

*Early
Expressions
2003*

Lamar State College-Port Arthur
A Member of The Texas State University System

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Expressions 2003
Photographic Entry- Second Place

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*As I continue this creative adventure
which has taken on a life of its own,
I must pay tribute to those responsible for its success:*

*To Janet Polk whose creative genius and
inexhaustible enthusiasm is at the heart of much
of the beauty of this endeavor.*

*Sally Griffin Byrd who has not only encouraged
but in many ways is responsible for me continuing
after the first year. She is also the best judge
and editor in seven counties.*

*To Bobby Summers who has given his time, energy, and
creativity towards the photographic art work.*

*Mike LaFleur and Dr. Gary Stretcher who support and
encourage in ways too many to count,*

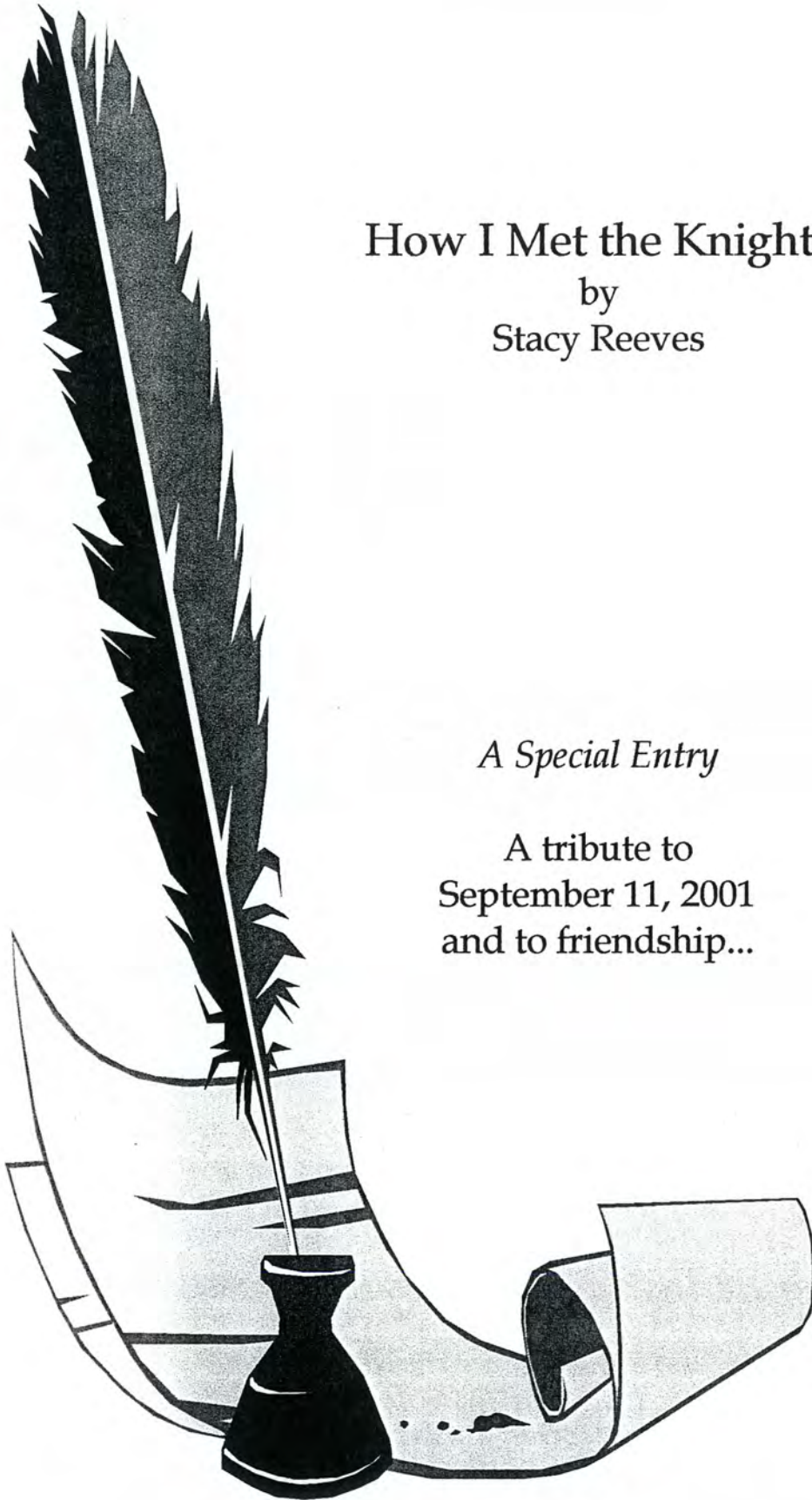
*To Our Students who open up their hearts and to
Tim,
always there to help in any way.....*

Peggy Gene Knight

How I Met the Knights
by
Stacy Reeves

A Special Entry

A tribute to
September 11, 2001
and to friendship...



For one reason or another, we usually don't pay much attention to the people on the elevator with us. Some of us welcome those few minutes of quiet to mentally sort through the 50 million things we still have left to do that day. Others of us realize that starting a meaningful conversation in that short of a time is certain to end awkwardly. What *do* you do when the two of you are not quite through talking and one of you has reached their destination? Cut them off abruptly and let the door close in their face, mid-sentence? Or, do you continue talking, get off with them at their floor and follow them around until you're finished, giving the appearance of a very lonely person or possibly, a stalker? And, still, there are those of us who just smile politely, make room for passengers getting off and one, and wait in uncomfortable silence, all the while staring intently at the flashing numbers at the front of the elevator as if they were the most fascinating things we have ever seen, wondering why it is taking so long.

But, I remember Mr. and Mrs. Knight.

I walked into Ms. Rudd's English Composition class one morning and overheard the guy on crutches saying something about a big explosion somewhere. He sat across the room from me, and I didn't know him all that well. He had a dry sense of humor, so I thought he was kidding around. Even though I felt kind of silly questioning him, I asked if he was joking. He said, no, he wasn't; that it was on the big screen t.v. in the student center. I had a few minutes left before class started, so I hurried to the other building for the second floor.

I don't really remember if Mr. and Mrs. Knight were already on the elevator or not when I got on, like I said, we don't pay too much attention. And, I didn't really recognize them, although, I'm sure we had passed each other

dozens of times on the campus. Although there were an endless amount of explanations for why they would be on the elevator at that time, I had the impression that they had also already heard the news and were on their way to verify it, too. Curiosity overcame my shyness and I asked them if they had heard about what happened. And, no, they hadn't. So, I gave them as much of the information that I had gotten a few minutes earlier: that some big building somewhere around New York was on fire and that maybe it was because a plane had accidentally run into it. Then, we finished the ride in silence.

Since then, I see Mr. Knight around campus all the time and his wife sometimes, too. That one minute exchange that took place in the elevator on September 11, 2001 has formed some sort of a bond between the Knights and myself. Every time we pass on campus we say hello; genuinely interested in how the other is doing - even on the elevator.

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Memories of Grandmother

**By
Lavinia Roy**

Description ~ People ~ First Place

Memories of Grandmother

by
Lavinia Roy

As I let my mind settle, I remember a grandmother to us and a mother of ten. She was an active church goer and very out-spoken to some who knew her. My grandmother was a very classy lady with neatly ironed shirts and ankle-reaching flared skirts. The silver streaks in her hair were entangled with curls and always intact. Looking at her wrinkle-free face, one would not know that she was a senior. She wore glasses for her impaired vision. However, that never stopped her from her daily routine. Her walk had a little swing to it, as if she owned the town. This beautiful dark complected woman had a face to remember, and a smile that was unforgettable. I should know. I have that same smile. My grandmother was the so-called sheriff in our family. That meant punishments and lessons to be learned came from her and not our own parents. All family functions were held at her home, simply because her home was bigger, and that was the way she wanted it. She was everything any child or grandchild could ask for.

However, when her health failed, things would never be the same. After her stroke, she became more dependant on her children and her husband to take care of her. This was very frustrating for her because she was always used to doing things herself. This vibrant woman with so much life to live had little life left. This wonderful woman with a walk that could stop traffic was now confined to a bed. She was unable to do the things she loved, and firm words that were spoken to us when we were being unruly children, were now slurred and barely

understood. Her illness had taken a toll on her body as well as her mind. At the end, she could no longer function on her own. She did not have the ability to hold her loved ones. Her lifeless body was clinging to hopes that her life would somehow be as it was before. That would never happen, as she never left the place where she lost herself. When God called her home, all we did was wish that she were still here. We came to realize that she was restless and ready for her reward. None of us will ever forget her, and no one can ever replace her.



Remembering Grandmother
by
Chanetta Dickerson

Description ~ People ~ Second Place

Remembering Grandmother

by
Chanetta Dickerson

Those things that my grandmother taught me will be with me forever. Even though it has been years since my grandmother passed away, sometimes I have to pinch myself because some memories seem so real.

It's the middle of December, very cold outside. Na is sitting in her rocking chair with her head of jet-black hair hanging down covering her chest, her hands folded together resting upon her multicolored house dress with a button missing in the middle; every so often she lifts her head complaining about her aching bones due to arthritis. The house smells of freshly baked sweet potatoes and mothballs, the sound of the "Price is Right" echoes throughout the house, and the voice of my grandfather yells out at the television "Bid twenty-five thousand."

My grandmother was a woman of character. She believed in God, and she didn't believe in telling a lie. She spoke her mind and would never let a soul pass her without speaking. Anytime I needed to talk she was ready to listen.

Every year for the holidays my grandmother made sure everything was prepared. The dining room table was set with all her fine china and silverware, extra sets at the side in hands reach just in case they were needed. We had to make sure everything was in the right place and all the napkins were ironed. Even though I hated doing this every year, I knew how important it was to her.

Once the table was set, my grandmother then called me to the kitchen to help prepare the holiday meal. She would sit at her 1970's table surrounded by five different chairs and the sixth one leaned up against the pea green wall of the kitchen. There she sat telling my grandfather and me what to do. The holidays were the only times we were allowed to use what she called her "good pots." To me they looked like the worst of them all.

It has been several years since grandmother passed away and still to this day I can smell her. I wake up sometimes hearing her yelling out to me to get up and get ready for school. Sometimes I can even taste her tea remedy that she would give us when we were sick. Memories are not all that I have of my grandmother, but all that she has taught me will remain with me until I leave this earth.



A Picture to Remember

by
Tiarra Bob

Description ~ People ~ Third Place

A Picture to Remember

by
Tiarra Bob

My grandfather always reminds me of the hard times "back in my day." I never really understood all of this until the day I looked through some of the photos he had. The photos were falling apart and really rusted. As I looked through this photo album, I came across a few pictures that really caught my eye.

One of those pictures was one my grandfather had from when he was in his 40's. This picture revealed him helping to build a store called Alford's Supermarket. My grandfather was a hard working man, and when everyone was at rest, he was still going. He was a contractor. This picture shows him standing next to Jonnie Alford, store owner and Rep. Jack Brooks. One thing that really stood out to me is that he was the only black in the picture. He was one of the three black men who were noticed in The Texaco Star magazine back in the 1960's. There is a paragraph that tells about his life. My grandfather was brought up in Washington, Louisiana, and went into the Army where he learned to drive trucks. My grandfather and grandmother had very little, but my grandfather used what very little education he had and went to work as a truck driver. At the age of 52, he formed a company called Mid County Dirt Pit. This blessing got him a page in the Texaco Star Magazine.

All of this was very meaningful to me because I grew up in the 80's, and there were no hard times. I received what I wanted, no questions asked. I never cared to ask my mother about when she was young; now I know.

As I aged I discovered more from talking and from pictures I found on my own. My grandfather came a long way. He was one that took a blow and kept on trucking.

What I've grown to understand about these pictures and my grandfather was that I admired the fight in him. Although he was the only black, he was going to show his people that it doesn't matter about color. If you love what you do, that's all that should matter. My grandfather had little education and all he knew growing up was to help his family. Out of five, he was the only boy. My grandfather, Mr. Roulton Veazie, worked hard for what he got. Though life wasn't easy, he survived. What I will always remember about these pictures is that my grandfather loved what he did, and if you love what you do then do it and do it well.

