



# *Lamar State College-Port Arthur*

*A Member of The Texas State University System*

*Early  
Expressions*

*Spring - 2001*

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# *Early Expressions*

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# *Table of Contents*

## *Early Expressions*

### *2001 Winners*

#### *Descriptive Essay*

<i>1<sup>st</sup> Place</i>	<i>Lynete Medrano</i>	<i>Pgs.6-7</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Place</i>	<i>Rebekah Sanders</i>	<i>8-9</i>
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> Place</i>	<i>Sandie Lipson</i>	<i>10-11</i>

#### *Narrative Essay*

<i>1<sup>st</sup> Place</i>	<i>Keito Means</i>	<i>Pgs.13-14</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Place</i>	<i>Sandie Lipson</i>	<i>15-18</i>
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> Place</i>	<i>Lynete Medrano</i>	<i>19-21</i>

# *Table of Contents*

## *Early Expressions*

### *2001 Winners*

#### *Poetry*

<i>1<sup>st</sup> Place</i>	<i>Jacqueline Williams</i>	<i>Pgs.23</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Place</i>	<i>Jacqueline Williams</i>	<i>24</i>

#### *Special Topic Essay:* *Museum of the Gulf Coast*

<i>1<sup>st</sup> Place</i>	<i>Neely Ducote</i>	<i>Pgs.26</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Place</i>	<i>Lori Holland</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> Place</i>	<i>Albert Meadows</i>	<i>28-29</i>

# Table of Contents

## Honorable Mention

<i>Autumn Denham</i> .....	Pg.31
<i>Sandra Holmes</i> .....	32
<i>Anglia Lazard</i> .....	33-36
<i>Lan Luong</i> .....	37-38
<i>Keito Means</i> .....	39-40
<i>Tuyen Nguyen</i> .....	41-42
<i>Robert Pate</i> .....	43-44
<i>Justin Varing</i> .....	45
<i>Audrey Ward</i> .....	46
<i>Frank Williams</i> .....	47
<i>Jacqueline Williams</i> .....	48
<i>Natalie Wilson</i> .....	49

*Editor*  
*Peggy Knight*

*Early  
Expressions*

*2001*

*Descriptive Winners*

# *The House on the Corner*

by

*Lynete Medrano*

*My grandmother's house sat at the corner of Guadalupe and Castroville Road, on the west side of San Antonio, for over forty years. The exterior was painted a crisp white accentuated by turquoise window, roof and door trimmings. This earth color was also worn by the crooked mailbox that stood at the end of the sidewalk, just beyond her fenced yard. My grandmother's immaculately kept yard was a symbol of pride and accomplishment throughout the years. The trimmed lawn was like fine needles standing on ends, sharp and firm under my steps. Thick bushels of monkey grass lined the sidewalk and front porch. There were several red rose bushes strategically placed throughout the yard; these enormous pillars provided a routine hiding place, with shade from the sun, while playing hide and seek with my two older sisters. A small flowerbed framed with planks of wood sat by the front porch. The sweet smelling flowers resembled a box of crayons.*

*My grandmother's love for floral motif extended throughout the house; curtains, quilts and upholstery were all in her favorite patterns. Porcelain flowers decorated the end tables in the living room, while her flowerbed offered daily pickings for the kitchen, bathroom and bedroom décor. My grandmother rarely used the window unit in the living room because she preferred the use of fans to keep the house cool. Fresh flowers provided a pleasurable scent that masked the fumes of simmering crystalline.*

*Our weekends visits were spent primarily outside playing tag, hop scotch and Simon says. We wore our swimsuits and sandals waiting for noon to roll around so we could drench ourselves in the cool water spurting from the garden hose. The neighborhood snow cone man played an integral part in our weekends as well. His timing was always perfect, as if he catered to our needs. We could hear the high pitches of his truck's melody from a distance; the tune grew closer and clearer as he approached the corner of Guadalupe and Castroville Road. My grandmother always met us at the door with a small satchel full of coins, and we'd run to the curb to wave him down. Our favorite treat was a blue coconut snow cone topped*



*Visits to my grandmother's house were always fun-filled. All of our toys were left at home. There was no cable TV or VCR, or even chilled air. We still loved being there. My sisters and I played as children do, but we always had respect for my grandmother's things. The scene was that of a different era, simplicity at its best; and we didn't welcome change.*

*To see Grandmother's house now is heartbreaking. When she passed on, it was decided by my father's two older siblings that the house would be sold. Within months of the new ownership, all memories of my Grandmother were destroyed. The money hungry owner dressed the house in dull beige with moss green trimmings. This mossy color was also painted on the mailbox, which now stood erect. The intruder was unaware that the precious turquoise color was chosen after a compromise. My Grandfather wanted blue, and my Grandmother wanted green; turquoise was a combination of both. The fixing of the crooked mailbox upset my father because it was his young, undeveloped arms and small hands that held the mailbox as the cement dried. My Grandparents loved to tell the story about their crooked mailbox.*

*The house has been rented out to several different people over the years. Each one leaving his stamp of carelessness behind. The lawn is no longer trim and green; weeds are growing where brightly colored flowers one lived. The thick monkey grass and full-bushed bearing red roses are gone. Scuffmarks stain the exterior shell of the house, and the chipped paint reveals tiny glimpses of what once was. The window unit is sloppily propped up with the wooden planks that once framed the flowerbed. This house on the corner of Guadalupe and Castroville Road is no longer a symbol of pride and accomplishment; it is nothing more than a monthly profit for the landlord and a stepping stone to someplace better for all those destructive tenants.*

