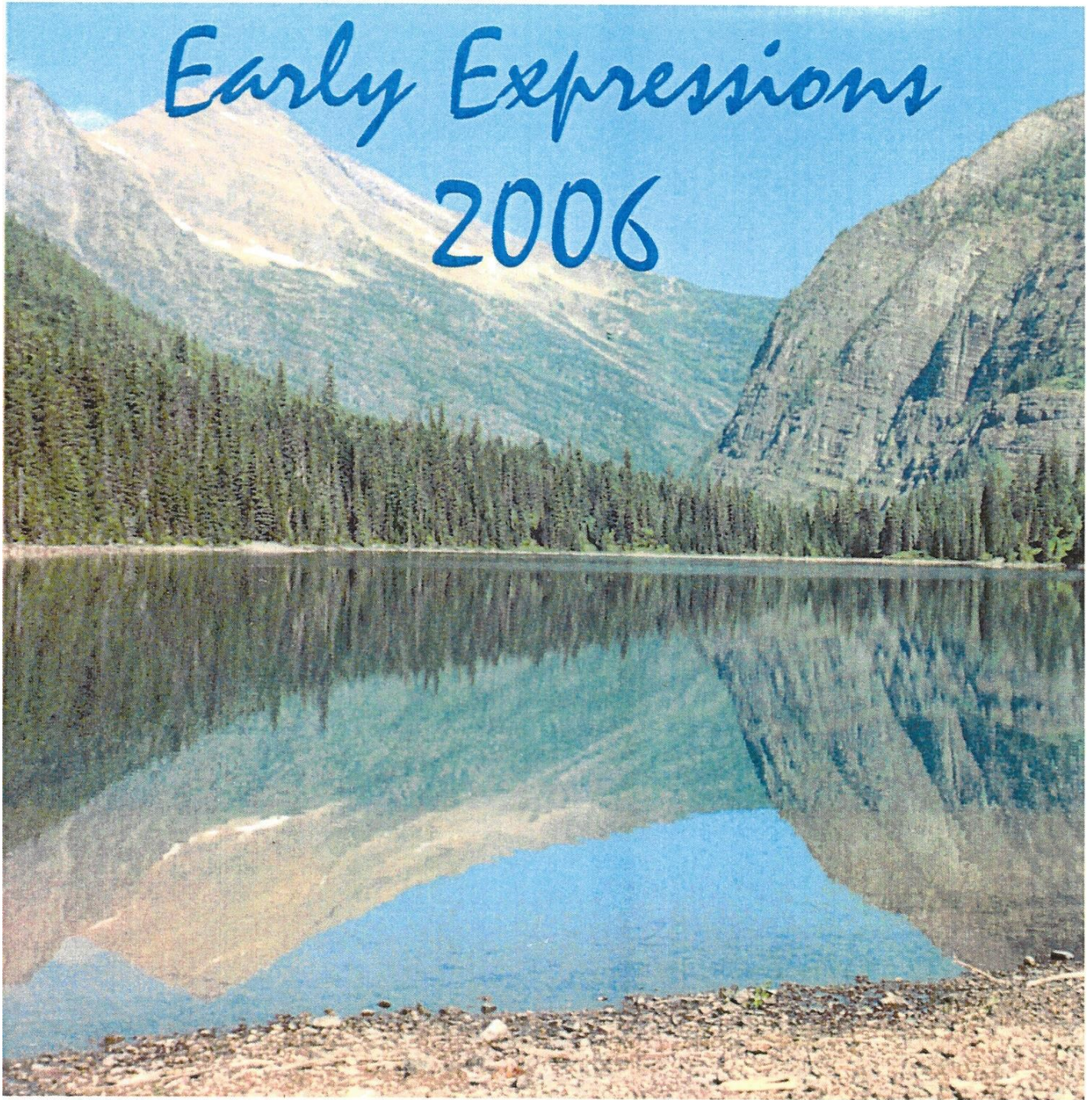


Early Expressions
2006



Lamar State College
Port Arthur





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

Early Expressions

2006
Volume VII

Early Expressions 2006 - Winners

CREATIVE WRITING-2005

First Place

The Rose Rena de la Rosa

Second Place

A Team to Remember Derrick Hannah

Third Place

Deer to Me Autumn Weaver

Honorable Mention

Coming to America..... Erika Alvarenga

The Family Reunion Maria Diaz Gutierrez

Fall Amanda Davis

My Favorite Pastime..... Tina Coe

Game Four Blake Lognion

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First Place

Life of a Gambler..... Hubert Thomas, Jr.