Honorable
Mention

Description

People



A Memory

by
Vera A. Breaux

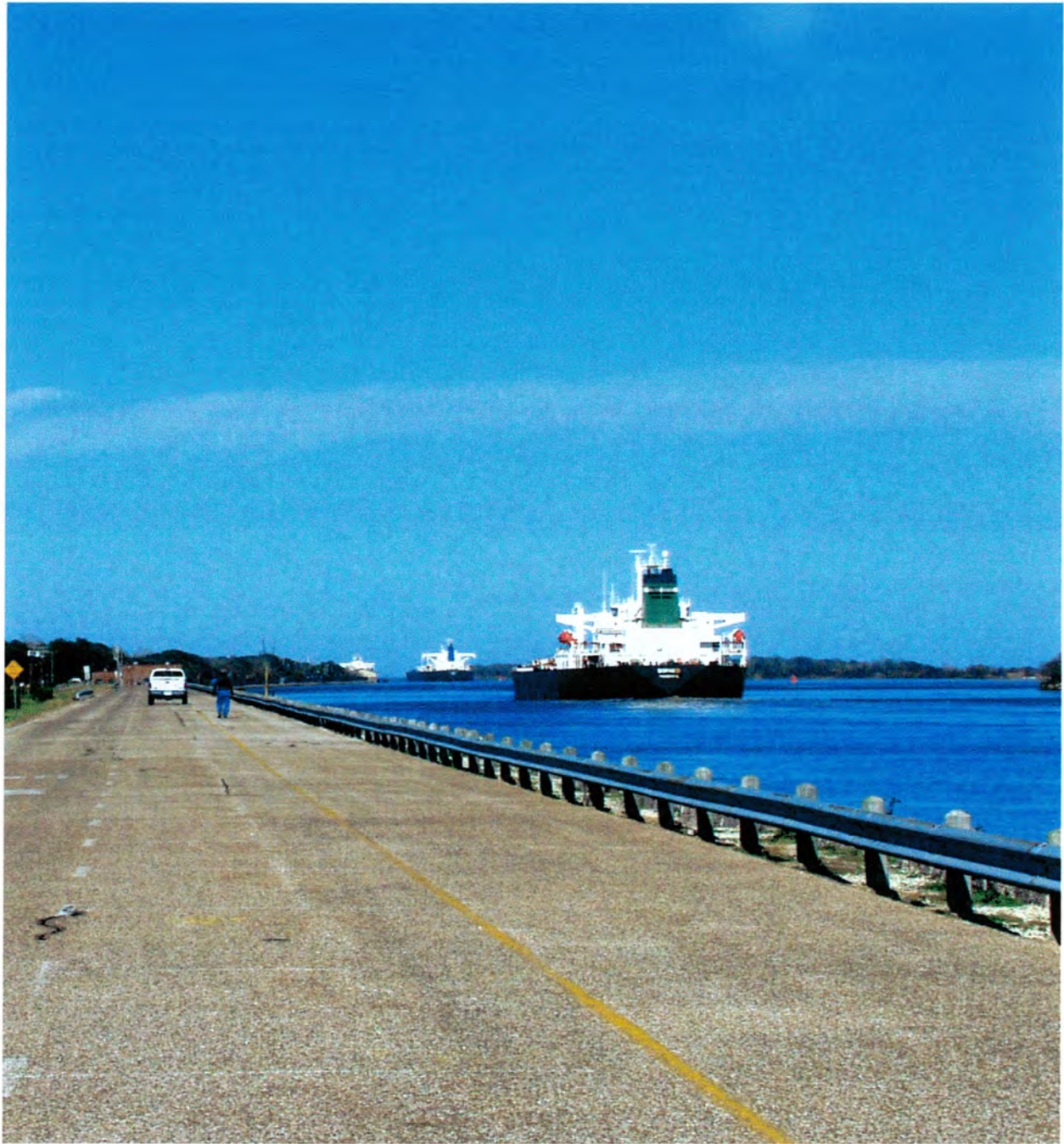
I would like to share my fondest memory of my grandmother. My grandmother was born in 1902 in April. She was a full-blooded Cherokee Indian. Her skin was light brown as a coconut, she had long black hair that ran down her back, and it was the color of coal, the type of coal that a diamond could be found in. Her hair and skin were as soft as soapsuds, and cotton.

Her skin and hair smelled of fruit, like fruit salad, the aroma of sweet berries that you could taste if you had eaten any type of strawberries, blackberries, and grapes. Her voice was low and meek, with a little sassiness. When she she spoke, you would have to cut everything that was loud off, like the television and radio so you could hear what she was saying. She spoke fair English, but not as well as her children and grandchildren. She was about 5'9" tall, and she weighed about 250 lbs., and was of a medium build. Her lips were already outlined in dark brown about the color of bark on an oak tree. Her eyes were light brown as the color of a pecan tree. She had long eyelashes, and she wore no type of perfume.

When I was little girl, I remember her in the kitchen cooking. She would have all four burners in flames with everyone of them covered with a pot. The oven would be on and the house heated from the kitchen. Although she had arthritis, she continued to make cakes with her large knuckles and wrinkled hands. Her feet were like brass, stern and flat to the ground with no arch.

Her legs and arms were soft as a rose petal. I noticed around her calves and under her upper arm the skin wasted away from age. As she would stir the cake mix in the bowl, the skin would shake.

In conclusion, although my grandmother is a faded memory, the most radiant feature I can recall about her was her high cheekbones. When she smiled, they would raise up to her eyes. Her teeth were even aligned in order and shone brightly as a cultured pearl necklace.



Peace Maker
by
Donisha Lewis

Description ~ Places ~ First Place

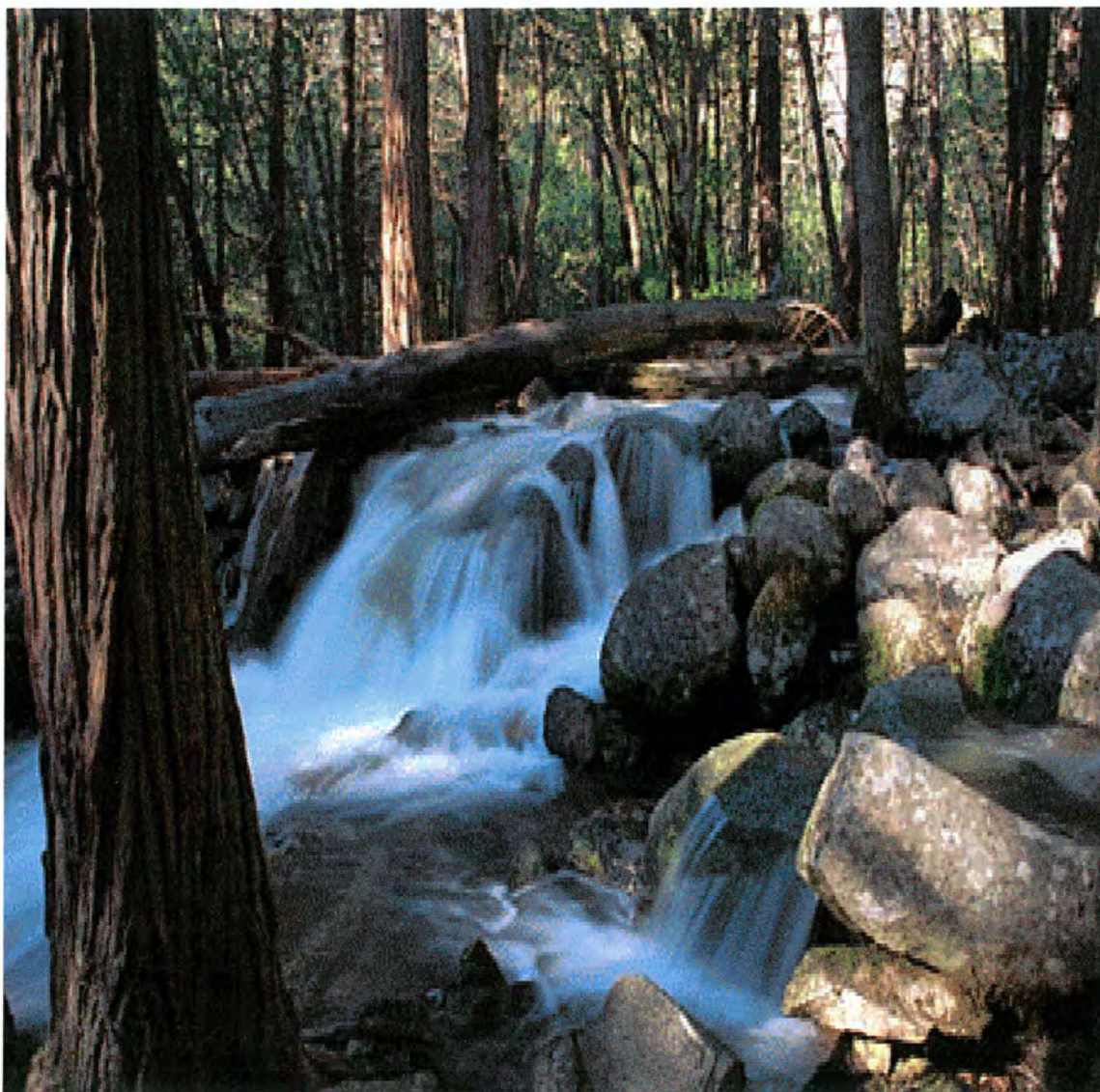
Peace Maker

by
Donisha Lewis

My favorite place is the seawall. I like to walk it for exercise, but also for the pleasure. The area is so peaceful. When I walk, my mind is calm, and I feel free of problems. All my stress is relieved throughout the walk on the seawall. Whenever someone makes me angry at home, I take off to my destination, the seawall. I live two blocks from it. The problem solver is close to me, which is great because all I have to do is walk to relaxation. The seawall is my peacemaker.

The rocks are great to relax on. I sit there looking at the sky with birds flying over me. I close my eyes, imagining that I am flying along with them being free from the world. No one can interrupt this experience because I let the seawall take over my mind. I love that environment. Ships pass by with their workers waving at me as if I were their closest friend. The waves rise after the ships pass. Then the water is calm with the sea animals underwater looking for food. People walking by greet me and keep on exercising.

I love to study on the seawall because it is so quiet. There isn't anyone around interrupting me. I may be doing my homework, and my mind drifts off in thoughts of the peacefulness. Yet, I can concentrate completely on schoolwork. The peaceful area satisfies my needs.



My Secret Place
By

J. L. Gillespie
Description ~ Places ~ Second Place

My Secret Place

by
J. L. Gillespie

On my thirteenth birthday I discovered a mystical area deep within the forest behind my childhood home where a small grove of majestic long-leaf pine trees adjoined a winding creek flowing with crystal clear water.

I became enchanted by the serene sound made by the wind softly passing through the tops of the trees and occasional chattering from distant squirrels. I often visited my secret place to lose myself in the tranquil surroundings where my thoughts were evaluated, and my dreams were flamboyant. I would lie face-up under the canopy of trees carpeted with layers of rich brown pine straw while gazing at the distant clouds as they slowly drifted across a pale blue sky. The soothing breeze of fresh air scented with hints of pine, honeysuckle blooms, and the aroma of clean compost was always cool in the protective shade of the huge trees.

Sometimes I would stroll along the creek bank with its patches of soft velvet-like green moss to watch the colorful sun perch swimming in the translucent water. When I waded into the cold creek, I could feel tingling sensations as the current swept the dislocated sand over my feet. If I stood still too long, a brave little fish would dart out from its hiding place to nip gently on one of my toes.



The Kitchen
By
Aquita Freeman

Description ~ Places ~ Third Place

The Kitchen

by
Aquita Freeman

The kitchen from my childhood was a walkway between the den and the living room. It was baby blue like sky in the afternoon on a cloudless day. The kitchen was a nice size, not too small, and not too big, but with just enough space for my mother, grandmother, and aunts to work in for the holidays without bumping into each other. On Thanksgiving, the kitchen was full of laughter and brewing spices. I always loved the smell the kitchen brought on Thanksgiving. The sweet smell of turkey, sweet potato pies, upside down cakes, and so many other delicious dishes always filled the kitchen.

When first entering the kitchen to the left, there was an iron counter full of things like cookie jars, bread boxes, artificial cows, and Coca Cola classic jars. My father sometimes left his medication and vitamins on the counter. On the wall over the counter were my mother's favorite cooking utensils. They were wooden, and there was always a spot missing on the rack, which was the spot for my mother's spatula; it usually stayed in the dish rack next to the sink. The sink was also iron like the counter. Sometimes it would leak, and my father would try to fix it; but he would always have to call a plumber over to help him. I always knew the plumber would fix the sink without my father's help, but I prayed along with my father.

Above our sink was a window with the panels painted in blue, sometimes white, or whatever color my mother would paint it when she called herself

redecorating. Out of this window I could see directly into my next door neighbor's kitchen window or vice versa. The refrigerator in the kitchen was right across from the sink facing the living room. Sometimes I think my father placed it there so that he could monitor who went in the refrigerator. Across from the refrigerator was the off-white gas stove. There I tried to bake cakes from scratch that tasted so bad my dog wouldn't eat them. The stove also kept us all warm during the ice storm, January of 1998.