# *The Creek*

*by*

*Rebekah Sanders*

*When I was a kid, my favorite place to be was way back in the woods at my grandmother's in Silsbee. My grandmother lived on top of a hill right above Village Creek. There was a trail that led straight from her house down the hill to where we could jump directly into the freezing icy water. We would go every summer and join our cousins to run through the woods and swim in the cold water. We would build dams in the branch with the white chalky sand, after the water built up lay in front of them. Break the dam, and wait for the chill of the icy water to rush over us. We had a large yellow rope that we used to swing from a tree in to the deepest part of the water. I remember opening my eyes while I was submerged in the brown bubbling water watching the sunlight glittering down to my face. We would play tag and almost exhaust ourselves running and swimming all at once. My favorite game would have to have been exploring. Even though we had explored every place within walking distance a thousand times, there was always something new to find. The creek was forever changing, as were we. My absolute favorite part was a little sand bar not far off from the main swimming hole. It was fairly shallow with large flat stones that I could use to walk across from the right side to the left side of the creek. While standing on the stone, I always felt as if I*

*my feet. On the left side the sand was as white as a ghost and as soft as silk. I would lie there on my little sand bar for hours tanning, relaxing, or reading a book. I can feel the warmth of the sun as it shown down on my face, caressing me tenderly. Sometimes I would fall asleep; and now that I think back on it, that was probably the most peaceful sleep I have ever gotten. I guess there is sometime in everybody's life that he wishes he could go back to. This is my time. During this time we were growing up, always yearning for that next year so we could be older and have a little more freedom. Now that I am out on my own, I realize the most freedom I have ever had was swimming in that creek, running through those woods, and just sprawling myself out on the sand while the water rushed by.*

# **Goodies from Goodness**

**by**

**Sandie Lipson**

*Now that I can have her only in memory, I find myself reflecting upon the precious time we shared and the amazing time we shared and the amazing stories that she passed down to me.*

*My great-grandmother was an inspiring woman. Throughout all the devastating trials that she encountered in her life, she remained cheerful and encouraging. She always seemed to put the needs of others before her own, and she was loved by all who knew her.*

*Her name was Elsey. She was born July 18, 1892, in the humid summer of Missouri. Her mother died within a few years of her birth. Although my great-grandmother didn't remember her mother, she felt cheated from a relationship that most daughters share with their mothers. She was one of nine children. Because she was raised on a farm, she had a heavy load to bear. Later her father remarried, as he needed someone to tend to his children. The relationship between my great-grandmother and her new step mother was not a good one.*

*Hard work wasn't foreign to my great-grandmother. Because she was a farmer's daughter, she was expected to work like a man, yet conduct herself like a lady.*

*She married at a young age, and she lost her first born to a disease called Smallpox. In 1912 she gave birth to her only surviving child, Henry. She nearly lost him on several occasions. Before my grandfather was a year old, her husband, Oscar, abandoned them. She never remarried nor dated anyone because of her religious beliefs.*

*She continued to work with heavy machinery in plants in order to provide food and shelter for my grandfather. In her later years, she*

*assisted my grandfather and my grandmother (her daughter-in-law) with raising their children, while they worked outside of the home.*

*She witnessed both World Wars, the falling of the stock market, and the Depression. Through it all, she remained compassionate and thoughtful of others. This is the woman who I've been told that once lived.*

*The woman I recall had many of these traits. I am not a witness to the young woman that once lived, but a witness to the older woman who continues to dwell within my heart.*

*As a child, I would visit my great-grandmother as often as I could. I loved her dearly. She would always welcome me with a sweet kiss and a warm embrace. She adopted the nickname "Good Granny" because she would bake goodies for the children.*

*Chewy chocolate cookies, mouth watering fudge and pumpernickel bread were often the main course of a meal at Good Granny's. The sweet aroma of cakes and pastries would fill the atmosphere in her small trailer.*

*Most of the time Good Granny would arrange her long hair into a lovely bun, but when I came over she would let her hair fall just for me. I loved her hair; and even more, I enjoyed brushing it. Her long, thick, gray hair often tickled the palm of my hand as I held it between my fingers.*

*She would tell me stories about her past, in a soft, soothing tone. I enjoyed listening, although some of them seemed to sadden her heart. I often wondered why. I was too young to understand the hardships she had encountered through her life.*

*At the end of our visits, Good Granny usually sent me home with a bag of goodies to share with my brothers and sisters. Sometimes it was cookies. Other times it may have been several slices of pumpernickel bread. Whichever the case may be, I was certain it would be sweet, delicious, and melt in my mouth.*

*Good Granny returned to the Lord on the anniversary of her birth in 1992. She was one-hundred years of age. I miss my great-grandmother, but I'm sure she's happy resting in the arms of our Creator.*

*I would like to think that she is governing over the children in heaven, just as she did for me.*

*Early  
Expressions*

2001

*Narrative Winners*

# The Three D's

by

Keito Means

I started as a young adolescent wanting to be rougher, tougher, and faster, than any of my peers. I got involved with sports to do just that. Once I was noticed as one of the better players, I gained more and more confidence. This natural talent felt wonderful to me, even if it meant a person being cut who was not good enough to make the team. Feeding off the high of the acclaim I received, I dedicated all my time and attention to becoming the best player I could ever be.

An old coach once told me that without the three D's I would never succeed in football or in life. The three D's consisted of determination, desire and dedication. I listened to what the coach said and put his lesson to use. I knew what I wanted to do, and what it would take for me to reach my goal. Throughout the course of my life I pledged to always follow the three-D rule. Writing this paper has given me a new awakening! Returning to school has also given me the last opportunity, to do what I set out to do. My plan is to reach that final destination, and I will, even if it kills me.