Second Place

The Championship Season Ward S. Dotson

Third Place

No Turning Back..... Ana Ceja

Honorable Mention

Graduation Night Ron Webb

The Open Book..... Charity Wells

The Summer That Changed My Life..... Sandra Ferguson

Teenage Love..... Michael Abalos

RITA NARRATIVE

First Place

Rita Experience..... Mohammad Arshad

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Gulf Coast Fear..... Amanda Davis

Third Place

Rita's Wrath..... Tina Coe

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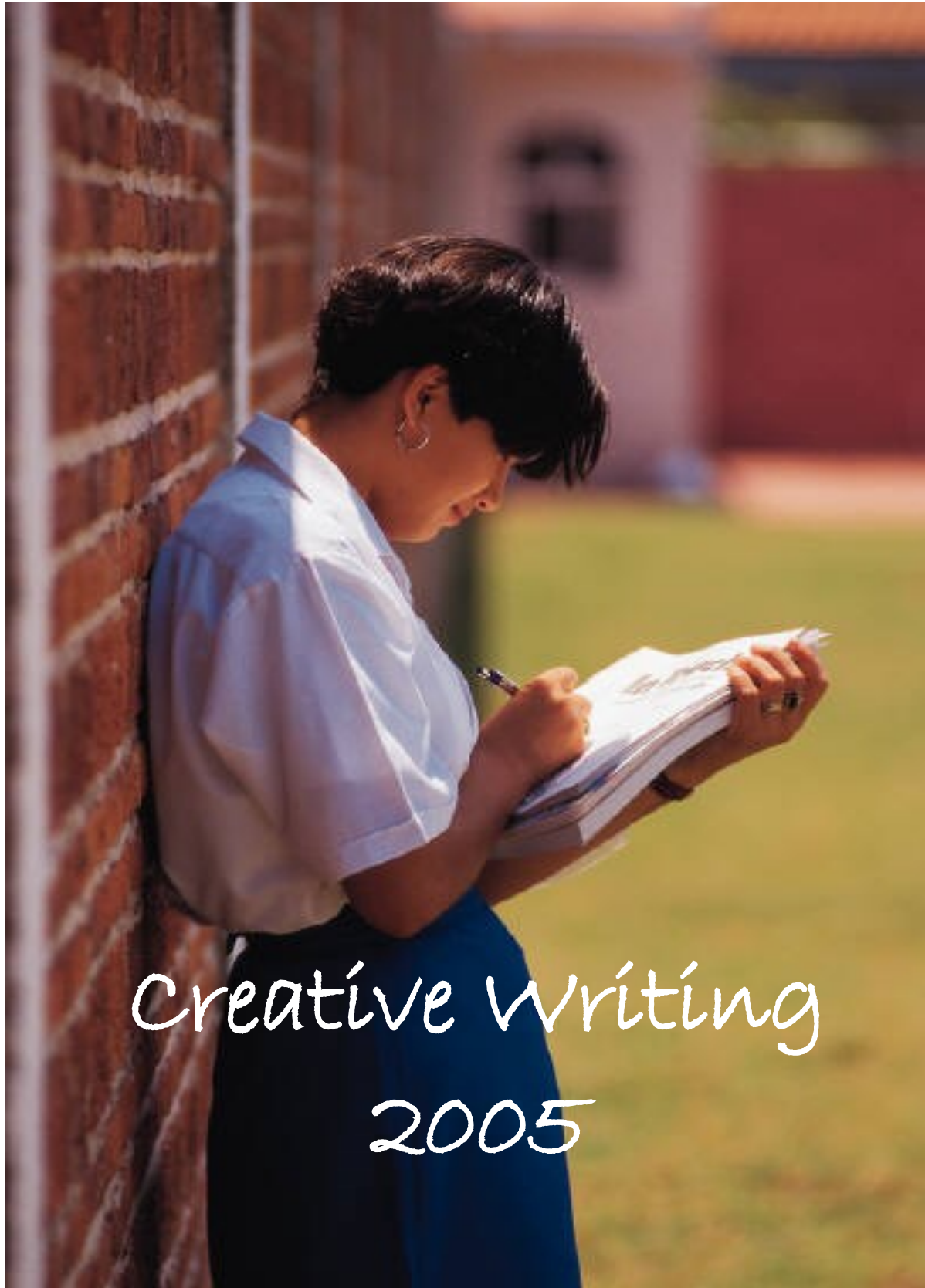
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PHOTO CREDITS

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Creative Writing
2005

Creative Writing 2005-First Place

The Rose Rena de la Rosa

One Saturday morning my husband, our two daughters, and I loaded up in our metallic gray truck to head toward the tall pines of Southeast Texas. Along that forty-five minute ride, down Interstate 10, I sat in the passenger side with the excitement of going to see my parents and those that I love. I could hardly wait to get there, just to spend the day with them.