We had lots of cabinets in our kitchen, also blue sometimes white. They were full of plates with red and black flowers circling the top of them, and some were just plain white. There were also a tremendous number of cups in the cabinets; some were glass with little blue berries circling the top of them. Some were plastic of all kinds of colors. My favorite plastic cups were the blue ones. The floor in the kitchen was filled with baby blue and red flowers; which followed a certain pattern; no matter which way the floor curved, they never fell out of sync.

I mostly liked the bar that sat in the back of the kitchen that connected the den to the kitchen. I remember when my cousin and I played like bartenders mixing cocktails, and margaritas out of water and kool-aid. Sometimes we would climb into the deep freezer that sat next to the bar to see how long we could stay in there. However, now we've moved out of that house. I've never been back there since we moved. I've heard the new owner of the house has made many changes to the kitchen, but I will always remember it the way it was back then.

Honorable
Mention

Description
Places



Peace in the Kitchen

by
Patrick Harris

Mom's kitchen was about as engineered as she was. She spends about sixteen hours out of each day in that kitchen. Most of the time she is standing over the stove stirring a pot with one hand, while wiping the stove edges with the other. She was always scanning the area of the room searching for anything that might be out of place. I bet that she could get first place in the department of order and neatness. As she walks a few paces to the sink, she sighs with a smile as she looks over the little farm animals on the window sill. It is as if she knows each one of them by name. At times she whispers a few words to them and then pauses as if waiting on a response. I often tease her, by saying to her that when she dies, I will make sure they bury her in the kitchen.

My sister often says that our mom finds peace and serenity in the kitchen. The pictures of fruits on the wall, the glass figures of animals, and the sparkles on the linoleum floor all seem so real to my mother. When the rays of sunlight vanish from the window and the light of day grows dim, my mother retires for the evening with the look of peace and satisfaction. When morning comes the next day my mother's daily routine begins once again.

My Mother's Kitchen

by
Cynthia M. Rogers

Coming up was the best time of my life. The times I can remember best were spent in my mother's kitchen. I still picture myself by the sink looking out the window facing Ninth Avenue, with the wind blowing through my hair. Running through the kitchen I could smell the food coming from the many pots on the stove. My sister and brother were always in the kitchen. My grandmother would be up early in the morning getting our breakfast ready, while also preparing our dinner for the evening meal. The aroma of hot donuts would fill the entire house. The floor was made with brown and gold tile. The cabinets were the color of a sunny California sandy beach. The stove, and icebox and freezer were all a matching white and black trim. One of the things my mother loved most about her kitchen was her built-in china cabinet where she placed her best glassware, and silverware.

At the time there was only six of us living in the house before my mother had my other siblings. My sister also remembers waking up to the aroma of breakfast. We remember my grandmother preparing homemade donuts, and how we used to run to eat the raw dough. Also, my grandmother fixed our hair at the stove. Those were the good days I can remember. My best memory of all is my grandmother standing in the kitchen preparing her famous donuts made with tender loving care.



Devastated in '64

By

J. L. Gillespie

Narrative ~ First Place

Devastated in '64

by
J. L. Gillespie

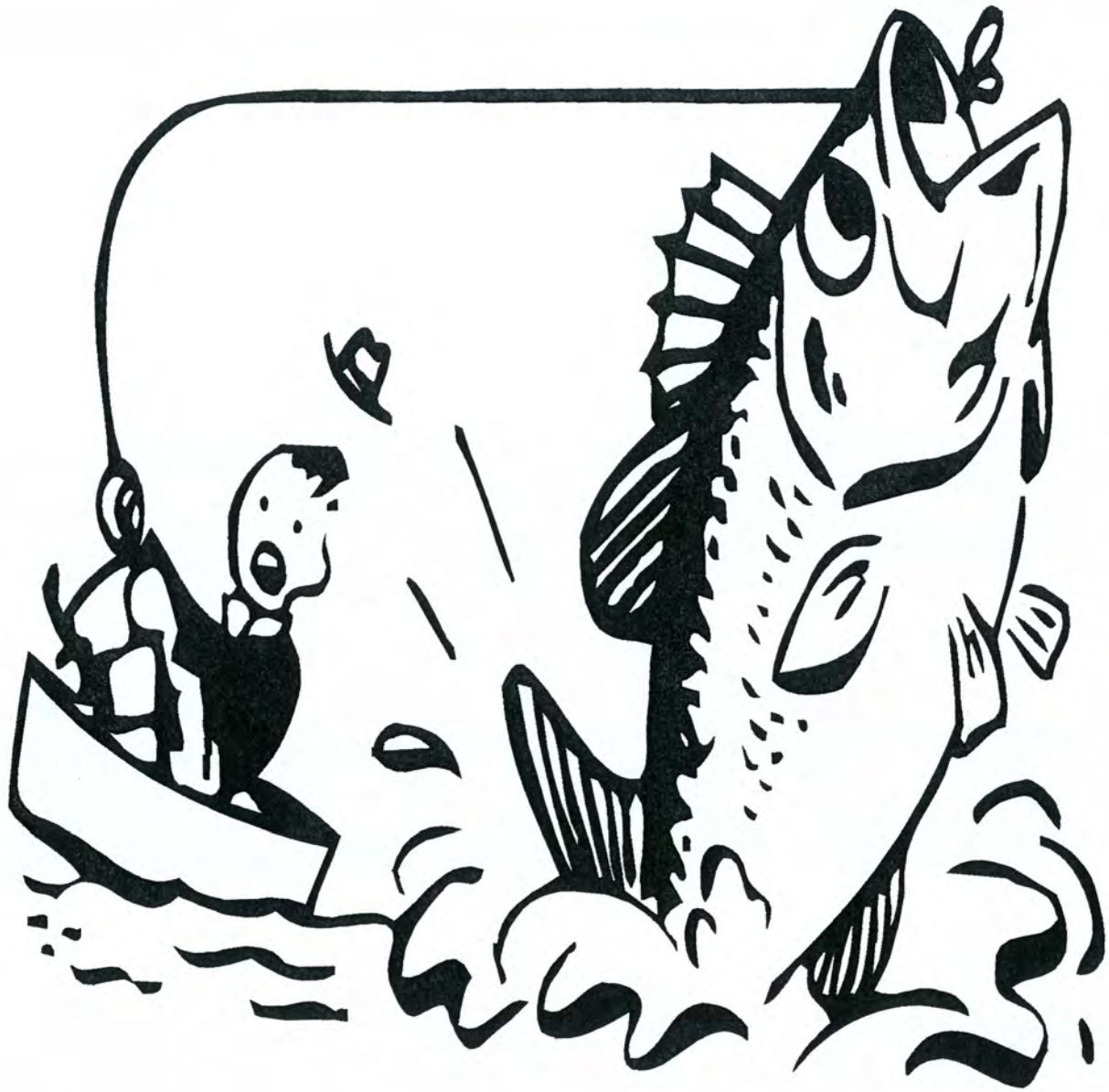
I had lived with Papa and Mama, my grandparents and legal guardians, from the time I was two months old. Life seemed to revolve around Papa with everything interlocked and balanced. On Saturdays, and sometimes on Sundays after Sunday School, my grandparents' friends would gather at our home, bringing dishes of food, musical instruments, and children. Throughout the day there would be joyous sounds of laughter, singing, and children playing on the front lawn. I was only twelve years old when those wonderful, carefree days ended. My grandfather died unexpectedly in 1964.

Papa's wake, or "setting up" as it was sometimes referred to in certain southern areas of Louisiana, was in the living room of our home. There was no laughter to be heard in the somber room overflowing with mourners and flowers dedicated to the dead. An occasional barely audible moan would escape from someone's confined sorrow. I would often walk along the graveled red dirt road near our home praying for a miracle, and then, I would return to Papa's side. I would gently touch his cold, non-pliant pale hands. I would watch for a sign that God had heard and answered my prayers. I would tell Papa that I loved him, that I didn't want him to go.

The morning after the funeral, while sitting at the breakfast table, I saw Papa's empty chair. It was as if I was being smothered when reality finally dawned on me. I began to cry. I cried until my chest felt as if it would collapse. My soul continued to weep long after there were no more tears to shed.

I was overwhelmed with grief, which rendered me helpless, feeling betrayed and forsaken.

A multitude of people were devastated in the year 1964. Soldiers were dying in Viet Nam. Hippies were dying from drug overdose. Three civil rights workers were murdered in Mississippi. The race riots in Harlem and in other cities were claiming the lives of innocent victims. The world was not aware of the death of my grandfather, which occurred two months past my twelfth birthday. His passing and being forced to experience the difference between sadness and unrelenting sorrow devastated my life.



The Bass King
By
Patrick Harris

Narrative ~ Second Place

The Bass King

by
Patrick Harris

My Mother smiled with disbelief as she described the details of the family fishing trip. Father was the center of quite a hilarious evening. She seemed to be absent from the present reality as she went back to that day of fifteen years past.

“Oh, your dad was something else,” she would say. His lack of patience wouldn’t allow him to sit still as the fish were jumping all around his line. Not one of those fish would take his bait.

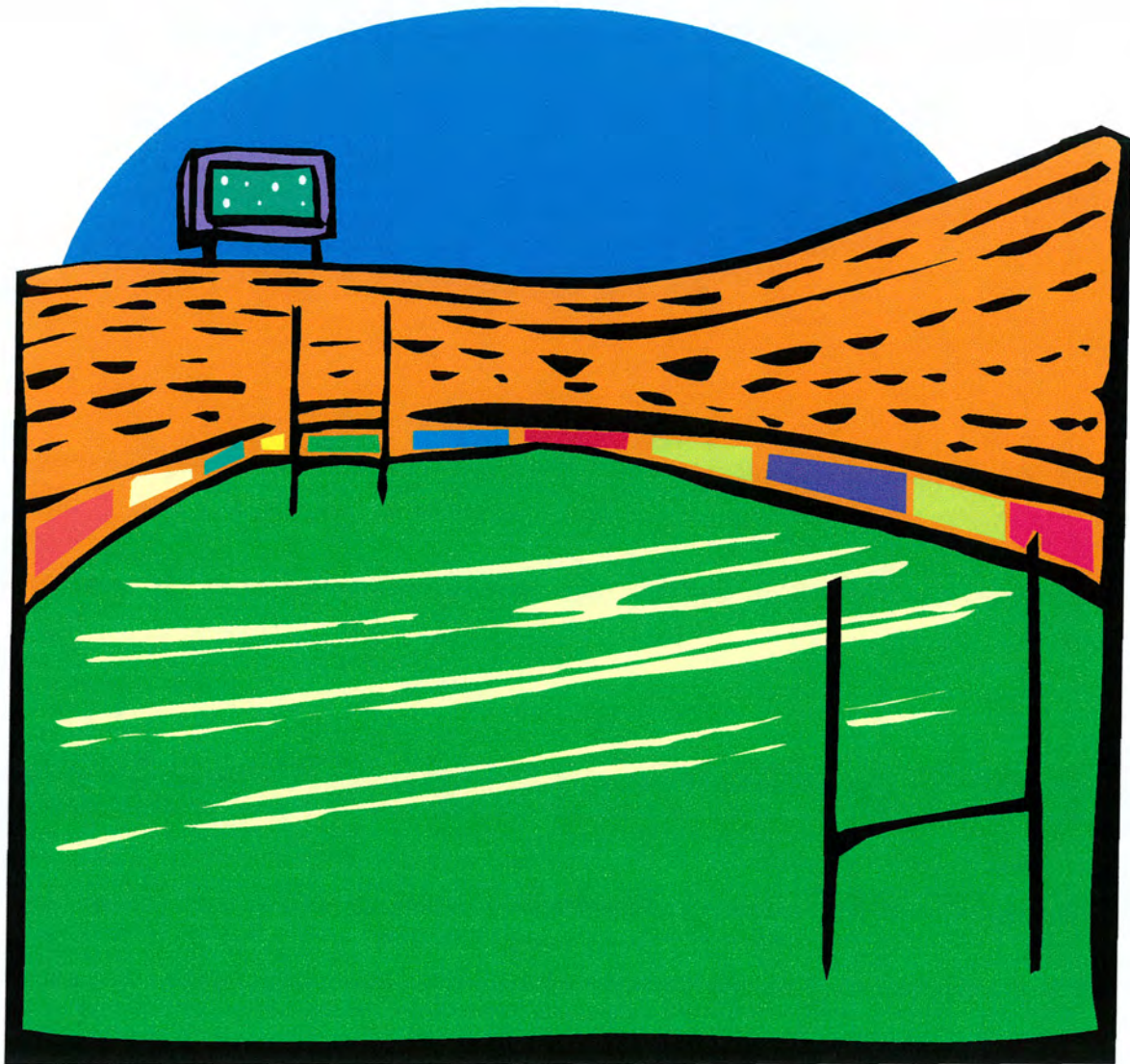
Mom found it quite funny as she told of how Dad would mumble something in disgust. She said it was as if the fish were teasing and taunting him. Mother would pretend she was attending to my sister and me to keep from laughing.