In the process of getting to this point, I made mistakes. My temper, and my inability to control it, was the first mistake I made. My first attempt at attending college, and playing college football, was at Ranger Jr. College. During the first few weeks at Ranger, I lost my temper. A fellow student made a racial comment and stupidly, I acted on it. The police did not know there were other people involved, so I was the only one arrested. At that point I did not know what to do. I called my mother and informed her of the events that had taken place. I also asked her to call the athletic department and inform my coach that I was in jail, and I would possibly be expelled from school. I grew tired of waiting on a response from my mother, so I decided to call the coach myself. To make a long story short, my coach informed me

there was nothing he could do to help my situation, and he could not overturn the expulsion. I was told I was expelled, and I could never return. After doing time, roughly about 20 days, I went to court and was informed the county had dropped the charges of aggravated assault. I was given time served for a simple assault, meaning, a simple fight. This setback, I felt, had taught me a lesson. I knew I would not make the same mistake twice.

Even though I did not make that mistake again, I made another major one. When I came home I had nothing. I had my family, but my dream of playing football was ruined, so I felt I really had no purpose. I tried the job thing, and that did not work. It seemed I was not happy with whatever job I chose. The pay was minimal; and I had a family to support, so I became a drug-dealer. That's when all hell broke loose. I followed the entire profile of a drug-dealer. I had a master plan that would eventually get me to where I wanted to be. After a year of doing the dealing thing, I had gained lots of wealth from what I was doing. I bought cars, clothes, and jewelry. You name it I had it. It was then I received my first possession of a controlled substance conviction. I was placed on probation for four years. I still did not understand and continued to deal. I continued that life as if nothing had happened. Little did I know, the Task Force was planning the biggest drug bust ever. One morning in September of 1998, there was a knock on the door. Without thinking, my child's mother answered the door... The same four years the courts had probated became years I had to serve. I served twenty-two months in prison before I was granted parole. Believe me when I tell you that was the worst experience of my life. That in itself finally made me realize it was still important to hang onto the three D's. Now, here I am, starting over, but this time there will be no setbacks. I'm going to make it to a university where I can complete my dream of becoming a great student athlete. Hopefully, I will make the roster. My dreams of playing pro ball have not vanished. I just know now that there is life after the game, which is basically why I am still here trying.



# *A Spunky Woman*

*by*

*Sandie Lipson*

*I have placed my great-grandmother upon a pedestal for as long as I can remember. She was a kind woman. She had a compassionate soul and an accommodating nature. When I reflect upon my great-grandmother, I cogitate only a sweet passive woman--as this is the only side of her I knew. After the death of my great-grandmother, it came to my attention, there was another side of her that I didn't know.*

*My grandmother and I had just returned to her trailer after singing psalms of praise in our small church. It was our custom to meet at her house for lunch after Sunday worship.*

*She had prepared a ham and cheese sandwich for me, while she ate cottage cheese accompanied by a bowl of sliced peaches. Although I enjoyed our lunches together, I didn't enjoy the sandwiches grandma would make for me. Because of grandma and grandpa's strict diet, she would make my sandwich with low fat cheese, low fat mayonnaise and rye bread (which is the least of my favorites). The mayonnaise and cheese would leave a bitter taste in my mouth, and I didn't care for the gritty dry taste of rye. It seemed that the only good things about grandma's lunches were the ham and the company. However, I didn't have the heart to enlighten her on my opinions. Instead, I would force the dry, bitter sandwich down and drown it with cold iced tea.*

*The entire trailer would smell as if a cargo of Ben Gay had been*

*delivered. The atmosphere reeked with the odors of ointments and medications--still I consider my visits with my grandparents among my most cherished memories.*

*My grandfather, who didn't have a formal education, was the most knowledgeable man I had met. It seemed as if he was either reading a book, or watching the news or some other educational program. I was often amazed by his wisdom. He appeared worldly, yet he rarely lifted himself from the old tattered couch.*

*Although my grandfather kept to himself, and he rarely spoke, he managed to keep his distance without being ignored. He would disguise himself as a man who was not interested in any of our conversations. He did this by burying himself in a book or television program. I knew this was a masquerade because of the subtle comments he would make once in a while.*

*My grandparents, which I called "Trailer Granny and Papa", had lost a great amount of their hearing. Because of their hearing loss, it was necessary to keep the volume on the television escalated.*

*As Trailer Granny and I ate, we talked about stories from her past. The sounds from the television echoed through my head as I leaned closer towards grandma hoping to hear her voice more clearly. One story led to another and before too long we were discussing the attributes of my great-grandmother, who was also known as "Good Granny".*

*"Aah, Good Granny," I said with a smile. "She was such a remarkable woman. She was considerate of other people's feelings, and she was always trying to help someone in need." Trailer Granny nodded in agreement. "Yes," she snickered, "but she sure was stubborn." "Stubborn?" I said with surprise, "Good Granny was stubborn?" It seemed odd that she would choose this*

*particular word to describe my great-grandmother.*

*"Oh yes," Trailer Granny stated in a factual tone. "Your great-grandmother was set in her ways. She insisted on doing everything herself. Even when she was old, she wouldn't allow anyone to help her with anything. She didn't change until after she became incapacitated, and we had to put her in the convalescent home."*

*"I'll give you an example." She continued. "Do you know where the post office is?" I nodded without saying a word. The post office was about three miles away on Valley Boulevard in Bloomington, California. It sat in the back of an old shopping center. I remembered the old Stater Brother's grocery store that stood to the right of it, along with many other stores. All of them, excluding the post office, had been closed for some time.*

*"Your great-grandmother would walk down to the post office by herself." Trailer Granny continued. "She would insist on taking this walk nearly every day. She wouldn't allow us to drive, or walk beside her. It used to make me very nervous because there was so much traffic on Valley Boulevard. I worried about her safety. I was afraid of her getting hit by a vehicle. I guess this was her relaxing device. I think she was eighty-eight years old when she took her last walk. It was just a few years prior to her stroke. Anyway, Good Granny took her daily walk to the post office to buy a book of stamps. With her oversized, black purse, she walked to the post office as she normally did. After she purchased the stamps, she started towards home. She hadn't made it across the parking lot before some young punk quickly ran beside her, and attempted to steal her purse. Later, she told us, that he was around seventeen or eighteen years of age. Because Good Granny always kept her purse clutched to her body, the young man was unable to seize it. When*