As we traveled down the road, I spied a railroad track. I heard, in the distance, the lonesome whistle of the train and then the wheels turning, the screeching of metal on metal as the train passed by. I knew it won't be long before I reached our camp, The Rose. Around the corner from the train track I heard the swift moving current of the nearby river, strong enough to pull one under. Then in the distance I saw home. I heard the wind blowing through the pines and saw the leaves fall to the ground, as if each one was dancing in the air as they fall around The Rose. There she stands waiting for us.

As my family rushed out of the truck, the scent of the pines reminded me of when I was a child. However, the sweetest smell of all was the perfume my mother put on this morning and the smell of dad's after shave cologne. I can remember these things as though it were yesterday. After settling down in the house, the aroma of Mother's cooking filled the room. She always wanted to feed us, and we gladly accepted. I couldn't wait to taste the garlic she carefully placed in her roast, each clove placed with love and care. The cucumbers from her garden were as moist as water that fell like rain. After our meal, my girls, mom, and I would go in the yard. Mom always had flowers, vegetables, and anything that would grow. I can see my girls each with baskets, eager to pick the fresh vegetables. The excitement on their faces was priceless.

The Rose holds so much for me. The love that we have for one another, the joy that comes to me when I see those that I love, the sound of the turbulent river, the smell of the pine and leaves that fall like rain all take me back to a time of joy and delight. The farewell hug and gentle kiss of "goodbye," till I see you again" comforts me until the next time.

Creative Writing 2005-Second Place

A Team to Remember

Derrick Hannah

It was the summer before my junior year of high school, when I really got excited about the upcoming basketball season. Our team was ranked 5th in the state according to pre-season stats. We attended two tournaments that summer and won both. I knew if we kept playing like we did in the summer, we would have a good chance to do something my small town's high school has never done before—Go to their first play-offs! Looking back on all of it now, our team, just average kids from a middle class town, had three things that set us apart from the other teams we played.

The first thing was our teamwork. There were no “ball hogs” on our team. Each of us played for the team. That's something that is less and less evident in high school basketball today. It seems like everyone is out to make himself look good. Our team didn't care about making one of us look good. It was all of us wanting to make the team look good. All of us seemed to know what the other player would do before he did it. It was like we could read each other's minds.

I believe another factor that made us good was our attitude in our practices. We always had good practices. Even though they were long and tough and very tiring, no one ever complained. We wanted something, and felt for the first time in our school's history we were able to get it—a chance to be in the playoffs. Good attitudes in our practices were going to get us there.

Lastly, we had leadership. We had one particular player that stepped up to the plate, and everyone respected him. Not only was he a good basketball player, but a straight A student as well. I believe that came into play as far as his leadership qualities. If anyone got a little down, he was always there to pick them up, and he got everyone else involved to help out. He never grabbed for the glory of it for himself either. I think because he played the position on our basketball team that made most of the decisions, our team developed leadership.

In conclusion, we went on to make playoffs that year as well as the following year too. However, that year was the most special to me. I don't believe up to this point in my life, there has been anything I have been more proud to be a part of than that particular team and my teammates. Someday, when I have children of my own, I will be able to take them to the gym where I played and show them two banners hanging from the ceiling. My name will be on both, and I'll be very proud. Most of all, I'll have all the memories of being part of a team that carried a special bond between them that will not be forgotten for a lifetime.

Creative Writing 2005-Third Place

Deer to Me Autumn Weaver

The hum of the road as we passed through the tall, thick trees made me weary. I fell into a silent slumber. Four hours had passed. As I awoke I sat up to see a long narrow dirt road just wide enough to pass. The smell of pine was in the breeze. The vibrant oranges and browns of the fall leaves covered the moist ground beneath. We rounded the corner to see an open gate. As we passed through my heart started to race. We were almost there. Beyond the last curve was a large cedar camp. The door of the truck flew open, and I ran for the door, passing all the logs that were freshly cut for the fire. I started up a little path that led up to a squeaky green door. I opened it and went in. I felt a brisk coldness on my face. The smell of sulfur lingered after my father lit the fire in the old stove. I sat down my bags on the softest bed in the camp, right next to the stove, so I was sure to be warm through the night.