“Dad would change his bait at least every five minutes or so,” she said, “as if to make a fresher appetizer for the fish.” She figured he would, at some point, take a look along the bank of the lake to see that no one else was catching fish either.

“Your Daddy figured if anyone would pull in the big one, it would be he. His eyes gazed over the water as if to locate the exact spot the catch would be made. He paced a few feet this way then a few feet that way. He’d cast his reel this way and before the hook settled on the bottom, he’d reel it and cast it in that way.” Mother said the fish were too busy jumping and playing instead of eating. She said that once they got tired of playing, they would eventually stop to eat.

"Dad, she said", was set in his ways. He wanted what he wanted and he wanted it now!

Oh, Daddy was one of a kind. I couldn't believe my ears when mother told of how she'd become curious when she noticed Dad unlacing his shoes. Next, he emptied his pockets, and before she could ask any questions he'd jumped into the lake. He'd walked intently along the edge of the bank, parting the weeds as if fish were hiding under them. All at once he raised his arms above his head to thrust his hands into the water. As his hands resurfaced, Mom witnessed the most beautiful fish she had ever seen. She said the fish must have weighed every bit of ten pounds. Ever since that day Dad labeled himself "The Bass King."



A Lie Well Told, or Not

**By
Chanetta Dickerson**

Narrative ~ Third Place

A Lie Well Told, or Not

by
Chanetta Dickerson

It was Friday, October 28, 1993, our Homecoming game which was the game of the year, Jeanerette Senior High School vs. Franklin High School. Our two teams had not played each other in seven years, and everyone was excited because not only were they rival schools, so were our towns. Everyone was going to this game, and I wasn't going to miss this game for anything, not even a bad report card.

Today was the day of the big game and also report cards came out. That part I wasn't too happy about because my grades weren't good, and I knew if my parents saw my grades they would punish me, and I would not be able to attend the big game. I had to tell a lie or change my grade. Instead of taking the chance of changing the grade and getting caught, I told my parents that my teacher hadn't passed out our cards yet and that maybe we would get them on Monday. They believed me and allowed me to go to the game.

7:00 pm, and it was kick off time. Bleachers were filled on both sides, the sound of the Tiger band echoed in the field, the smell of freshly popped popcorn scented the air, the best tasting corndogs in Louisiana pleased the taste buds of my tongue, while I felt the presence of adrenalin rush through my body due to great excitement of the game. I watched and cheered my team on. I was like a little kid at Christmas time, full of energy. Seconds were left; and it looked like Jeanerette had won, and it was time for me to head home. When I walked into the house, my parents were waiting for me with my report card in hand.

My father asked me about the game, handed me my card and told me to explain. I did. My parents then punished me, and I wasn't able to attend anymore games or school activities until I improved my grades. I apologized and went to my room.

Because of a lie I told, I was punished for awhile and missed out on a lot of activities that year. As I look back on this experience, I realize that it was wrong then and it is wrong now to tell a lie. With every lie there are consequences we must face regardless if the lie was a little white one or if it was a big fat one.

**Honorable
Mention**

Narrative



These Hands of Mine

by
Husaan Abdull

I am all alone in this deep, dark, cold, and dreadful cell whispering to my hands, since they seem to be the only friends that I have, contemplating on the murder my hands committed. The FBI labeled the case as the world's most horrific murder since the crucifixion of Jesus. However, since I am a non-believer in the existence of Jesus, my murder was the first of its kind. I felt relieved from the pain and torment that I had to endure as a child. Growing up with only my mother was like hell, since my father left us when I was twelve. Life was hard, and it had a major effect on my mom. She was devastated and had fallen into a black hole state of depression. Being depressed caused my mother to take on a life of crime; prostitution had become like a day job for her. She said, "It was fast and easy cash, doing something she loved best." At night she sold drugs and had illegal gambling games being played in our basement. During her traumatized stage, she would have denied any allegation by our neighbors about me being neglected. In actuality I was not only being neglected and abused, my mind was being corrupted and my heart was being desecrated. There were many cold and lonely nights when I cried by myself and to God asking him why? Why should he let me be deprived of a healthy and prosperous future? I questioned myself and God many times and came to a conclusion that there was no God, and I finally lost my faith. From that day forward, God was exiled from my mind, body and soul.

Thirteen years have passed since I lost my faith in God. I've now followed my mother's footsteps and turned to a more drastic but quite exhilarating life of crime. My frame of mind had changed tremendously, and I had a whole new outlook about the world. Everyday I fell into deep meditation about suicide and often took part in some satanic rituals. Going down a path of total darkness was my new found interest. I started robbing, stealing, and taking drugs. Life became so sweet with pure evil surging through my veins.

There was only but one thing missing from my evil list of destruction and that was taking the life of another human. Voices in my head were telling me to Kill, Kill, Kill, while I looked down at my hands, which had total control over my life and fate. There were many endless days and nights where I would be on the prowl for my victim, acting as if I were a powerful lion in a jungle. However, my prey couldn't be just any ordinary person; it would have to be someone who was pure, innocent, and free of sins. My victim would be someone who highly believed in God, more like a priest, nun, or better yet a child.

There he was, so gentle and innocent playing in the yard alone. He looked like he was about seven years old. I stared at him for about an hour, watching his every move. In an instant my prey was found. Innocence became me, innocence became my mission, innocence became my prey. My victim was innocent, a God fearing child. As I watched him, I saw love from both of his parents as they came outside to check on him. The next day I watched as they prepared him for Bible Study. I watched him as he, with a heart pure as gold, shook hands and hugged the pastor of his church.

Every battle needs a place, and if innocence started with God then it should be taken in God's house.

These hands of mine were yearning for the blood of an innocent. The hands of mine were yearning to take a life. "That's it," my hands said to me as I clinched my fists. Forget preparation, forget meditation, patience has no virtue over my hands. My hands are my fate.

Sunday morning was the day. My hands told me to get up, my hands forced me to drive to his church; innocence was in the air. I sat in the very front aisle of the church to the right side of the pastor's podium. As I sat there, I saw the child standing in the choir loft behind the pastor's pulpit. After an hour, my patience began to wither away. Before I knew it, it was time.

As the pastor called everyone down from the choir loft to end church service with the benediction, I walked to the pulpit and stood behind the boy. I waited with all the evil and hate for God and innocence until the final moment when everyone said together "Amen." At that moment with a smile on my face as I stared at the crucifix mounted from the ceiling of the church, I grabbed the child and with the other hand I sliced his neck. With innocence in one hand and death in the other, my hands had completed their mission. With all the pleasure I've received from doing so much evil, I can't help but wonder if I'm the Antichrist?

Lying

by
Candy Hayes

As I was growing up, my mom taught us that lying was the devil talking through us. It seemed like he used me to his fullest advantage one afternoon. I was a freshman at West Brook High School taking French. Now this was the first time I ever tried to speak a different language other than English. My teacher was Mrs. Sutton, and sometimes we called her Bruses Sutton. She would always have bruises on her arms and legs, and every time we would ask her about them, she would tell us weird lies. For example, she fell off the porch, or the elevator closed on her arm, or she didn't know how they got there. I really felt sorry for her at times, but if she was getting beatings from her husband, she really didn't want any help.

She was very old and strict on us all the time. French was so hard for me, but I think it was because I did not want to study. She would always get on me in class for not paying attention or talking too much or not pronouncing the words correctly. She stayed on my case constantly about those things. At first I thought she really didn't like me because she knew that I didn't need that class, and I didn't take it seriously like I should have. It wasn't long before the three week progress report was out, and mine didn't look good at all. She wanted to have a talk with my mother and discuss my behavior in her classroom.

Now my mother never had to worry about me or my behavior in school until now. She would not be pleased if she got that note telling about me acting like that in school.

So I did everything that a person in my situation would do and that was lie. Lie, Lie, Lie, Lie and Lie. I lied so well that I actually scared myself at one point. When Mrs. Sutton called, I had to be the one to answer the phone. She called about 6:30pm, in the afternoon of a Tuesday. I saw her name on the called ID and got prepared for the unthinkable. I answered it and, she asked if she could speak to Mrs. Hayes. I said, "This is she, How may I help you?" She started to talk and tell who she was, and why she was calling. "Mrs. Hayes, Candy doesn't pay attention in my classroom and will not stop talking either. I have tried to give her warnings, but they won't do. She plays with friends and the other kids can't learn because of her disruptions in the classroom. Can you help me with her and try to make her understand that this is not a game?"

Then I said, "Mrs. Sutton, are you sure that it is Candy and not someone else that sits on the side of her? I truly cannot believe that Candy would act like that in your classroom. She has always been a wonderful student with no behavior problems. I will make sure that her attitude and her behavior will change. I am truly sorry for this misunderstanding, and thank you for calling." Now, after that I thought I was for sure in the clear. When I went to school the next day, I was the perfect little angel. I did everything she told me to do, even participated in class. She started complimenting me on everything I said and did. I was so excited that I apologized to her, and I told her I would never act that way again. After that, she said, "I know you won't." I really didn't know what she meant by that, but it wasn't good. I would just die if she or my mother would find out about what I had done. So I played it smooth, and kept doing what I thought would help me. Something was up, and I could just taste it.

My mother was acting extremely weird, and I could not take it anymore. The next day in class I could tell something was up, because Mrs. Sutton was acting very funny with me by using me as an example for the class. She kept making the statement, "Look at Candy, she is a perfect student these days, because of one phone call I made to her mother." Mrs. Sutton had talked to my mother and I could feel it. My mother came to school the next day, and sat in the back of the classroom. Now, how Mrs. Sutton's room was made, a person could come in two ways. The first door was for all the students, and the second was for the other teachers. We would sneak through that door some days. The second door, I could sneak in a person and no one would notice. I guess she told my mother how to do it, so we would not see her or hear her. I was getting so tired of the good girl attitude. We started to throw paper at each other and make funny noises. Mrs. Sutton's back was to us, so she didn't see anything, or know who was doing these things, but someone else knew. Mrs. Sutton finally got tired of the noises and said something about them. Now, Mark, my classmate recognized my mother sitting in the back of the classroom. He immediately threw a piece of paper at me, but I thought it was just another piece of paper so I threw it at my other friend. After I did that, he made this loud sound, and everyone laughed. Mrs. Sutton put him out. We only had three minutes until the bell. The bell rang and everyone was out the door, but I was walking out, and I heard someone say, "Sit down and don't move." Now, I knew for sure that was my mother, and she was not happy. I turned to face her, and she had that look on her face. That look indicated that she was going to hurt me when we got home. I was so scared I just stared at her hoping she was not going to make me do anything crazy.

She didn't, and I was so happy. She took my phone for four months, and I couldn't go anywhere for those four months either.

I personally didn't care about not going anywhere, but taking my phone was like going to hell without any water or cool air. I really thought I was going to die without my phone. My phone was my life back then. My mom finally gave me back my life and freedom again. It took me a long time to gain back my mother's trust, but finally I did, and I promised myself that I would never do anything like that again.

The Fire; My Near Death Experience

by
Reynaldo Figueroa

I don't think I've ever really had a near death experience, but the closest I can say I've ever gotten to death is the day I tried to save an old couple from their burning house. It was a very breath taking experience. I would like to take a few minutes and talk about what happened that day. There are a couple of things I feel were most important that I would like to point out. For one, there was the feeling I had waked up to a fire next door. Then there was the challenge of getting into the house and getting to the couple. But my last and most important challenge was being inside facing the fires and getting them out.

Early that morning, my brother and I woke up to my mom screaming that the next door neighbor's house was on fire. At first I was very confused as to what was going on. Then it hit me that the actual next door neighbor's house was on fire. At that moment my brother and I looked at each other and knew what we had to do. We quickly jumped out of our bed and put on our shoes. We rushed out of the house and through the back yard. We jumped the six foot fence that separated the burning house from ours. Then we were there, standing face to face with the burning house.

Once in the back yard, my brother and I had to figure out how we were going to get in the house. We noticed the back door to the house was cracked open about two inches, and there was thick, black smoke gushing out. We rushed to the door and kicked it open. We could hear the voice of the lady yelling out for help.

However, through the blinding smoke, we had no idea where she was. We walked in through the kitchen feeling our way around the house hoping to find her and her husband.

Finally inside the house, with flames all around us and trying to find the couple, we were facing our biggest challenge. We were dodging the large chunks of wood falling from the ceiling. The feeling of the hot, suffocating smoke in my face gave me a feeling of fear. In the midst of all the chaos, I remembered that the man had an illness that required him to breathe with an oxygen machine. It hit me that there were tanks of gas that could blow up at any second. I really started to fear for my life at the moment. However, I knew we had to help save this couple from the burning flames. I continued to follow the ladies' voice and finally felt her hand. I could tell that she had fallen over in her wheelchair. My brother and I picked her up and felt our way back to the door. We took her outside and ran to the front window of the bedroom where she told us her husband would be. We broke the window and just as we were about to go in, a police officer arrived. He advised us to just go ahead and back away from the fire, and he took over from there.