*he made a second attempt, she proceeded to beat him with her purse until he ran away. After she returned home, she told us about the incident. Your grandfather and I couldn't understand why she didn't give him the purse. After-all, she didn't carry more than ten dollars with her, and she didn't have any valuables in it. So we asked her, why did she risk her life? We reminded her that he could have killed her, and we asked her again, why didn't she just give him the purse?"*

*Trailer Granny paused for a moment. "What did she say?" I asked with an inquisitive tone. Without peering from his book and without hesitation, my grandfather answered my question. "She said, Do you know how hard it is to get a social security card at my age? I would be dead before I would receive it."*

*I couldn't help from laughing. It struck me funny that Good Granny would place herself in danger for a social security card. We chatted a bit longer before I made my excuses to return home.*

*I still have Good Granny placed upon a pedestal. When I think about her, I reflect upon all of her exemplary attributes. Now that I have been enlightened as to her courage and independence, I've added them to the list.*

*It is because of this story, I can say; "My great-grandmother is a spunky woman indeed."*

# **The Neighbors**

by

## **Lynete Medrano**

When I was a young child, my parents took every measure possible to shelter my sisters and me from the harsh realities of the world. Our television programs were monitored, our friends and their families were researched, and all of our extra-curricular activities involved both my parents. As we grew older it became apparent to us that things weren't always as pleasant and proper in the "real" world. Our perfect domicile was punctured by disturbing reports of murder, rape and burglary in and around our subdivision. It was around this time as well that our neighbor's house, which had recently been sold, was put up for rent and begun attracting every demented duo in town. The "evils" my parents struggled hard to protect us from were closer than they ever imagined.

This small place, two doors down, housed several tenants in its first year. They moved in, did their damage, and moved out. Some tenants had children, which they allowed to run amok; others were childless due to losing custody of their children to the state. All tenants were of the wrong sort, unchaste. It seemed as if the landlord catered to housing all the riffraff in town.

A couple, Juan and Gina, had been living in the rental house for about six months. Their abrasive manner kept them at a distance most of the time, except for their weekly physical arguments which always spilled out into the streets and summoned the police. My sisters and I never saw the physical violence. However, we heard the ferocious tones and cursing, the pounding and punching, and breaking of glass. The end result was always the same—one or both of them would spend a night or two in jail. Then they'd be back home as if nothing ever happened. They both warded off an assistance from neighbors during their bouts, even going as far as cursing and attacking anyone who offered help. It was as if they relieved their tension and pent up anger on cycle, with no regard for anyone else.

The date was August 31, 1982. I had just turned nine years old, two months earlier. We had been at the ballpark watching my sister's game most of the day and had plans that evening to eat at Pizza Hut with the whole team. My parents wanted to make a quick stop

by our house to freshen up before heading to the restaurant. As my father approached our driveway his slow pace quickly increased, and he sped past our house. Our bodies jerked back into the seats and in an instance we caught a glimpse of the drama unfolding in the front yard of the neighbor's house. The caged windows were smashed and furniture and clothing was thrown around the yard. Juan was insistently pounding on the front door, while Gina stood at the bars of the broken windows cursing him. My parents remained calm and phoned the police from our destination. Nothing was mentioned of the scene, and we went on with our peaceful evening. Several hours later, as our caravan rounded the corner, any hopes that the problem would be solved were diminished. The streets were packed with neighbors and foreign cars belonging to unfamiliar faces-onlookers. Several patrol cars blocked our driveway and exits to neighboring streets. An ambulance was parked in front of Juan and Gina's house. Our van came to a halt, and it seemed as if we all popped at once. Deaf to the buzz amongst the crowd, we pushed our way through to the rental house, unaware of the extent of the horror that lay ahead. My parents stood there like zombies behind the barricades; their protective guard was down for us as well as for themselves.

Juan's truck was parallel parked in front of the house, near the curb. The driver's door was slightly ajar. His torso slumped out over the open window and his lower back and legs rested heavily in a seated position, facing the house. A puddle was formed, beyond the curb, from the blood of the self-inflicted gunshot wound that blasted his skull. A stray dog was investigating the scene, sniffing around, until he was hauled off away from the truck. I spotted Gina in the ambulance, surrounded by medics and officers. She had an annoyed, unsympathetic demeanor as they treated her for the minor cuts she obtained from the broken glass. The dark sky, bearing a full moon, and the flashing red and blue lights that cast shadows of the gathered crowd gave a surreal effect to the sinister event.

Apparently, after an argument, Gina had thrown all of Juan's belongings out on the lawn and locked him out of the house. He begged and pleaded to be let back in, but she refused. The police were called by my parents, en route to the Pizza Hut, and several other neighbors to put an end to this explosive situation. When the officers arrived, they ordered Juan to remove himself and his belongings from the premises. Juan did as he was told, but returned several hours later. Once again he pleaded to be let in the house; Gina refused.

Juan walked to his truck, sat down facing the house and threatened to shoot himself if she didn't let him back in the house. Gina laughed and chanted, "Do it, do it, do it!" We rounded the corner approximately forty minutes after Juan pulled the trigger and ended his life. Neighbors who witnessed the horrible event reported that Gina was laughing and taunting Juan the entire time he begged and pleaded to be let into the house they shared. She showed no remorse when his lifeless body slumped out the window of the truck; she didn't even touch the phone to call 911. Gina was calmly watching TV when the medics entered the back door to her den. The back door was unlocked the entire time.