I awoke the next morning to the mumbles of the other campers, and the smell of coffee filled the air. The hunters started to leave, and it grew silent again. I fell back to sleep. Hours later the sun shown through the window onto my face. I pushed back the toasty blankets and sat up in bed. My father was back from the morning hunt, and he began to make breakfast. Bacon was popping in the skillet; fresh biscuits were on the counter, eggs in another skillet waiting to be flipped. The aroma coming from the kitchen was divine. I set the table, and we ate our spread. We were miles from the city in the middle of a thousand acre wood. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. I thought it was like heaven. Evening came, and just hours before sunset my father and I set out on an adventure. We walked through the tall trees. A log had fallen over the creek, and we passed over it to get to a small opening where a lean-to stood. I stepped inside and took a seat. Silently, we waited there, patiently hoping for a deer to step out. As the sun fell into the trees, I knew it was time to go. The weekend had come and gone. We started to pack our things. As we drove away, I remember wishing that I would always have this place to go. Years later it still remains the same. I still get the warm feeling of my heart racing when we pass through the iron gate, but it is a little different now. The people have all gone away; it is colder now and filled with loneliness. The camp still sits in the middle of the thousand acre wood.

Creative Writing 2005-Honorable Mention

Coming To America

Erika Alvarenga

I remember coming to the U.S. as though it was yesterday. The memories that it brings me fill me with joy every time because they remind me of how lucky I am to be here.

As I got out of the airplane at the Houston Intercontinental Airport, I remember seeing all the big planes as they took off and landed; I was in awe. Even though I was a 14 year old teenage girl, I acted like an infant baby when it gets its first piece of candy. My mom was holding my hand, and I could feel her shaking. I knew that she was more scared than I was about coming to an unknown land.

At the gate my uncle and aunt waited for us in excitement. At first I did not see her, but I heard her loud voice calling my mom's name way before we got near them. My family greeted us with a kiss and a hug, and then we got our luggage and left the airport.

On the way to Port Arthur, my uncle asked my mom and me if we were hungry. The flight was three hours long, so I was starving! My uncle then quickly got off the highway and stopped at a place which I had never heard of, Burger King. I remember the delicious smell that entered my nose when I opened the door; it was like nothing I had ever smelled before. I had never eaten a hamburger nor spoken English, so my uncle ordered my food. I sat down and waited for my food. My uncle came fast to give me the hamburger, I took a bite of it and it was the best flavor in the world! I could taste the meat, cheese, mustard, mayonnaise, and the bread; I had never had so many flavors at the same time. From that moment on, all I did was eat hamburgers for the next year.

Creative Writing 2005-Honorable Mention

The Family Reunion Maria Diaz Gutierrez

My mom has always said that back in the days when my grandparents got married, there was no television. This is the reason that they had a huge family of four sons and six daughters, but now all of the family is spread out across the USA, some of us in Texas, others in New York, and the rest in California or Georgia. As a family tradition you can say, we like to attend a big family reunion at the end of the year, every year. I remember when I was 14 years old; it was in December when the excitement of going to Mexico begins. It was a feeling of eagerness to see my grandmother and the rest of the family again, to sleep in those little beds with the rest of my cousins. I loved to wake up in the mornings, and hear my grandma in the kitchen baking bread and making hot chocolate for breakfast. I remembered the sweet and warm smell of the hot chocolate and the bread, that awesome breakfast my grandma used to make for us. The smell was so strong that I could no longer stay in bed, and I had to wake up and run to the kitchen so fast, as if I was dying for that bread with a cup of chocolate. Once I got into the kitchen and saw the bread and the chocolate, it looked so nice and neat that I did no longer smell the bread or the chocolate. I was looking at my grandmother setting the table for her family with so much love. I used to sit by the chimney to warm myself up by the fire while I was waiting for the rest of the family to wake up and finally have breakfast all together. I remembered how huge the kitchen seemed to be just with me and grandma, and how small it became at the time we were all together having breakfast, how noisy it used to be, but I was concentrating just on one thing grabbing a cup of chocolate and a piece of bread. That soft and warm delicious bread and the sweet taste of that chocolate drove me crazy. That was the joy of my grandma, seeing her family together at the table. The first December after grandma died, it was so hard for me going to Mexico and not hearing the noises of grandma in the kitchen. I could no longer smell the hot chocolate and the sweet bread as I was waking. I missed her a lot. One of the good things she left for us was the tradition of getting together on holidays. Now, my mother and my aunts are the ones who bake the bread and make the hot chocolate in grandma's kitchen.