As I recall the feeling of having to wake up to a next door neighbor's house on fire, I faced the challenge of getting into the burning house, and the most challenging thing of trying to get the couple out. I realize that all of this posed a near death experience for me. I was determined to save this couple even though I was risking my own life during the process. Surely I would repeat all of this at any given time if I had to.

A Miracle While Face to Face with Death

by
Brian Washington

Death has its plan designed and destined for everyone, and I thought that I was face to face with destiny. Although I am a strong believer in my religion, to come face to face with death brought fear. This fear was not of death but of the fact that there were so many goals that I had set and not accomplished. As I relate my story hopefully you will learn and gain a deeper value on life and also believe in miracles.

In was the summer of 2000, and I had no idea of what I was coming in contact with that summer. I had just begun a job working for Lucky 7 and was also a minister at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church. God had not only called me to be a preacher but also placed me inside of many ministries. That summer one of the ministries I was in was taking a trip to Jasper for a week, and because I was in leadership, I decided to go. I would stay in Jasper and then leave and come home every morning. However, this particular morning I was in store for something that would change my life, if not take it.

That morning when I woke up my friends told me not to leave because they felt something strange was going to happen. Nonetheless, I left anyway because I felt it was my responsibility, and so I left but deep inside something was telling me not to leave. While on my way home, the car went out of control and slid into oncoming traffic, and so I turned the wheel away from traffic, and pulled to the left and slid backwards. Once it slid, this time it went back into oncoming traffic except it was the traffic that I had just left.

My car began to turn in circles and headed for a manhole ditch, but there was nothing that I could do except to pray. Before I knew it I had hydroplaned over the ditch and landed on the road on the other side. Once it landed the car just stopped, and soon after I got out. Afterwards, I saw two hand prints on the hood of my car, and so I knew what saved me. I wanted to believe that it was a logical explanation, but I knew how it happened. It was what I believe to be a miracle.

Words could not express the fear that came over me, but all I knew was that it was not my time to go. I learned that God has a plan for my life, and there is no way that I am going to die until my job is done. Now I am trying to live my life as God has designed it because he is in control of it.



Our Vows
By
Shayla Wycoff

Special Topics ~ Life Choices ~ Poetry First Place

Our Vows

by
Shayla Wycoff

Oh my,
No more clubs
No more scrubs
No more late night creeps
No more calling him before I go to sleep
No more fake excuses
Just a lot of phone number refuses
No more flirtin'
No more short skirtin'
Oh my
I do...

Ah man,
No more Kiesha or Iesha
Not even a Felicia
No more bathroom conversations
No more hesitation
No more impressin'
No more of your stressin
No more keepin you up at night
No more tryin to make my lies right
Ah man
I do...



In The Depths of Solitude

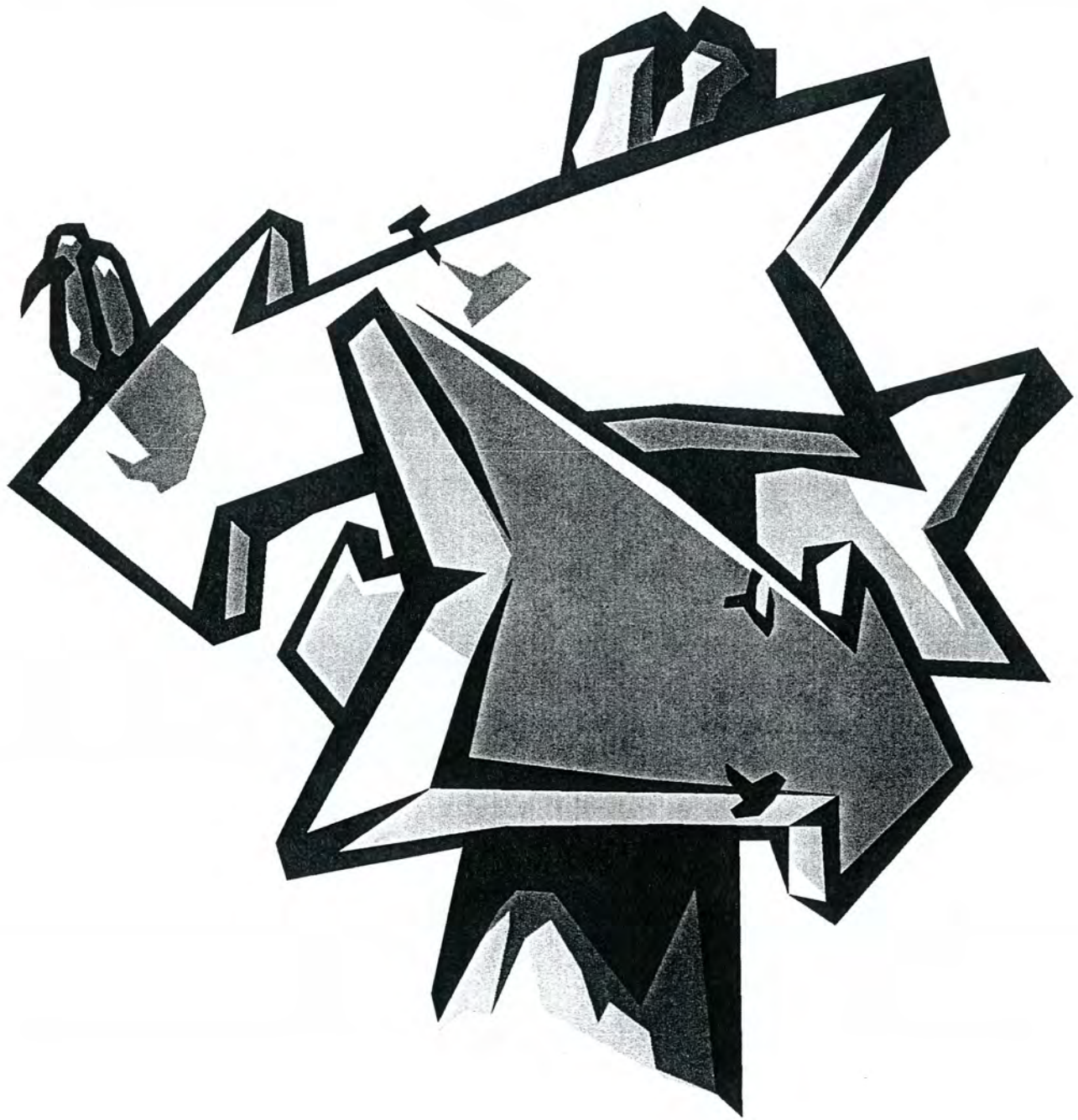
**By
John-Louis Lyons**

Special Topics ~ Life Choices ~ Poetry Second Place

In The Depths of Solitude

by
John-Louis Lyons

I exist in the depths of solitude
pondering my true goal
trying to find peace of mind
and still preserve my soul
constantly yearning to be accepted
and from all receive respect
never compromising but some times risking
and that is my only regret
a young heart with an old soul
how can there be peace
how can I be in the depths of solitude
when there are two inside of me
this duo within me causes
the perfect opportunity
to learn and live twice as fast
as those who accept simplicity.



It's A Choice

By

Dana Gonzalez

Special Topics ~ Life Choices ~ Poetry Third Place

It's A Choice

by
Dana Gonzalez

It's a choice to work.

It's a choice to sleep.

It's a choice to drink.

It's a choice to eat.

It's a choice to love.

It's a choice to hug.

It's a choice to laugh.

It's a choice to cry.

It's a choice to lie.

It's a choice to die.

It's a choice to do,
what you want to do.

Honorable
Mention

Special Topics

Life Choices

Poetry



Journey

by
J. L. Gillespie

I have journeyed through this life
Wandering without mind set or goal~
A mere whispering in the night
Aimlessly fading from young to old.

I came upon a bright path
Foreseeing selfless love I will find~
Warm eyes smiling with no past
Vanquished entrenched dark thoughts of mine.

To me happens peace in life
Happiness instills warmth to my soul~
The mere laughter of my wife
Lovingly shelters me from the cold.

What Is It?

by
Candy Hayes

Patience at first, a friendly smile.

Happy thoughts is what she thought.

Her ambitions, her goals, even her dreams.

The sadness, darkness covered, Blacker than a hundred midnights.

The crying, depression, hospital admitting.

(A deep breath, the pause).

A site of no fear, no anger, no pain.

The feeling of something warm but cold.

(It ran).

Another pouring out quicker than she would imagine. The look of
her despair.

Her ache for control, and love was far from what her eyes could see.

(It was nothing).

Everything was such a blur, she saw herself fall into a life of illness,
and not come back.

What Is It?, it is her cutting her wrist to end the life of hurt.

To Follow Him or Not

by
Elton Lynch

One Choice, Follow Him or Not to Follow Him.

He said we are more than conquerors.

We are the SALT of the earth.

We are the LIGHT of the world.

One Choice, that's all that matters.

Follow Him or Don't.

He is a vessel, waiting for lost souls.

He has created a place for you.

Follow Him.

There is one choice, Follow Him.

"How"!

Believe!

Believe in your heart that He is the Way, the Truth
and the Light.

Let Him be with You.

One Choice.

He is the Way when there is no Way.

He is the Light when there is no Light.

Let Him live in your heart and dwell in your mind.

Jesus, there is no end to your Love.

YOU ARE THE WAY.

The Warrior Codes

by
Charlie Pham

The warrior ray, is like dust to dawn
They all rise and fall
They all live and die
Warriors live by arms
So they would die by arms
All of the warriors and soldiers
Over all are a brotherhood
Nobody gets left behind
Life isn't about how long they live,
But it's about what they did in life
As warrior they fight for
Life, Liberty, and Justice
And their Honor Code; Courage
The ability to face adversity in it presence
The drive to carry on...
For whatever the reasons may be...
Nobody will understand The Warrior Code...

In Her Eyes

by
Lavinia Roy

In her eyes, to be loved was to be thin
So she could be admired by all men

In her eyes, beauty was being light skinned with long hair
with a face that wouldn't cause a stare

In her eyes, a relationship was filled with love
not empty courtships without the approval from above

In her eyes, life was complete with husband and child
not unwed with bastard children from nights of being wild

In her eyes, the world would be a better place to live
If only God had blessed her first with these many gifts.

Resurrection

by
Marco Vital

My eyes closed and the darkness began
My mind awakes but nothing in sight
No scent, no light, no wind
The feeling of abandonment and desertion
All of a sudden I see the light, hear sounds, and smell life
Thinking to myself, what happened?
Was I dreaming, or is this reality
I am confused but at the same time glad
As long as I am back.



Picture Perfect
By
Chanetta Dickerson

Special Topics ~ Life Choices ~ Prose First Place

Picture Perfect

by
Chanetta Dickerson

About twelve years ago my favorite color went from bright yellow to the darkest black, my favorite past time went from singing and dancing to sleeping.

At that time my life wasn't the prettiest picture to paint. I lived in a house that wasn't a home, the outside had no red, yellow, or purple flowers, no green grass, no singing birds, and there was no sign of life: not even when I was home. I felt as though I was in a world all of my own at night no stars and in the daytime no sun.

Faced with many decisions, and trying to work things out on my own, little did I know I was digging myself a grave six feet under and still counting. It was then I realized my painting needed a new artist.

Growing up in southern Louisiana, one thing my parents and grandparents did was made sure we attended Sunday school and church every week. As children, not knowing how important it was to be in church service every Sunday, there were only a few times a year we looked forward to going. One was singing our little hearts out in the youth chorus, and the second was finding out and acting out our parts in the Easter and Christmas play.

As I got older, I started dealing with a lot of issues including peer pressure. I had questions but no answers; knew plenty of ways to deal with these questions but wasn't sure of which way I wanted to take. Dealing with the pressure of wanting to do what all the popular kids were doing in and out of school, my parents separating and my grandmother passing away, I didn't know what to do.

Months later with still no sense of direction, no patience, and this bittersweet attitude as though it was I against the world, my grades began to dropping tremendously. I started disobeying my parents and not caring for myself, or others around me. Still mourning the loss of my grandmother, what I did didn't matter any more.

All I wanted to do was sleep. Everyday seemed like night, every smile I hated, every meal I refused, every knock at my bedroom door was unanswered, and every tear I cried burnt like hot wax to the skin. Not knowing then what I know now, I was falling into depression, and there was nothing my parents could do. This relentless feeling went on for weeks until I realized that every morning I opened my eyes, despite how I was feeling, I had been blessed with having another day of life.

I knew I had to do something because I was no longer that young lady with a smile as big as her heart, and a personality that had JOY written all over it. Confused and not knowing where to go or what to do, something had to be done or else depression would suck all the life out of me, and then it would have been too late.

