

Etched in Stone
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A block of stone, a thing of permanence.
Cool to the touch.
Hard, unyielding, a block of stone.

A pitching tool with three-pound hammer can crack chunks from the virgin stone.
A point chisel and two-pounder create outlines on the changing surface.
Followed by the tooth chisel, rondel, riffler and rasp, the stone hesitatingly accepts the carver's will.
The finished block set into place; facing the weather; facing life; the etched block resolutely reflects a time long passed.
Long passed when the stone sat in sandbag on the banker's table, awaiting the craftsman's blow.
Now set in its wall, the etched stone joins others in creating an edifice that defines a time and a place.

A final exam, a thing of permanent performance.
Cool to the touch.
Bendable, foldable with a metal staple in the upper left-hand corner.

The grader chisels at the exam with red pen: reading, scoring, and sometimes scorning.
The final exam stands as a marker of a four-month path followed hesitatingly, relentlessly, to a conclusion.
On page one finally and with finality the grader engraves letter or numeral.
The grade being a lasting comment of a journey taken.

A grade, a simple letter.
Full of emotion.
Joy, despair, a right of passage.

Something etched into a field of cellulose.
Cascading through a spreadsheet,
Byteing a path through a computer,
Eventually dispelling its entropy into a registrar's base of data.

The grade is placed into a wall of performance for some to see.
The grade stands next to comrades from other bankers' tables.
As a herd of elephants, as a pride of tigers, a transcript of grades.

As the years pass, the engraving stands.
A monument to efforts made and lessons learned.
Something that defined a time and place.
A grade is as an etching in a stone.
Permanent, hard, unyielding.