Creative Writing 2005-Honorable Mention

Fall Amanda Davis

It's mid-September and fall is less than a week away. Fall is my favorite time of year, for so many reasons. First of all, fall is the start of the high school football season, and even though I am no longer in high school, I still get caught up in the hype. Sounds of football moves and crowds cheering can be heard all the way to my front porch. With fall also come many festivals, such as: The Rice Festival, The Gator Fest, the Pecan Festival, and we can't forget the State Fair. Many people go for the rides, I go for the food. The taste of fall as I call it involves pork-k-bobs, corndogs and lemonade, and always a cup of hot chocolate as well. True, this is a great reason for anyone to love fall, but I love it for an even greater reason, the air. The air around me feels so crisp and cool, but not too cool. I love to stand outside in the fresh air and watch the leaves turn to beautiful colors. Many say spring is the most beautiful season, but I disagree. What could be better than colors of brown, gold and dark red falling together to make a different kind of rainbow. Now we know what fall looks like, but what does it smell like? It is the smell of a warm cozy house that I call home. I can smell the heaters and the warm soup that mama is cooking on the stove; I can even smell all the pies that will soon be cooking for Thanksgiving. Also what makes fall so wonderful is the gathering of family during the Thanksgiving holidays, and who can forget Halloween and all that candy. I think fall is the most wonderful time of year because it is the one season that I can use all my senses and enjoy every last bit of it.

Creative Writing 2005-Honorable Mention

My Favorite Pastime Tina Coe

My favorite pastime away from home is camping. We generally take at least two camping trips a summer. I love camping because it is an escape from the hustle and bustle of life at home. Going camping as an adult also brings back feelings of enjoyment that I had as a child going with my parents.

My favorite part about going camping is being able to fish. I love fishing very much and could do it all day long. I love the feeling of the line being tugged at by a fish and trying to guess how big or small it is. I also enjoy the silence of the early mornings on the water and late at night as I lay in the tent. It is so quiet during these times of the day that I can almost hear myself breath. Other than an occasional bug buzzing by my ear, or a faint noise made by a nocturnal animal, it can be absolute silence. I also enjoy taking my children camping and watching them experiencing the same things that I enjoyed as a child. Seeing their eyes light up when they catch the biggest fish of the day is priceless. Looking back now, I can understand the times that I was fishing with my dad and he was more excited about seeing me catch the biggest fish than I was.

Finally, the thing that we do the most of while camping is eating. There is nothing that compares to eating outdoors, especially during the winter time. Things always taste better cooked over an open fire. Sitting around a campfire, roasting a weenie on a small twig from a nearby tree, smelling the combination of the wood burning and the weenie cooking, is only an experience I can get from an outdoor cookout. Maybe it is cooking over wood that I have gathered around the camp, or it is just the outdoor air that is circulating around the open fire, but it is definitely a different taste. Even the burned charcoal taste of a weenie that I have gotten too close to the flame seems to be tasty.

Creative Writing 2005-Honorable Mention

Game Four Blake Lognion

Last year in the fall, the Boston Red Sox were playing in the World Series. Their opponents were the St. Louis Cardinals, a team with more offence than most teams could dream about. Never-the-less my family's favorite team was playing for the championship of the nation. Knowing half my family is from Boston and understanding how important that series was made it breathtaking. My dad surprised my cousin and me with tickets to game four in St. Louis. We left the next day from Houston airport hoping to taste 7th inning popcorn with Red Sox running onto the field with the lead. After finding a taxi to take us to the stadium, I could only hear my heart beat faster and faster. Just then my eyes saw Bush Stadium; goose bumps covered my body. Walking up to the stadium was like deja vu from a dream; already knowing the setting location just from instinct. Just before sitting I heard the crowd roaring louder and louder like in my dreams the night before. After three innings I decided to buy some popcorn and coke. Then I remembered all I had to do was yell at the man with the large tray and here he came. As he approached, I could smell that delicious popcorn and my mouth watered. Popcorn and coke was six dollars, but worth it. My dad turned to me and said, "There's nothing better than seeing the Red Sox leading going into the bottom of the 7th inning." Then I realized it was more than a game to many. It is life and belief in one goal. The Red Sox are like a god in Boston. The city lives or dies depending on how they do. However, at game four, I felt like my dad. We tasted victory and won the World Series in four straight games. Some say it will never happen again, but I feel it might this season, and maybe I will be able to go.



Creative Writing

2006

Creative Writing 2006-First Place

Life of a Gambler

Hubert Thomas, Jr.

It all started when I was a teenager, Joe Barron was the name. If a challenge was issued, I would take it, no matter what it was. Whether the challenge was from throwing rocks to throwing bricks or who could chunk the farthest horse shoe, I was so competitive, that it seemed like my name should have been competition. All the children knew when I walked up what I would say. "Would anyone like to make a bet?" It never failed someone would always try to call my bluff. The last young gentleman that answered my challenge still regrets it to this day. The challenge we embarked on was rock throwing. Man, that day I thought I was superman. The name of the boy was Leonard Williams. Leonard was a lanky, scrawny, looking little kid. He was taller than I and had huge hands to say he was so skinny. The first throw was his. He picked up that rock and chunked it so far that it looked as if it would never drop. The crowd looked in awe. I'm talking mouths opened, eyes like silver dollars.