Shortly after this incident Gina's new boyfriend, who parked his big car against the very curb that was stained with Juan's blood, began moving his belongings into the house. She didn't shed a tear, or bat an eye at the neighbors who watched as they smooched on the front porch. Even after Juan's death, the landlord had no question about the tenant he was leasing the house to. After all she put money in his pocket, and he didn't have to live next door to her. I learned then that some people don't have a conscience. They don't care who they hurt as long as they get what they want, when they want it. It was also obvious to me that even when you do care enough to help, there are people who refuse to change their lives for the better.

*Early  
Expressions*

2001

*Poetry Winner*



# *The Birth of a New Day*

*by*

*Jacqueline Williams*

*Thank you God for your grace,*

*And your power for every second,*

*Minute, and hour.*

*With each moment and ripple in the waters,*

*Oh God, how you perfectly made all things in order.*

*When the sun shines and the moon glows,*

*And the wind blows,*

*God's love will always flow.*

*With every breath and every sound,*

*With every leaf that falls to the ground,*

*And every raindrop that touches my face,*

*I know that God has blessed us*

*With this beautiful day.*

*With every mountain top that's covered with snow*

*God gives us hope to try once more.*

# *Reborn*

*by*

*Jacqueline Williams*

*If I have to make A choice*

*Between Life and Death,*

*To save my soul,*

*Lord, Let your Holy Spirit,*

*Take control.*

*To do what's right in God's eyesight,*

*Lord, I will open up my heart;*

*And let you in and now I know*

*I am Born Again.*

*Early  
Expressions*

2001

*Special Topic Essay:  
Museum of the Gulf Coast  
Winners*

# Museum of the Gulf Coast

by

Neely Ducote

On a scale of one to ten, I rated my experience at the Museum of the Gulf Coast a two. That, though, was only before I stepped foot into the Museum. I saw exhibits in the museum that held many parts of our towns' history and heritage I never knew about. I thought I knew all there was to know about the history and legacy of Port Arthur. As I looked at the mural on the wall of the different eras it all became clear to me. I had learned everything that was painted on the wall, but it took the painting to make me truly appreciate the past and what we have now because of the men who were portrayed in the painting.

I soon learned that there were many more important people than just Janis Joplin and many more amazing events than just taking the first picture of Spindletop gushing. Although the two were both important, many other things and people would go unrecognized for there for their accomplishments if not for the museum. Many important people have begun their lives in Port Arthur and are proud to acknowledge they were raised here. Most people in our generation can't wait to get out of this town and move to somewhere bigger and better. Most of the people in the museum can afford to live anywhere, but can't wait to get back here and show off their accomplishments. These people have spent a larger part of their lives in the so called "Bigger and Better" cities, but eventually come back to their first home.

As we walked through the museum I became prouder by the second to live here and to know that my daughter will get the opportunity to grow up here. My final score of the Museum was a ten. I would recommend a trip to the museum to anyone who believes that our city means nothing or has no importance. Soon they will realize that they do live in the bigger and better city they always dreamed of.

# *What I Loved Most About the Museum of the Gulf Coast*

*by*

*Lori Holland*

*I am very interested in Native Americans. I like to delve into the Native American history of an area. I was very interested in the legend of Kisselpoo, "Full Moon Princess," but could find no other references to her.*

*I enjoyed learning about the local Indians from Louisiana and Texas. It is amazing to me that more people are not truly interested in their history. The Indians of our country were a great asset to the first settlers; if not for their help they may have perished. Unfortunately, the Indians could not survive the white man's many wars, diseases, or their greed. They could not survive one of the worst things the white man supplied, whiskey. Whiskey was a true poison to the Indian. It killed many and took control of many. It became a horrible addiction that could not be beaten. They suffered and we flourished; that is a sad fact.*

*Now that I live in Texas I may not love all things affiliated with it, but learning about the area, the Native Americans, and their history should make an interesting stay here.*

# The Gulf Coast Museum

by

Albert Meadows

I enjoyed my visit to the Gulf Coast Museum in Port Arthur. Being an information buff, I liked the various plaques and signs present. The local flavor that was present throughout the museum was very tangible. The huge painting that hung over the museum's entrance reflected a rich past. The story behind the painting and the fact that it dated over a hundred years in age spoke volumes for the artist. The spectacular diorama on the wall was awe-inspiring. To see history unfold before one's eyes in a visual medium takes one's breath away. I saw the complete time frame from past to present served in palatable form. I saw time change from hunter-gatherer natives to modern day technology.

The cannon represented independence for this area. It was part of the Dick Dowling exhibit. These men turned away a huge armada with a few weapons between them. The wildlife exhibits were informative and very life-like. The animals were presented in their natural settings down to the last details.

The area most fascinating to me was the Lucas gusher display. To know this one oil derrick ushered in the industrial age is amazing. One could only wonder about the citizens and the kind of day they were having. What were their working conditions? Were the people tired and hungry? I imagine the people did not have any idea of what they were witnessing. Millions of lives have

been affected by this one discovery. Walking through the halls, one is confronted with the truth that there were many different ethnic groups that made this area what it is today. No one group can lay claim to the progress that has occurred here.

The entertainment exhibits were very informative. To know that so many people from this area have gone on to national and international prominence is staggering. From music to television to movies to authors, the Gulf Coast shines in the spotlight.

The sports exhibits were inspiring to me. To learn that some of these people came from limited backgrounds and reached their personal goals shows the younger generations that anything is possible with perseverance.

In all, my experience at the Gulf Coast Museum was a very enlightening one. I learned so much about this area that I didn't know before. I have visited museums in Houston, San Antonio, and New Orleans, but this museum had a much more personal feel to it. I felt that I was a part of the Gulf Coast experience. Mr. Knight is proud of the museum and has every right to be. I want to thank Mr. Knight for making this trip possible.

