

Pretty Face

by Ann Bogle

“Get that pretty face out of my face!” my mother said, as I tried to slide out the door to smoke a cigarette illegally. I had started wearing make-up with green eye shadow in seventh grade, first year of junior high, with other Protestant girls who started with light blue. The Catholic girls started in eighth grade, middle year of junior high, the year their mothers remembered as the year before high school, in training them to wait. If I had been arrested for underage smoking, I never would have smoked again. Poet Bill Yarrow asked at Knickerbocker at what age I started, and for a change I answered, “Twelve.” I puffed at twelve. The two girls who were my best friends had not minded that I didn't draw it in. It was Obie, as we called him for short, who commanded me to inhale at thirteen. “You're dead,” Obie said, as soon as I did it. I fell backward in the tall, yellow grass. I knew about the Surgeon General's new warning that smoking cigarettes may cause dot dot dot, and it still is true that chemical additives in cigarettes may. At any rate, I remember thinking, do I want a mother? Yes! Answer. Then be not too pretty, I told my straight-A, responsible self. My mother was naturally beautiful, graceful, and elegant. She drew on her lipstick in the rear view mirror. She did not wear rouge or mascara. Her hair was not dyed: the color of champagne, very light red.