A little girl stood up and said, "Joe Barron, it's no way you can beat that throw!" Everybody else was shaking their heads as if to say that little girl was right.

I stepped up and said, "They don't call me Joe Barron for nothing! I live for the challenge." I bent down and picked up a rock, and the muscles in my arms were so tight I thought I was going to bust out of my shirt. I stepped back and made a loud grunting noise "Ayi!" When I let that rock go, I heard the noise of the crowd once again.

This time the little girl yelled at the top of her lungs, "Man, he threw that rock clean off the earth!"

A strange-looking boy stood up and said, "Joe, you're right! You should have been named competition, "cause you whipped the pants off of Leonard." I still remember that like it was yesterday.

As I became older, drifting from one town to another, laying my head from pillow to post, there were bigger, better and more dangerous games being played than rock throwing. I was going from one town to another to find a poker table and players. I was the best poker player I knew. I came upon a small town called Poker, Texas. I thought to myself, HMM, with a name like that I bet there's a poker game going on.

When I wondered into a small bar, the bartender said, "Hey stranger, what's your poison, women, gambling, or drinking?"

I replied in my deepest voice, "Jack Daniels, women, and poker. Do you know where I can get these things?"

Bartender replied, "Right here, stranger."

"First I'm going to drink my drink, then play some poker. When I win all your money, I'm going to take your girl."

A low chuckle came from the card table, and a voice spoke, "What makes you think that, stranger?"

"Cause my name is Joe Barron."

The cowboy at the table said, "Sit down, Joe Barron."

I took a seat right next to him, and said, "I have five thousand dollars. Let's play one hand of five card draw; one eyed jacks are wild."

The cowboy said, "You're on." He dealt the cards while I stared right into his face. There was something about his exterior that gave me the chills.

He asked, "How many cards do you need, Joe?"

"Give me two cards."

He replied, "The dealer will take one!" He looked up at me as to say, "I got you Joe, you will be a loser tonight." With a small smirk on his face he said, "What do you have, stranger?"

I laid my cards down and had only two pair. Then with the loudest laugh I've ever heard, he said, "I just got a little ace and his three brothers." I was beat, caught in a trap like a grizzly bear. That night I gave up my gambling ways and moved into a small country town. I met a nice young lady named Susan. We started a little family with two children, a little boy named Joe, Jr., daughter for my wife named Suzy. Ever since that cowboy whipped my pants off, I never gambled again. I think about it every blue moon, but every time I see that cowboy's face, my boots start to shiver.

Creative Writing 2006-Second Place

The Championship Season

Ward S. Dotson

It was the summer of 1970, July to be exact, when it all started. All the boys showed up early to begin what we felt would be the championship season of our football program for the 24-2A district. Bill Black was the returning quarterback for the offensive team, along with six returning starters. I was a defensive linebacker, and eight of us were returning to the squad. This was our year as the papers had it. We were going to be champions of the district.

The coaches drilled us hard everyday to make sure we never forgot what we had to do, or what our goal was for the season. I can still hear the whistles blowing to begin practice and run plays for the offensive and defensive squads. Bill Black's squad appeared to be ready for what was going to be a high scoring season. All we had to do on defense was stop the other team from outscoring ours.

We finally received our blue and white game uniforms for the first game. I remember the coaches comments, "Boys, strap up tight! This is the beginning of our championship season." The team began cheering and clapping. We could feel the exhilaration in the room as we exited the locker room for our last practice before the first game of the season.

Every week on the field was special to all of us on the team. The crowds for both teams were yelling and working together to pump up their team. The children wore their school colors as they played alongside the field giving everyone the impression they were participating and contributing to the game. It was a feeling I believed I would remember forever, and hoped it would never end.

It was the eighth game, and I remember thinking the season was almost over. If we could just win one more game we would be the best team in the district. That game finally came in the tenth week. It was against our rival from a nearby town 10 miles north, named Lytle. They were always champions every year! "Boys, we really need this one," said all the coaches as they spoke to us in the locker room, "If we don't take this game, everything we worked so hard for will have been for nothing." We then all quietly walked out to the field for the second half.

It felt as if it would never end. Every time we scored, the other team would come back and score. Bill Black's offense was relentless. I remember him looking at me and saying, "We can do it, just hold them this time and we can win this one." I could feel the anxiety with every play, and each play was more important than the last. I remember looking up at the clock and realizing there were only ten seconds left; and if we were going to win, we would need to stop their offense from scoring this time. They were on the five yard line and all the momentum was

in their favor. I heard the crowd cheering and yelling as if the other team had already won the game. As I looked over at our crowd, even the children seemed to have a defeated look in their eyes.