One Sunday during church service, my pastor preached on, "Holding Hands With God," and for some reason I knew he was talking to me. So I stayed after service, and I had a long talk with the pastor. I told him what was going on in my life and that I felt that through the storm someone had taken my joy away. All I could remember him saying to me, "Child this too shall pass." In other words trouble doesn't last always. He also told me, I must believe, trust in God and to forever pray and then he promised me that everything would be all right. That day I took those words and put them in a place where I knew they would never be forgotten. Hearing those words brought me so much light in my view

that I needed to wear sunglasses.

That day was the day I chose to save my soul instead of burying myself alive. I believed, I had faith, I trusted in God, and I prayed and prayed and I prayed.

My days went from the darkest black to the brightest yellow; outside the birds sang my favorite song, the flowers perfumed the air, and the grass so green tickled my feet, those big smiles reflected, my tears became scattered summer rains, and there was no need to knock at my bedroom door because it was always open.

I realized that I had to live for myself and as long as I had God in my life; coming across troubled waters I knew I would be able to weather the storm.

Making the decision to put God not only in my life but first, has put me in a window that framed a beautiful picture. In my mind I know the picture I want to paint; in front of me stands an artist board with a variety of colors from the darkest black to the brightest yellow. Regardless of which colors I choose, I know that once the picture is painted it will be perfect because he, GOD, holds the paintbrush.

I have been blessed with patience, a sense of direction, and answers to many of my questions and last but not least a picture perfect LIFE.



To Overcome the Barriers

**By
Thom Nguyen**

Special Topics ~ Life Choices ~ Prose Second Place

To Overcome the Barriers

by
Thom Nguyen

At last, after twelve years of waiting my wife and I got permission to move from Vietnam to the United States of America. With my limited level of English, I am almost dumb and mute when facing the new world. So I decided to learn more English before I can work to live. I wish to enter college although many troubles I have met such as the problem of age, of finance and of my English limitations.

At the age of sixty-four, from time to time I have forgetfulness, a sign of old people. Is my mind getting rusty? Does my memory lose its ability to record? I try to surpass the obstacle, learning regularly, revising the lessons many times. My wife warned me, "You should not go to school because of your health." But I think that learning can enrich my life. In some way, learning is good for the health, in general, and for the mind, in particular.

The problem of finance may not be a big one for me. The college will accept my financial aid application and then award financial assistance to pay the fees and tuition . A part-time job will help me live economically while learning at college.

My English level is a difficult barrier for me, indeed. I am quite puzzled when using English. I am shy and thus slow while expressing my ideas. However, I believe that I can overcome it. I still remember a number of French vocabulary words I learned when I was young. It is useful to me to learn English. I also try not to let my mind be passive and lazy.

In short, I think that I can overcome the barriers I met on the road of learning. I cannot fail to integrate with the people I chose to live with. This land is my land now.



GET
OFF
THE
FENCE

By
Brian Washington

Special Topics ~ Life Choices ~ Prose Third Place

Get Off The Fence

by
Brian Washington

Many people are satisfied in the psychological, financial and carnal status that they are in. However, the condition that they are in was never designed or destined for them but because they are comfortable they never leave. In life, we have a fence that divides up our status. On one side is prosperity, on the other is failure and in the middle is average. Many people settle with average because it is safe. In my life I have made many decisions; some decisions benefitted my destiny while others damaged my fate. However, the decision to get off the fence and be prosperous and not just average came as a life changing decision.

While in a state of failure, I learned that it was my decisions that kept me from being prosperous. However, just like many other people, I blamed other people for my failures. I could never reach prosperity until I came to realize the actual truth to my situation. As I began to communicate with people residing in a life of prosperity, I became furious because I realized that the same type of life was destined for me. Nonetheless, I stayed in the state of convenience because I was happy with just barely meeting the qualifications. Life is like a cake recipe, and if you do not follow all the instructions then you will end up with failure. People would state to me that I was destined to be prosperous and desperately call me to the other side of the fence. I myself was not equipped; therefore, I remained in a state of failure. The Bible says "Whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap." If a man sows half his seeds than he shall reap half his blessing, but if a man sows all his seeds than he shall reap a harvest. It also says "to everything there is a season," but if we miss our season to plant, which is to learn

and become equipped, then we shall miss the harvest. If we plant lettuce in the winter then the seed will die; if we plant it in its season, then it shall grow.

Everything in life happens in stages. An example is a baby learning to walk. He must first take narrow steps before he truly begins to walk. After I got beyond the failures of my life, I became comfortable in being average. However, I knew that there was a more profound plan for my life, but I still was not ready for the responsibility. The reason I was not dependable was because deep inside I still considered myself a child, and so I was not ready to grow up. I learned that in evolution there is death because as we mature our old traits perish. Once a baby is born it begins development, but it is also getting closer to death than it was before birth. As I lay in my state of convenience, I learned that I could never succeed in life until I grew out of convenience and into a state of inconvenience.

I finally begin to reach out to a state of Prosperity, and this was because of a person that was placed into my life. I met a person who began to give me a reason to strive for prosperity. I learned that prosperity is not financial but mental. For we could have money and no brain or a brain and some money. Money is not what life is all about, and so prosperity can be love, peace, joy and happiness. It was convenient to be average, but it is nothing like being prosperous. In reaching out to prosperity I found things, people and love that were destined for my life.

In conclusion, I learned that prosperity is not in my pocket but in my head. Anything that I put into my mind to do, I can achieve, but I must get off the gate and root myself sturdily in prosperity. Wind may blow and storms may come, but as long I am rooted then I will stay planted. I made a decision that I was to climb the fence and reach prosperity.

Honorable
Mention

Special Topics
Life Choices

Prose



Man

by
Husaan Abdull

When we speak of the word life, we only know it as a continuing history that repeats itself.

Man since the beginning of time has been put in a position to where he has to rely on his five senses, but more so on a special gift from God called a conscience.

From childhood to an adolescent and even as an adult we go through life making choices whether good or bad. The confusion we have to endure is because of the illusion of life which sometimes blinds our vision.

We as human beings are easily misguided and misdirected because we fail to remember the essence of life is our spiritual soul.

My Future

by
Chris Landry

All I can see is my future coming toward me, like a speeding bullet train that never stops. I hope one day I can look back and say that "I did this." I know that there are going to be tons upon tons of obstacles that I will have to face in my future. I am looking forward to seeing what awaits me down my road of life. My future is waiting for me and only me to step up and claim responsibility for me; that time has come all too soon. I must claim responsibility for my own future. I have learned that no one else can. My future is awaiting my response. I know now through experience that I am the only one who can take hold. I have said before that no one can take responsibility for me.

As the days of my life pass on, I like to look at my life and see what I have accomplished so far. What I see makes me proud; it also makes me want to accomplish more. It's with this that I say "Without my goal that I have set for myself, I would be lost and would probably not know how to reach my goal." My future is what I am shooting for now. I know that it is three years until I graduate from Lamar University-Beaumont. I also know that in time when this goal is reached, I would have reached my ultimate goal.

I have also learned that good things come to those who wait. I know that in three years when I graduate as a radiologist, I will be very proud of myself. My future is the most important thing to me right now. I would put my social life after my college. Each day of college that passes by I get closer and closer to my goal. It is with this now that I say "In time my future will come to me, because I know that I would have worked every step of the way." I work toward this goal because of one reason and only one reason, it is my future.

The Good Ole Days?

By
Ashanta Nellar

Sometimes I think about living in a past time, mostly referred to as "The Good Ole Days." Would life choices be easier?

Today, social differences and morality struggles may seem overwhelming. However, choices are still choices. Keep in mind, the choices you make have a profound impact on your future. Remember that your decisions in life will set precedence in the lives of your descendants. The importance of choices may become relevant at different times in our lives.

In my case, it was not until the birth of my son that I realized what God was trying to tell me all along. Make decisions that matter. Now, the decisions I make not only affect my life, but also the extra life I was blessed with. During my times of troubled and dusty roads, I turn to God.

Sometimes answers are not so alarming through him. There are no flashing lights or horns when the message is being delivered. Be patient and the trumpets will blare within. Then we will see that even though the struggle seems endless, there is a mystical light at the end of our tunnel.

Working Hard

by
Tuyet Pham

Throughout my life, I have seen my parents work hard to make a living. I know for a fact that my family's generation was not lazy at all. My parents were not fortunate enough to go to school like us in America and because of their lack of education they had to work as shrimp workers offshore. My parents would remind us that we are lucky to be born in America and have an education and that we should take advantage of it. They would also tell us, to go to school and have career, so that we would not have a difficult future ahead of us. I do know that my dad's working atmosphere would not be a place for me because it is hard work. My dad's job is staying offshore all year long. After seeing my parents like this, I wanted to go to college. Also because of my own working experiences, I know how hard it is to earn of couple of dollars. I would hate to see myself ten years from now still waiting on tables. The reason why I go to college is because I want to have a better future, an education, and a career.

I know I would like to have the best future out there, but it all depends on me. If I can handle the real world in society today, and take it as it is and improve my skills then there's always hope for me. Even though there are things in life that are uncomfortable to see, I still move on. I don't let people step all over me to command me to do something for them. There are jobs out there that will treat me in this world like trash. I don't want to go through the things my parents are going through because of a lack of education. I would not like to jump from job to job, just until I get satisfied with what I'm doing. Sometimes my dad is offshore for a couple of weeks and we would not be able to see him

until he comes back on an unexpected day. I don't want my kids one day to go through that same process as I did. A better future for me means having an education and a career and better life for my family.

I want to have a career so I know for certain, that this is what I want to be for a long time. Switching to different jobs can be difficult and stressful. If I have a career, I know I can depend on it to pay my bills, by the things I want, and even have kids one day. Everything in this world costs money and nothing is free. For me to get a career, I have to go through college and get a degree. A career can benefit me because it helps me reduce worries about money problems. Once, I set my goals for my career, then I will be ready for the real world.

A college education can guide me to my career. Furthermore, it will increase my knowledge and skills; an education will also help me accomplish my goals. Not only will college help me with accomplishing things in life, but it will build my self-esteem and self-respect. I think that it is a good idea for everybody to go to school because most jobs require educational backgrounds. Sometimes it is difficult to find a job without a high school diploma. Without a high school diploma, people usually get stuck with a job paying minimum wages.

The future is ahead of me so I have to grab on to it before I lose it. Procrastinating will get me nowhere in life because I am being too sluggish with my future. That's why my parents are very supportive in the idea of having an education. An education can get me to a better future, career, and to improve my knowledge skills. I take my education very seriously when it comes to getting a career. I don't want to work anywhere that pays minimum wages the rest of my life. If I get paid minimum wages the rest of my life, then I won't make it anywhere.



Donny Goes to School

**By
Patrick Harris**

Special Topics ~ Life Choices ~ Narrative First Place

Donny Goes to School

by
Patrick Harris

I once knew a fellow who was very ambitious at a young age. He envisioned himself becoming a prominent lawyer, doctor, or maybe even an astronaut someday. This rambunctious boy's name was Little Donny. Little Donny was very smart. His friends often believed that he was born with lots of knowledge. Little did they know how hard he had to work during his studies at home. He loved school and even looked forward to attending each day; neither bad weather nor sickness could keep this eager little child away from school. Little Donny loved everyone, and everyone loved him as well. The people in his community loved him. The neighbors, corner store clerks, and the milk delivery guys saw ambition in Little Donny. During his elementary school years, he often boasted to his classmates that he could outscore them on exams and other class assignments, he turned studying into competition, he did very well in all of his classes. At the end of every school year, Little Donny found it very hard to keep from exploding with joy as his name was being called at the academic award banquets to come up and receive the well-deserved awards he easily earned.

The time came when Little Donny was finally ready to go on to middle school. Little Donny had never ventured outside the confines of his community. The neighborhood, the corner stores, the school, churches, and a playground was his comfort zone. As he went off to middle school in a central part of the city, he was amazed at how much bigger his new school was. He had never known that

there were hundreds of other students at this new school that he had never seen or known. With all of those new students around, Little Donny felt like a stranger in a foreign land. Some of the kids were much smaller than he, but there were others that were much bigger than he was. Little Donny was very observant. He couldn't help but notice the different attitudes and behaviors of the kids in this new school. He made a wise decision to stay away from thugs. The worst thing of all was that he noticed that he wasn't the smartest kid in school anymore. There were other kids that excelled just as much as he did, and some that excelled even more than he did. He quickly abandoned the thought of competing in school for fear of failure. He eventually adapted to the change and managed to rank in the top five to ten percentile of his middle school class.

