

# Hardware Store Tour

by Ann Bogle

I thought she wrote, Chaucer's "In the Basement of the Plaza," meaning it was something He might pen if He were alive today. I have discovered His short poems situated in the back of my college Ch-r text. The poems are cute and funny, as he was, a little sad, somehow great, and short. Here is part of one:

*Against Women Unconstant*

*Madame, that throug your newfangelnesse*

*Many a servaunt have put out of your grace,*

*I take my leve of your unsteadfastnesse,*

*For wel I woot, while ye have lyves space,*

*Ye kan not love ful half yere in a place;*

*To newe thing your lust is ay so kene;*

*Instede of blew, ye may wel were al grene.*

Her question, anybody remember Chaucer's in the basement of the Plaza? let me recall the name of the burger place just off State Street in Madison. The Plaza had a chess-board floor, green wood booths, and the lights stayed up. I might be combining a memory of Fitzie's in Binghamton. The Plaza felt like a preppy soda fountain with beer. I wish we could tour the Kennedy Manor, see if it is still there—a residential hotel with dining room and small, single girl-friendly bar at the corner of Langdon Street and Wisconsin Avenue.

Another reason to write to her today: I remember she liked hardware. Consider joining me here for a hardware store tour, I wrote. You would not believe the variety. Ace, True Value, and others old and young. I went to Battery Plus and bought both a Blackberry replacement battery and a Radio Shack telephone battery. The manager-salesperson quoted a price of \$1 per pound to dispose of recyclable batteries, though triple-A and double-A batteries have been safe to discard for years, he said. Recyclable batteries can also be set on top of the all-sort green bins every other Monday in Saint Louis Park. Consider that as an idea for a relaxing trip for her and

S., I wrote, a brief visit if they like, rather than the two weeks I scheduled as a visit to Gage when she first was meeting Grant.

Gage had waited two years to meet someone. At thirty-five she was smarter and being picky. She and I cast transits for prediction and otherwise read astrology. She kept her cat Moses indoors one day due to a warning that I could not have interpreted in one of his signs. I realized, a little too slowly, that I had booked my ticket to stay too long. During the second week, I felt like a blond (no -e, adj.) chaperon she and the newfound Grant didn't really want. They had not been alone together yet. We saw the actor in "Ode to Billy Joe," Robby Benson, at Crab Shack on a beach outside Santa Monica. He and I shared full eye contact, standing quite near, a full-face exposure. Robby Benson looked at me as if he almost knew me, and I looked at him, knowing it was Robby Benson, though I didn't speak. No camera! Gage and I and two of her Santa Monica friends from Houston walked barefoot in tan sand, stepping gingerly, avoiding wads of gum and medical waste.