Finally after the last play, I recall getting up and going into the dressing room. I took a shower, got dressed, then packed my uniform up and placed it on the bus. I looked over at the fans laughing, cheering, and having a good time. As I walked past the coach he said to me, "Great game, this was our year." I finally knew how it felt to be champion.

Creative Writing 2006-Third Place

No Turning Back

Ana Ceja

Her dream was to become a Doctor, specialty in children and adolescents; but when you take a wrong turn, the road takes you to the wrong place, a place where you may never be able to turn back. Emily M. King was attending Colombia University; she was studying to become a Pediatrician. She loved children. She lived by herself at Colombia and was striving to make it through school. Emily was very studious and loved to visit the library and read. Reading was one subject she loved the most.

It was a sunny, windy day, and she decided it would be a wonderful idea if she took a walk around the park and find the right spot where she could relax and read. It was five o'clock when the clouds started to get dark, and the wind grew stronger, "How weird, it was so beautiful a while ago. I better go before it starts to rain," she said. As she took a few steps she felt a cold drop on her shoulder, so she started to walk faster as the rain rushed down quicker by the second. A car with dark windows approached her and asked, "Need a lift? I'll take you home and out from the rain!" Emily knew that getting in a car with a stranger would be dangerous, especially a car with dark windows. The heavy rain seemed as though it would not stop, and she still had a long way to get home so she accepted the offer and got into the vehicle. "Hi, my name is Alberto Ramirez!" he said with a smile. She ignored him and did not say a word to him. Her heart was pounding so hard that it felt like horses running in a raceway. All Emily did was lead him to her house. As she reached her home she took off without saying thank you or anything. She got into her house locked the door and watched him leave and praised God that he was gone.

The next morning the sun was shining, the birds chirping, and the children were playing in the playground from their school as if nothing had happened the day before. Emily only lived two blocks from school, so she walked, leaving early so she could have time to go to the library. She started to search for her book, her eyes grew wide open, "Oh, no! Now what am I going to do?" she said with a worried look on her face. She thought of only one place where she could have left her book. Emily had no idea what to do; she didn't want to see that man after the scary experience, so she thought she would rather pay for the book than asking a stranger for it. Emily went home to get herself a bite to eat. "Hello, someone home?" Emily froze and didn't move a muscle. She grabbed the knife that was lying on the kitchen counter and walked towards the living room. She heard someone knocking at the door so she approached to see who it was but no one was near. She dared to open the door to see who was there, but no one

was around. As she closed the door something kept it from closing, so she panicked and screamed, “Who are you, and what do you want?” When she realized that what kept the door from closing was her book she had lost, she opened the door. “Here’s your book, I knew you would need it so I had to bring it.” Alberto had a curious look on his face, and Emily still wasn’t sure about him, but after all he did bring her book. “Thanks!” she replied. Emily and Alberto talked for a while, and she thought he was nice after all. It was already late when Alberto dismissed himself and told her that it would be a pleasure to meet up again, but Emily refused because she had to study and attend school. Alberto hesitated and took off without saying bye. Emily had to study for a test scheduled the following day, but she couldn’t stay awake, so she fell asleep. Later on that night Emily woke up with a deep thirst, so she got up to get a glass of water, but she heard foot steps coming from the kitchen. She kept walking to find out who could be in her house. Suddenly someone behind her came up to her and covered her mouth. Emily tried to scream, kick, or run out to call for help. Emily bit his hand and he released her, so Emily tried to run out the kitchen door, but she was so tense that she couldn’t open the door. “Who are you and what do you want!” she screamed. A person with a black mask and a dark suit appeared out of the shadows, and Emily reached for the telephone when the stranger ran up to her and stabbed her in her chest. Finally the person in the black suit took off the mask, and Emily’s eyes grew wide open and with a low squeak she said, “Al...ber...to.” She fell onto the ground and darkness she saw.

Creative Writing 2006-Honorable Mention

Graduation Night

Ron Webb

Seven o'clock and my alarm was blaring into my ears. I swung my arm across my body, not even opening an eye. I slammed the sleep button and began to wake up. Why not? I've been waking up at this time for twelve years. Graduation day was only a few days away, so I quickly made my way into my sister's room and woke her up for school. After we both got ready for school we headed out to our mother's car, but little did we know what was in the driveway. As soon as we opened the door we took off to our cars like we already knew they were just waiting on us to come outside. We thanked our mother, because it couldn't have been easy to buy two new cars all by herself. Then we took off to school to show off our new material items we had obtained for graduation. I met up with my buddies at school like normal and found out what there was to do the upcoming weekend, graduation weekend. My friend told me there was a party on the edge of town, so the police shouldn't be bad at all. The weekend came around and I found myself in my car headed down the long deserted road toward the party at the edge of town. As I came up on the party, I was already feeling good from the toxins. Everyone was outside the party chatting, and I decided to actually see what my car had. Trying to look cool in front of my friends, I came to a complete stop and revved up my engine. I let off the clutch, and the tires spun. I was hitting every gear perfectly. Before I knew it I was at ninety miles per hour. I looked in my rearview mirror then BAM! I smashed into a brand new car turning onto the road. The last thing that went through my mind was the hope that the person wouldn't sue me, and that I loved my family so much.