One day while strolling down the hallway, Donny spotted a girl staring at him. She seemed to be attracted to him. He had friends of the opposite sex, but he never had time outside of his studies to actually become involved with any of them. This was love at first sight. He now managed to divide his time between studying and courting his girlfriend. He also made new friends. Some of his new friends were mild mannered, while others were unruly. Fortunately, for Donny he had enough common sense to distinguish right from wrong.

After middle school, Donny made a smooth transition to high school. His girlfriend moved on to the same high school as he did. When Donny got to high school, his grade point average was just average. Donny felt he should start spending more time with his girlfriend. Now that they were getting older, she was thinking marriage, while the dream of college was entering his mind. Obviously, their ideas for the future were headed in two different directions.

The closer they got to graduation, the more anxious and excited he became over his plans to attend college, start a career, and then get married. Donny's plans didn't quite work out the way he hoped they would.

He graduated, got married, and the dream of being a professional person was thwarted. As many years rolled by, Donny worked a decent job. Then he stopped and realized that during all of his years of working, he never included God. He later agreed that whatever his future plans may be, he would not forget to seek guidance through God Almighty. He realized that nothing in God's world happens by mistake.

Today, Donny had made his way to college. He looks to God for his direction. God has given him the strength to pursue his dream of furthering his education. After seeking and finally accepting God into his life, Donny has developed determination and drive. Donny is filled with joy, and is at peace with his life. I am Donny!



In the Balance

By

James R. Moity

Special Topics ~ Life Choices ~ Narrative Second Place

In the Balance

by
James R. Moity

It all started in the fall of 1994. I was a freshman in high school and at that time of my life everything was going great. As a freshman, I was playing on the varsity. Besides playing the sport that I loved, I was also doing well with my football team and with schoolwork. Then it happened; one day after returning home from school, I was told that my mother and father were getting a divorce. At first it didn't bother so much so I thought. Then one day my father decided to move out and establish his own place to live away from us. When that happened, it devastated me more than I had imagined. My mother noticed the change in me before anyone else. I wasn't applying myself to my schoolwork and was starting to fail my classes. At the time in my mind I didn't care, for some reason. Then everything caught up to me. Due to my failing my schoolwork, I was kicked off the football team. That hurt the most, but I was mostly hurt by my father. However I didn't care what he thought. As far as I felt, he had left us; why did he care what happened to me?

By winter of 1994, I had quit school. I started hanging around the Rock Creek Crips and doing drugs and alcohol. Doing things I shouldn't have, one night a couple of friends and I did a drive-by on a house in Groves. We had some problems with this guy and his homeboys earlier that night at Port Neches Park. It was almost 2:00 A.M., and we came up to the house. I was driving and we opened fire and let off a ton of bullets. About two weeks went by and there was no word if the police suspected anybody. On January 13, 1995, I received a

call from my friend Matt. He told me, "James, they picked up Eric today on that drive-by." The next thing I knew, I was sitting in the county jail at the bright age of seventeen. I didn't know what to expect. The jail wasn't at all what I expected. I was lonely, cold, and scared. Now imagine being in a cell with another person that's the size of a restaurant bathroom. I had finally realized I needed to do something with my time. I was charged with Aggravated Assault with a deadly weapon. My bond was set at \$300,000. I knew then I wasn't getting out anytime soon. Since I had quit school, I decided to sign up for GED classes. About this time, they transferred me to the new county jail. It was like heaven compared to where I was. It was set up like dorms with at least fifty men in each one.

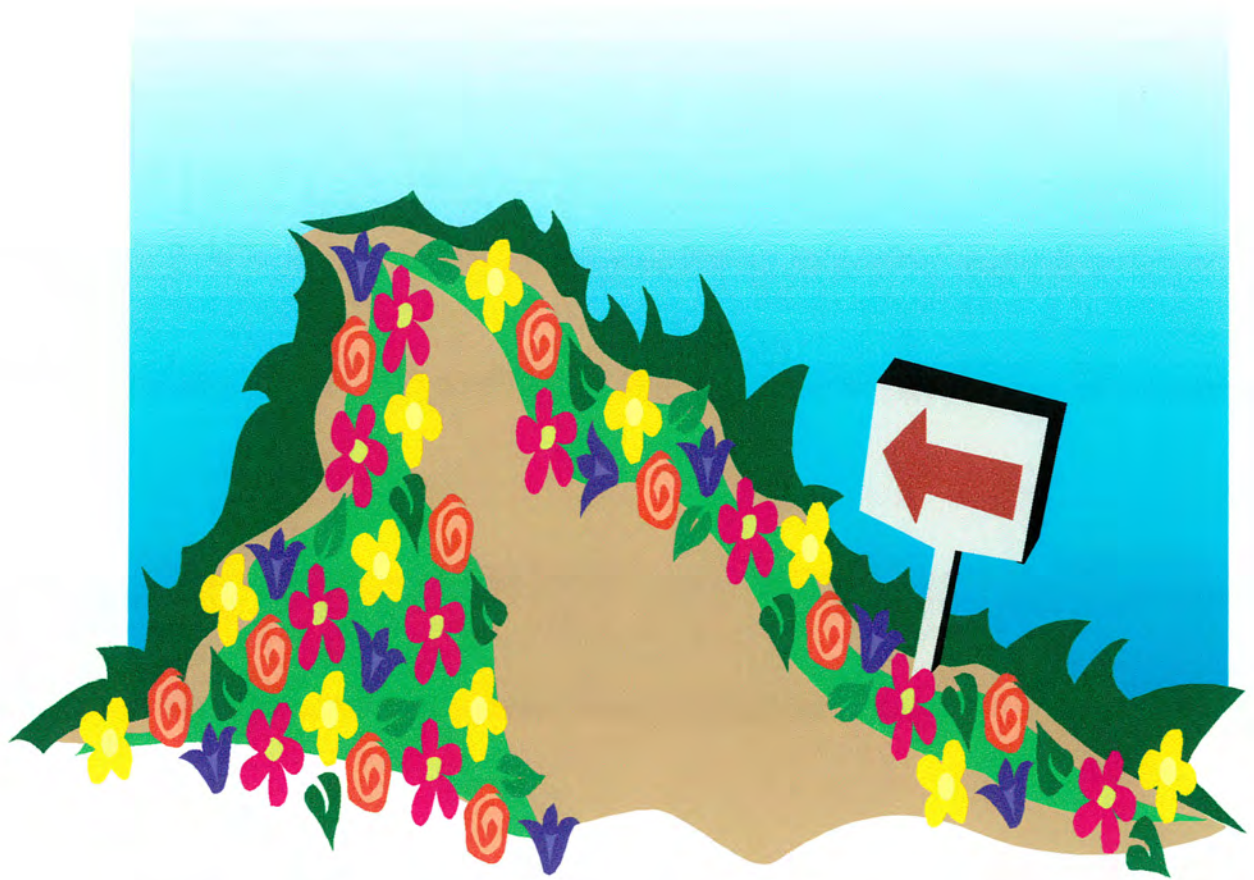
On March 25, the day of my birthday, a detective from the Groves Police Department came to see me. He proceeded to say, "James, we know you weren't the only guy that night, and we don't want to see you throw your life away. If you tell us who else was with you, we will try to get you a deal." Now I'm thinking to myself, okay, if I tell them, who's to say my family won't be harmed. Throughout this whole time, I was saying I was innocent, and that I had no clue on what they were talking about.

On April 4, I went to court and the D.A. offered me 65 years. I laughed at them, saying there was no way I was doing 65 years. At this time I turned to ask my attorney if this was the best he could do for me. He said yes, unless I worked with them. Then I proceeded to tell my attorney he was fired. My case was rested for May 26. I was appointed a new attorney, and needless to say he was a fruitcake. He informed me that the D.A. had offered 25 years, but if I talked I would only have to serve 10 years. I was sitting there wondering why would they come down from 65 to 25, which of course they never had a case to begin

with. The only evidence they had was the testimony from a well-known drug dealer, whose testimony they knew wouldn't go far with the jury. They wanted me to cop-out to the charges. I had to make a very hard decision and call my father for help. I explained to him that I needed a good attorney and asked him if he would hire one for me.

On July 25, I was given a pass to go see someone. A man named Larry Dowden was standing there. At this time I said to myself that, I couldn't believe my father came through for me. Larry explained to me that we were going to take this to trial, because they had no case on me. An hour before the trial my attorney came to me. "James, I have good news and bad news. The good news is that your daughter was born last night." When he told me that I started to cry. I had made up my mind what to do. Then he told me the bad news. "The D.A. has given you your last offer and it is up to you if you want to take it." They offered me five years in TDCJ, and I would start today. I smiled with tears running down my face. I said, "Where do I sign?" I left and did two years in the penitentiary. Once I was released, I came back home, and had to make the toughest decision of my life, which was to do better for myself, my family, and my friends. Now, I'm no longer on parole. I'm a model citizen in my community, a college student, and most importantly, a single parent to my daughter Kelsi.

So all in all I guess you can say that my life decision is to be a better person and make a life for myself and my daughter.



The Right Path
By
Emily Daffron

Special Topics ~ Life Choices ~ Narrative Third Place

The Right Path

by
Emily Daffron

I believe that life decisions are the choices one makes for oneself. Everyone has a chance to make a choice whether it be a good choice or whether it be a bad one.

I hope and pray that I make the right choices. I also believe that God plays an important role in my decisions. I feel he tries to guide me down the right path. The decisions I make in my life affect me, my family, friends and my goals. There have been many decisions for me to make in my life; and I have made some foolish ones but I now I truly believe I am on the right path for making good ones.

My best decision is going back to school. I was scared at first, but quickly fell in love with the Lamar instructors, my classmates, and even with learning. It still amazes me that I have improved so much that I have made the decision to go on into nursing school!

I almost made the worst decision of my life. Recently, my fiance passed away because of pneumonia. I wanted to give up on everything and everyone. This was a major set-back and was difficult to go through. With losing my mother a few years ago, I felt so alone, no hope, or no way out of the darkness in my soul.

Then one glorious day a beautiful voice which, I know was God, told me to pick up and move on for my time was not up. I guess what I am trying to say is I have plenty of life decisions to make before I reach the end my path.

I know of two for sure, one is getting my degree in nursing and the other is watching, loving, helping, caring for my four beautiful sons. Raising them to grow up and to rise to their full potential is a high calling. I believe to live life itself is one great big decision.



Honorable
Mention

Special Topics
Life Choices

Narrative



Today I Let Go and Let God

by
Aaron Green

My name is Aaron Green. I have made some bad decisions in my life, but today I realize I went through those things to get to where I am today.

I allowed myself to stay in an abusive relationship at the age of 15. At fifteen I became pregnant. I graduated in 1978, and moved to Houston. I stayed in Houston for 10 years. I married at the age of 25 and stayed in that relationship for 5 years. I made several poor decisions while in Houston. I started drinking and drugging. It's not anything to be proud of, but I had to go through something and that was it. That choice of life took me through a journey.

In 1990, I was pregnant again and delivered a beautiful baby girl. I moved back to Port Arthur and two years later delivered another daughter, and unfortunately she did not survive. A few months later I was pregnant and had another beautiful daughter. I now have three wonderful children ages 27, 12, 10.

I was doing what I wanted to do which was anything and everything. I was big and bold enough to do so. The decisions I made were bad, but I know today that I am not a bad person, I just made bad choices. I know today with God's help I can do anything because he loves me unconditionally and I want that love. When I graduated, my parents wanted me to go to college, but I decided to do what I wanted, and school was not it. I had been in school long enough, I thought. I wish that I knew then what I know now. I would have listened. However, today I have my Savior to guide me through my life decisions.

I know right from wrong, but sometimes I still fall short. I have someone who I know will not lead me wrong. One of the best decisions I've made was surrendering my life to Christ, because I have so much peace. I'm learning to face life's ups and downs without running. I decided to better my education, and financial status, because I feel good about myself. I also want to be a better asset to my children. I do not want my children to make the same mistakes I made. I do understand they have to go through something, but I also know that it doesn't have to be what I did. I know my parents did the best that they could. They did teach me right from wrong, but I made my own choices. I know my parents loved me dearly. Both my parents are deceased, but I know they are at peace. My life decisions today are much easier than ever. I have been out of school for 25 years, but I decided to step out on Faith. Today I let Go and Let God.

Determined

by
Kristen Rausch

We make many choices in life. Some are good. Some are bad. Some are choices that others don't agree with. The choice I made was to go against the odds, and prove to myself and others that I could turn a learning disability into a positive choice in my life.

I have made a choice to go to college for child development. I can recall a comment made to me about my not being college material. My feelings were hurt, but that made me more determined to work that much harder in college to prove that I could and that I would do it.

I am always eager to learn new things and to refresh my spirit in that learning is great. I made a choice a few years ago to work with children because I am able to understand and relate to their feelings. It really is joy to work with children. I can't think of a better way to spend my time than with teaching children of God. I thank God for giving me the patience and understanding to help children everyday. Through my disability I have been blessed with an ability.