*Early  
Expressions*

2001

*Honorable Mentions*



# *My Name*

*by*

*Autumn Denham*

*My name is Autumn. My father gave me my name. He once told me that he named me "Autumn" because he was mesmerized by the beauty of that season, how the leaves turned into beautiful colors of red, gold, and orange. However, it was not only the season he was mesmerized by, he was also mesmerized by his only little girl.*

*I have always believed that a name can tell a great deal about a person. In my case that is true. Although my name has no other meaning than a time of year called fall, to me it means more. If you watch the weather during this season, you will notice it is unpredictable. One moment it is sunny. The next thing you know, it is windy and cool. The same goes for me. I can be happy, excited and giddy. The next moment I look as if my world has been torn apart. Therefore, I have come up with my own definition of my name. The name of Autumn is defined as a season in the dictionary, but to me it means unpredictable.*

*I am comfortable with my name. However, I can remember a time when I wanted to be called Yvonne, which is my middle name. I wanted this name because the name Autumn was not a unique name, at least not unique enough for me. As I have grown up, I have learned to love my first name. It means more to me because it describes me. Yvonne may be unique, but it has no real meaning to me, other than it is my middle name.*

# *A Good Thing Can Come Out of a Bad Situation*

*by*

*Sandra Holmes*

*It was the morning, and I slept very well, the night before. As I stretched before getting out of my bed, not wanting to get out right then, I realized I had an appointment to go buy a car. I got up, brushed my teeth, washed my face, took a bath and put on my clothes. Now after all that, I had to have my coffee. At the same time I was thinking about what kind of lie I was going to tell the man about my income. I had no money coming in my household. Better yet, I did not have a house. I was homeless. I drank my coffee and smoked my cigarette, thinking of something to tell these people. I smoked another cigarette, and going through my mind was the idea of telling them that I get SSI, or that I worked somewhere; but what if they wanted a check stub? I could not provide that, so it was a lie.*

*I was going to a used car lot. My friend was taking me because that was where his daughter had bought her car. My friend knew at one time I worked, but did not know I had gotten fired. Now how was I going to pull this off? I would meet my friend at a man's house because that is where he thought I lived.*

*We pulled up at the car lot named A&A Motors. We shook hands and introduced ourselves and made small talk. We soon got down to business, and he asked me where I worked; I told him. He then asked for a check stub. Earlier my friend and I had made one. I then produced it and gave it to the car salesman. That went over well. I could have paid cash for the car. I had enough, but I just did not at the time. I left owing him five hundred dollars. I still owe this amount.*

# A Pet Bird

by

Anglia Lazard

One hot day while our family was sitting around, the boys asked for a pet bird. I explained to them that there were certain responsibilities in caring for a pet bird: for example, feeding, bathing, cleaning the birdcage, and keeping the floor around the cage clean. So they agreed to be responsible. The next day we went to the pet store. There were all kinds of birds, but one caught our eye. We were amazed at the different colors on the bird; the beak was bright red with a fantastic blue body. The nails were pale pink, and the eyes were shiny and black. As the boys felt its soft feathers, we knew he was our special bird. Next we picked out the birdcage along with toys that would make him feel at home. The boys were so excited about their new pet bird. While riding home they named him Raymond. My sons were so thrilled to have a pet they forgot to find out the sex, and if Raymond would talk or chirp. The next day they shared the responsibilities of caring for Raymond. One week later they lost interest in their pet. I found myself taking on the task of caring for Raymond. I was overwhelmed by my new duties, and a terrible thing happened. I forgot to close the door to Raymond's cage. Raymond escaped from his cage, and I heard an odd sound. As I glanced around, my search led me to the den, and there he was. I was met by a swarm of blue feathers floating around in mid air.

At this point I figured poor Raymond must have met the ceiling fan. My heart went out to the lifeless bird who knew no better. As I began to gather the feathers and the remains of Raymond, I began to wonder how I would explain this mishap to the boys. I managed to gather up the courage to confess to my sons. After a few words of anger and sadness, we came up with a solution. The boys and I felt it would only be right to say good-bye to Raymond as we would to any other family member. We performed a simple funeral service for Raymond and laid him to eternal rest in the backyard.

# *The Family Pool*

*by*

*Anglia Lazard*

*The weatherman is predicting a very hot summer. He feels the temperatures will range from 90 to 105 degrees. The chances for rain are very slim. Therefore there will probably be a water shortage. Based on his predictions, the city officials are closing all public swimming pools. My husband decided to purchase an above ground swimming pool for our family. The things we had to do to prepare for the pool included pricing pools, leveling the yard, and assembling the pool. We were on a mission to accomplish building our own pool.*

*When deciding to get a pool, the first thing my husband and I did was price different pools. The first step we took in pricing pools was look through newspaper ads and inquiries in the yellow pages. My husband and I thought this was interesting because we learned about the different pools, shapes, styles, and prices. According to square footage of land we had available to accommodate the pool, we found that the pools we had to choose from were priced from \$1,000 and up. We decided our budget would allow us to purchase an oval pool between the prices of \$1,000 to \$1,500.*

*After we priced the pool, it was now time to level the ground where the pool would be. Upon leveling the ground, we had to get rope, sand and dirt. The rope was used to make sure the measurements were correct. Then once the measurements were made, the sand was spread across the measured area on the ground. We used a shovel and other tools to smooth the sand out across the ground. The ground was then level and ready to add some dirt. Once that was completed, the ground was level and ready for the pool to be installed.*

*The final step in the process to have our pool was to assemble it. The first thing we did was to watch the instructional tape "How to Assemble Your Own Pool". After two hours of viewing the tape and taking notes, my husband felt he was ready to assemble the pool. After many steps, and taking our time making sure we followed each step as the directions said, we had a completely assembled pool.*