What I Enjoyed About the Museum

**By
Moses Martin**

Special Topics ~ Museum of the Gulf Coast ~ First Place

What I Enjoyed About the Museum

by
Moses Martin

"Vision is the art of seeing things invisible."

Jonathan Swift
1667-1745

Walk up to any student and ask him to define the word "museum", and he may give you any number of definitions. He may say it is a place devoted to the conservation of objects or an institution dedicated to the study and exhibition of art. Ask your friendly neighborhood freshman, and he may simply tell you it's a place where they keep "old stuff." Whatever the answer you get, it is impossible to define the Museum of the Gulf Coast in two sentences or less.

As a child growing up in Port Arthur, I had the opportunity to visit the Museum of the Gulf Coast with my middle school. It would have been easy to choose one thing that completely held my interest then, but as an adult the task is nearly impossible. With this fact in mind, I would like to talk about the museum and the idea of it as a whole, and how this one building means so many things to our area and its citizens.

First and foremost, the museum is set up seamlessly. Choosing one of the nation's largest museum murals as a sort of time-line helps to give every exhibit on display its own small part of a whole. This is very important when there are many items that need to be and should be shown. There is no way to accomplish a feat of this magnitude without order. Moving from pre-historic times and what creatures were believed to inhabit this area through fossil findings and research, to early Indian inhabitants accomplished through the first 15 feet of the mural.

This puts the area's beginnings into perspective. The mural marches through the landing of the Spanish onto our shores, which opened the doors for Spanish occupation of the southeastern coast of Texas and eventually the entire area that Texas was a part of. This is where the exhibits start to tie into the mural. Documents that are remarkably intact and completely legible are displayed across the appropriate part of the mural. The documents lead into displays of maps, lands, and waterways from that period.

The next depiction on the wall is a rendering of our area's part of the Civil War, the battle of Sabine Pass. This part of the mural is accomplished with exhibits of cannons and cannon balls of that era.

Lastly, the mural moves into the bread and butter of our area - the gusher at Spindletop. This section of time is accomplished by the only surviving picture of the gusher at its birth and the camera that took it! There are also wonderfully made models of the different types of refineries that are present in our area today, and the products that they produce that make life as we know it possible.

As you can see the old saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words," still holds true today. A beautiful mural on a wall is more than a sight for the eyes; it tells a story in a language that is universal in its message to all who behold it.

In closing, I would like to touch on the importance of our Museum of the Gulf Coast to this area. First, I make references to the word "our" because it truly represents all of us in this area. Secondly the museum shows that this is more than just an area we live in. This area has contributed its part to building our nation. We are an important part of a whole. This one building allows children and adults alike to see that we have great achievers and achievements in this place we call home, and it should motivate us to continue to carry the torch.



Port Arthur: Old and New

**By
Nelda F. Jackson**

Special Topics ~ Museum of the Gulf Coast ~ Second Place

Port Arthur: Old and New

by
Nelda F. Jackson

Taking the trip to the Gulf Coast Museum was very interesting. It was my first time going there, and I wasn't disappointed. Walking around and learning about everything that they had in there made it hard to choose just one thing to write about. Everything was eye catching and so interesting that I had to really sit down and think about what caught my eye and had me interested the most. One thing stood out every time I would think back and that was the picture over the entrance door of how Port Arthur used to look. Something about it mesmerized me; it made me feel more appreciative about where I'm from and respect the place I call home more than I ever did.

The picture was old and empty. Besides about three buildings and a gentleman, I believe, it seemed just an empty place to be. It brought me to a peaceful place, somewhere I would like to be. Just thinking about what little they had and having to make do with it makes me look at what we now have in a different way, even if it's still not much. It makes me feel good to know people cared enough about Port Arthur to make it a better living environment by building a lot of things that were needed, and that are now meaningful historical places. Behind these historical marks are stories that will have your attention and leave you wanting more.

Port Arthur is not as bad as it seems. I used to think there was nothing good about Port Arthur, I never liked being here and always wanted to leave. To me it just seemed run down and lacking excitement I felt I didn't belong here.

I was kind of ashamed to say I was from here at times. I didn't want to be from a place so full of nothing. Then to hear about and see all the good and exciting things that took place on these grounds through out the millions of years intrigues me. To see Port Arthur in the picture you wouldn't even have recognized it. Port Arthur has grown into something special with a million great stories and adventures. I'm learning to appreciate what Port Arthur stands for. Great and talented people have come out of here, and there is still more talent to come.

I have written a poem in my own words and thoughts about Port Arthur.

This Place Called Home

I Hate to Love this place called home;
It's a little place full of nothing
Jobs are less and pay is low.
Once you've been here two or three days,
there's nowhere in it left to go.

Everything so close together, it makes me sick to think
that people have been here for years and years and don't
even want to leave.
It's really hard to be happy here when all you see is this.
To look outside it depresses me; it breaks me down
to think about how I was raised here in this little run down town.
But without it where would I be?
I feel I owe a whole lot to it;
It has taught me to believe in myself because no one else will do it.

This place I Hate to Love called home it's taught
me to be a strong, independent, cautious woman,
in other words how to survive. It's taught me
how to hustle in a world that's in disguise,
So I guess I ought to be thankful for being
brought up where I've been made stronger.
I'LL SHOW MY GRATITUDE BY STAYING HERE A LITTLE WHILE LONGER!!



The Museum of the Gulf Coast

**By
Katy Barbosa**

Special Topics ~ Museum of the Gulf Coast ~ Third Place

The Museum of the Gulf Coast

by
Katy Barbosa

The Museum of the Gulf Coast has captured every heirloom left by the many prosperous natives of the Golden Triangle and turned them into physical memories that will be passed onto future generations. The collection of Port Arthur's history is not only interesting, but it can benefit our city in a number of ways. The museum educates people who visit, both younger and elder. It also shows the young people that extraordinary goals can be achieved. Another way that the museum benefits the area is that seeing how Port Arthur looked decades ago may inspire people to help in restoring and preserving this area.

As I walked into the Museum of the Gulf Coast, the first thing that caught my eye was the beautiful mural painted on the walls stretching the entire length of the wall. The painting showed how Port Arthur has evolved starting at prehistoric times and ending around the time that Spindletop blew. The museum taught me a lot about the town I have lived in all my life. I would have never imagined prehistoric elephants roaming on the same ground we walk and drive on everyday. The painting showed how Indians and settlers used this very land. The end of the painting showed the beginning of our economic development with the famous Spindletop oil well.

After seeing the museum's display of the local artists who made names for themselves, I felt proud to live in this town. Somehow when something happens to your home town it happens to you, so to speak. I never have stopped to think about how many people from our area have made it big. A young child or

teenager seeing the display of actors, models, sports figures, and inventors from our area may be the difference between trying to succeed or turning to negative alternatives such as quitting schools or drug use. The knowledge alone of the many people who have reached stardom is enough to persuade the talented youth to follow dreams whole-heartedly knowing that extraordinary goals are within reach.

To someone who drove through Port Arthur today, this area looks run down and poor. Restoring and preserving our town would be a wonderful change. Besides making the city look better to visitors, we would make it a better place to live. The museum shows us the potential this area has to be a vibrant, lively place. Just experiencing the historic memoirs and seeing the beauty that was in Port Arthur decades ago would possibly inspire people to aid in the restoration and preservation of this town so that when my children are grown they will still want to live here and raise their children here too.

In conclusion, The Museum of the Gulf Coast is a hidden treasure that I was so lucky to have discovered. The many ways that it benefits our community are apparent. The many historic people displayed in the museum shed a new light on goals that were at one time distant and showed that they are closer than we thought. Our culture and history is important for us to know and teaching our youth is done easily by introducing them to The Museum of the Gulf Coast.

Honorable
Mention

Special Topics

Museum
of the
Gulf Coast



A Hidden Treasure

by

Alicia Michelle Moody

The Museum of the Gulf Coast, located on Procter Street here in Port Arthur, Texas, is a plain, two story, grey and white building. I had heard of the museum before, but had never taken the time to visit until recently. I thought that I knew all there was to know about this podunk town, nothing special, just a small, quiet town off the coast of Texas. I had no idea how wrong I was.

On the outside, the museum looks to be a normal downtown building, but on the inside is a whole different world. Upon entering, my eyes immediately turned left to observe a giant mural. This enormous painting depicts our home from prehistoric times up through the present. Images of Karakawas, Dick Dowling's fort, and the famous oil derricks of Spindletop are brought to life, and visible from any location in the museum. The bottom story is filled with unending knowledge of the history of the entire coast. Artifacts from the first settlers as well as war heroes are scattered throughout this entry.

A short journey up the stairs takes me to the most popular part of the museum, the music room. A disco ball and huge red guitar spin, hanging from the ceiling. Surprisingly, many successful musicians have come from this area. The most elaborate exhibit in the music room is that of Janis Joplin. She was born and raised in Port Arthur and attended Thomas Jefferson High School. The display of this incredible woman includes her family photos, high school yearbooks as well as a note that she had written to her mother. Her purple sequin pants and matching vest that hang next to her albums are in perfect

condition as if she wore them yesterday. The most memorable piece of her belongings displayed here has to be her car, a 1965 Porsche Cabriolet, painted at her request in a '60's hippie style. As I stand there and look into the glass case containing the life of a legend, I can imagine Janis as a little girl, playing in the streets of Port Arthur as I once did. I look around and notice that this room contains far more success stories than I had expected, and I find myself inspired to make a success story of my own life.

I have always planned to get an education and eventually a career; but after seeing that countless people have come from the same little town as me and had phenomenal lives, I believe that I can do the same.

The Museum of the Gulf Coast has opened my eyes to the past as well as my own future. I may not end up on these walls, but I know that the possibilities of success and recognition do exist. The grey and white building in the heart of Port Arthur seems to be a sort of hidden treasure in my opinion. You probably don't even know it is there; but once you open the door, the discovery of the past and possibilities for the future are endless.

Ambitions+Dreams-Doubt=Reality

by
Sheryl Roberson

"I have a dream."

Martin Luther King

What is the meaning of these words when we think about them? When ambitions, dreams, doubt, and reality enter your mind, what image comes to memory? Are we never focusing much on good news than the bad? Does Webster define these terms? Are they more than expressions or alphabets put into sentences? Does each word mean something different for everyone? As individuals, we can only remember the greatest things that happen to us and all the bad things. We never really think about the things that brought to pass these results. There is successful thinking that we can achieve anything we desire. Dreams and ambitions without doubt bring a positive reality.

Small people make big things happen. Most people believe if you come from a small town, you have small thoughts. Some of us fall victim of those words and stereotypes. In Southeast Texas, we had small people make big things happen. For instance, Frank Trost, a small man in the world but a big person in his city, shot the first oil rig active in 1901. He became famous for one photo in a small city full of riches. This example proves that you do not have to sail the world to be recognized. Leah Rhodes, born in Port Arthur, won an Oscar for the best costume design in *The Adventure of Don Juan*. Although she left the city limits to a better job market, she probably never dreamed of an award so astounding, a small town girl, recognized for her huge creativity.

No matter what your race, sex, or age, success can be yours. Hard work pays off more than you can imagine. Barbara Lynn born in Beaumont, hoped to be a singer and writer. She graduated with my mother from Hebert. In 1962, she never knew how big a success her song "You'll Lose a Good Thing," would be. It was heard all over the U. S.. It also landed her a spot on the Dick Clark show, a young black female success during segregation times. Barbara Jacket born in Port Arthur was the second black woman to ever coach an Olympic team. Her hunger for basketball also claimed her eight National Association Intercollegiate Awards. No matter the sex, race, and age, small people can achieve their desires.

Fear does not mean doubt. Anxiety is a natural feeling. It is what is combined with it that determines the outcome. Our faith moved mountains before we knew we could. Some accomplishments are fired by determination and fear. For example, Lucian Adams earned the Congressional Medal of Honor in the U. S. Army during World War II. During his time in battle, it never crossed his mind about a medal. He was fighting for his country and his life. President Kennedy honored him with this medal. Some of us live in fear to fire our desires. We place ourselves in situations where our hopes, dreams and fear encourage us. Like Valerie Malfod a young white female "body builder" who decided to fight Monica McGowen "a famous boxer daughter," for her belt. Valerie won. A lot of people doubted that she would have won but her determination proved them wrong.

In conclusion, whatever your heart desires you can have, ambition and dreams without doubt is a positive reality. Take the negative things in your life, let it nourish you for something positive.

Life is what you make out of it. Regardless of how small town you are, you can achieve big things. Each day you live, you make history. What you do with history? Keep in mind a young preacher's words "I have a dream." This is your chance to make Lamar Port Arthur a positive thing in your life.

*Layout and Printing:
Janet G. Polk
Print Shop
Lamar State College-Port Arthur*