*My husband and I had made a thought a reality. With much research, patience, and hard work we completed a task and made something for our family to enjoy. The hot summer would be able to be enjoyed by our hard work. My husband and I turned what could have been a miserable summer into a relaxing fun summer with a pool.*

# *AN ATHLETE'S ROOM*

*BY*

*LAN LUONG*

*I ENTERED THE BRIGHT, CHEERFUL SPACE WITH ITS BEIGE WALLS AND THE GRAY CARPET OF THE ATHLETE'S ROOM. I NOTICED A CLOSET TO MY RIGHT WITH THE DOOR OPEN. ON THE SHELF ABOVE THE BUNCHED TOGETHER CLOTHES WERE A RED BASEBALL CAP, A BROWN GLOVE, AND A GYM BAG. TURNING FROM THE CLOSET, I NOTICED A SINGLE BED WITH ITS WOODEN HEADBOARD AGAINST THE FAR WALL. THE BEDSPREAD WAS A BROWN, ORANGE, AND BEIGE PRINT OF BASKETBALL, FOOTBALL, AND BASEBALL SCENES. A LAMP SHAPED LIKE A BASEBALL WAS ON THE TOP OF A NIGHTSTAND TO THE LEFT OF THE BED. A SPORTS SCHEDULE AND SEVERAL YELLOWING NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS WERE TACKED TO THE BULLETIN BOARD ON THE WALL ABOVE THE NIGHTSTAND. A DESK WITH A BOOKCASE TOP STOOD AGAINST THE LEFT WALL. NEXT TO THE DESK WAS A WINDOW WITH BRIGHTLY PRINTED CURTAINS THAT MATCHED THE BEDSPREAD. BETWEEN*

*THE WINDOW AND THE LEFT CORNER STOOD A DRESSER. THE ROOM BROUGHT BACK A FLOOD OF MEMORIES. I LAUGHED AND JOKED WITH MY FRIENDS, SAT THERE AT THE DESK, DISGUSTED WITH A STUBBORN COACH OR IN WEARINESS AND MISERY AFTER I LOST A GAME. THIS DESK HAD EVEN WITHSTOOD A FEW PUNCHES AFTER I FELT DEFEATED. THE MEMORIES WERE SO STRONG I COULD SEE AND HEAR THE EVENTS, JUST AS THEY HAPPENED THAT NIGHT MY TEAM LOST. TAKING ONE MORE LOOK AT THE ROOM, I LEFT THE ROOM, SLOWLY CLOSED THE DOOR AND WAS ENGULFED IN SILENCE.*



*Mr. Clyde*  
*by*  
*Keito Means*

*There's a man who lives in my neighborhood who goes by the name of Mr. Clyde. I have great respect for Mr. Clyde who is approximately 54 years of age and has a very uncommon, yet hilarious sense of humor. He walks with a distinctive limp that shows, he'll probably walk that way for life. Although faced with life's difficult challenges, Mr. Clyde always manages to keep a smile on his face each and every day.*

*Some days Mr. Clyde will decide he'll go for a walk; and without anyone's help or transportation, he'd get from point A to point B with no problem at all. There have been days that I've seen him off walking from the area in which we live and end up far, far, from where he started. Nevertheless, Mr. Clyde took on those challenges as if they did not bother him. You can see the strength and determination in him as he sets out on another long and difficult journey. I must admit, I gave him all the respect in the world because although he's not the type of person you'd look to as a role model, but he is a good person.*

*Although challenging himself each and every day takes its toll, Mr. Clyde has much more to worry about. Now in his mid-fifties, Mr. Clyde is battling cancer as well as AIDS; and if you would see him today, you would only think he'd probably die of old age. There are also some things that bother me about him. For instance, his voice, he speaks in a very low tone,*

*and has a crackling voice like an old witch. That's very spooky. He walks as if he's always had back problems and never took care of them. No matter what, though, he never complains. Turning down someone's help is another problem he has because it's like he enjoys those long walks by himself, I guess to gain a peace of mind. The day walking is a big stress reliever, so maybe that's what it is. Regardless of the situation, Mr. Clyde makes sure he gets to his destination. Sometimes I wonder if his wife leaving him might be his problem or maybe why he tends to do everything on his own. I've been told his last wife literally drove him crazy which is why he acts and does certain things. There was one day I noticed Mr. Clyde talking, but there was no one else around. Even sometimes when he would walk somewhere I would catch him talking to himself. It bothers me because there is much I would like to do for him, but in some cases, like his, there's not much that can be done. I wish God made a special place just for people like him, so that they would be at peace with themselves and not have painful things to go through in life. There are times that I find myself thanking God for keeping me just the way I am because if I were in his shoes, I would not be able to handle things as well as he has.*

## *The Kitchen*

*by*

*Tuyen Nguyen*

*As a child being born, I happened to be the first baby in the family. Therefore everything revolved around me. I remember as I grew up at the age of three, I had learned to open the refrigerator by myself and made a big mess for my mother to clean up. As an Asian ethnic group, my parents were always cooking everything they could get their hands on. Our family had a very small kitchen in the first home. All appliances in the kitchen were so close to each other. If there were six adults in the kitchen, our kitchen would be crowded. However, after five years of living in the first house, my parents decided to move to a bigger house. Our house now is huge, and our kitchen is four times larger than the first kitchen. Everything that we do is in the kitchen. When we have visitors; the guests and our family would be in the kitchen talking about old-times, and my mother would be cooking up a hot meal for the day. Every event takes place in the kitchen. If we were watching television, it would be in the kitchen, talking about school, talking about boyfriends, and everything else. We could*

*probably fit thirty people in our kitchen today. I really like how my family communicated with each other in the kitchen. The kitchen is the heart of my house. I am very glad I can share this.*

*The Movie*  
*by*  
*Robert Pate*

*There is one place that impressed me. It was when my mother took my brother and me to the movies for the first time. When we first walked into an area that sold candy, there was one thing that stood out from everything, the smell of popcorn. The popcorn had a distinct quality to it. The smell by itself made my mouth water with delight. The taste was unbearably delicious; the cheese, the salt really made it worthwhile. Then we moved to the inside where they had a big screen showing commercials. We found a place to sit. I didn't hear anything but a distinct sound of music. That made it easier to sit there and wait for the movie. The movie started and the sound of the movie was loud and enough to hear. The excitement was*

*unbelievable, being my first time. These are just a few things that impressed me about going to the movies.*

# *The Gulf Coast Museum*

*by*

*Justin Varing*

*I was given the opportunity the other day, to have the privilege to attend the Museum of the Gulf Coast. I greatly enjoyed all of the wonderful history and information of the history of our area. I truly enjoyed many aspects of the objects displayed throughout the museum.*

*I would have to say that the parts of information that I enjoyed the most were the variety of famous people that originated in our area, and how they became famous. For instance, our area yielded many famous and esteemed athletes, musicians, and actors and actresses. Just to name a few, some of the famous athletes from this area include Chuck McElroy, Xavier Hernandez, Olympian Barbara Jean Jacket, and famous football coach of the Dallas Cowboys, Jimmy Johnson. There is also a handful of different musicians who originated from our area. To name a few, these musicians include Janis Joplin and Wayne Toups, both of which make a huge impact on our area by their one of a kind attitudes and actions. Another aspect of the museum that I found interesting was the many actors and actresses who originated from this area and have gained fame. Two of these actors are two of the stars from the comedy, Police Academy, G.W. Bailey, and Bubba Smith.*

*I'm very glad that I was able to visit the museum. I really enjoyed it, and now better understand its significance in our culture.*

# My Great Grandmother's Kitchen

by

Audrey Ward

When I was a young girl, I spent my summers with my great-grandmother. She spent all of her time in the kitchen. We did everything but sleep in that kitchen. It was the biggest room of the house, and in the center of the kitchen was a big round table. Every morning on that table, my great-grandmother, would be sitting in a chair in the corner reading her paper and drinking her coffee. She had a plate of pancakes, bacon and a glass of orange juice waiting for me. After breakfast, I would always go outside to play; but when I would come in, she would still be in the kitchen reading her Bible. There used to be a massive cookie jar that was shaped like a barrel with a tightly screwed on lid. The jar sat on the counter by the stove and was fully stocked with awesome homemade chocolate chip cookies with walnuts. Those cookies were the best cookies I have ever eaten. The stove was electric and connected to the cabinets. So when my great-grandmother would cook, I would sit on the counter and watch. The counter was bright yellow and glitters. It was shaped like an L; at the corner there was a little sink with a huge window in front of it. Through that window I used to watch my grandfather's dogs play and sleep. On the window seat lay my great-grandmother's many medications along with a cup where she would keep her false teeth in at night. Next to the window was a big yellow icebox with everything under the sun in it. On the wall across from the icebox was an old fashion dial phone, the kind that looked like it came out of an old fifties movie. I never did figure out how to use that phone. Next to the phone was the big round table. My great-grandmother would sit in her little chair in the corner with her Bible.



# *The Great Nubian Queen*

*by*

*Frank Williams*

*Now that I can have her only in memory, I see my grandma chewing that Wrigley's Spearmint Gum, watching "Young and the Restless," sitting in her favorite rocking chair. I've never seen anyone so calm and quiet, a person who could get her point across and didn't care how I felt about it. I remember her most often on Sunday morning dressed like a great Nubian queen, in church on the front row, in the same spot as the Sunday before, praising the Lord, keeping an eye on my brother and me in the choir stand. She would issue a special look by squinting her eyes and pouting her lips; that meant "Stop talking or you are in big trouble when WE leave!" I don't recall anything more frightening than anticipating a whipping from Grandma. The whippings were the worse; she would make us retrieve our own switches. By giving us that advantage we would take our precious time and find the smallest switch. After awhile we would see her face in the window screen saying, "Find me a switch and come in the house!" When we went in, her arms started swinging. In spite of the whippings, grandma was a sweet, kind, and understanding type of person. She did a really good job of keeping our family together at family reunions, Thanksgiving and Christmas.*

*We would rent a hall or ballroom, and she would do all of the cooking; and everyone would pitch in and help clean. However, after she passed on, it seemed everything changed. The whole family tree fell over. No one communicates, attends family gatherings or anything. As I look back on my grandmother's life, I realize how blessed I am to be part of the Williams Family, even though things are a little different now that I can have her only in my memory.*

# *Joy*

*by*

*Jacqueline Williams*

*God, You gave me Joy when Jesus was once a baby,  
Born in a manger that was surrounded by  
Beautiful angels.*

*God, You gave me Joy when Jesus became a man,  
And healed souls through out the land.*

*God, You gave me Joy when Jesus died for my sins,  
And rose from the grave, and now I know my  
Soul is saved.*

*God, You give me Joy. I'm just like a baby  
With a brand new toy.*

*I want to grow up and live with you, Lord, in your  
Heavenly Kingdom.*

# *My Name*

*by*

*Natalie Wilson*

*My name means Sunshine. It also means Happiness. When I was a little girl my stepfather would call me Na'talie. My name made him feel close to home. When my stepfather would say Na'talie, the Spanish color blue would roll onto the side of his face. It was a joy.*

*My name was given to me before I was born. When my mother was pregnant with me, every time she felt me inside her, she would become overwhelmed with happiness.*

*I am the first in my family to have the name Natalie. It was an honor. It was my younger days that made me feel so proud of my name. Now that I am older, it does not mean the same to others as it has meant to my family. Natalie is my name. It will always mean sunshine and happiness to me.*

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