As I started to come to reality, my head hurt badly. I noticed I was in a white room, and three figures were standing in front of me. A doctor appeared in front of me; he checked my heart rate and made sure I was alright. I asked for some headache medicine, so he left the room. The other two figures stepped toward me; it was my parents. They told me I had been in a coma for two weeks; I set my head back down in disbelief. It was true; I had been in a coma. The more I thought about it, the more I remembered crashing into a new car. I asked if I was going to get sued. My mother started to cry. I asked her what was wrong, and my father stepped up and my mother stepped back. I knew that I was getting sued. As my father shed some tears he looked straight into my eyes; as if he could see into my soul. He told me, "No, the person is not suing you...the person was your sister in her new car." I lay my head deep into the pillow and stared into the ceiling. I didn't believe him. My eyes began to shed tears, why? I had crashed into my sister's car. Now she is not here. I no longer looked so cool to my friends when they came to see me in the hospital.

Creative Writing 2006-Honorable Mention

The Open Book Charity Wells

Sadie Jackson was a simple yet complicated girl. Her entire life has consisted of keeping her true self a secret from everyone else. Sadie was raised in a God-fearing home, and even attended a Christian school. From the very moment she was born, Sadie was raised in the church. Her parents were extremely strict with her, mainly because of their religion. As a child, Sadie was not allowed to participate in any functions in the “world”. Football games, movies, and parties were considered to be worldly. Sadie was unable to wear pants, shorts, and sleeveless shirts out in public. Even though she had to comply with these standards, inside Sadie was uncomfortable. In her teenage years, Sadie grew weary of people judging her because she dressed differently. “How can I fit it, when I don’t fit in?” Sadie would always question herself. Sadie began to rebel inside by doing sneaky things. She knew the ways of the world, but wanted to desperately keep them hidden away. No one knew Sadie’s heart and how she conducted herself behind closed doors. It was almost like she hid her own ways from herself. In November of 1991, Sadie’s parents divorced. Shortly after the divorce, Sadie met a man by the name of Jeffery Strange. Mr. Strange stood about 6’2, with chocolate skin, broad shoulders and a stern yet soothing voice. Mr. Strange was a handsome, yet cocky man. He was like no one Sadie had ever met before. Jeffery began to show Sadie how much she had been missing in her life. She trusted Jeffery so much that she began to change her ways. Rebellion, anger, lust, and pride began to set in her heart. Sadie was drawn towards this new life of partying and drinking. “How could I have missed out on so much fun?” Sadie allowed Mr. Strange to entice, charm, and even seduce her. Her childhood fueled her actions even more because this new lifestyle was wrong. Everything that this new way of life offered went against what she was taught as a child. Sadie knew she didn’t fit in with everyone else, but kept going because it appealed to her. “I will show them,” Sadie proclaimed. “I will show them all I can fit in.” Sadie always felt that her new life was wrong, but still she kept going. At first Sadie began venturing off into drugs and alcohol, thinking it was all a part of having fun. Eventually Sadie became dependent upon her lifestyle to make it from day to day. She started doing things that she never would have imagined herself doing. Sleeping with different men to make ends meet, standing in line at a homeless shelter for a plate of food, and even sleeping on the streets with no place to go. Sadie’s life, personality, and spirits had declined. Mr. Strange watched Sadie spiral into depression, and with a sinister grin he knew that his work was almost complete. Sadie’s family and friends tried reaching out to her, but her self-worth was too far

her life ended. Sadie always tried to keep her secret life quiet, but in the end all she became was an open book.

Creative Writing 2006-Honorable Mention

The Summer That Changed My Life Sandra Ferguson

Every summer my family and I took a vacation to Cotija Michoacan, Mexico to visit relatives of both sides of the family. Little did I know that the summer of 1993 when I was just seven years old would not be like every other summer. This summer would leave me an unforgettable fear that would be hard to remove from my life. The church bells rang twelve times to let the people know what time it was. My mother was inside our two story house cleaning and cooking while my father went to visit my grandmother. My two brothers and I were playing outside of the house with the neighbor's kids. The boys played with marbles and the girls with Barbie dolls. All of a sudden we heard screaming from down the street. As I turned toward the direction of the noise, I was stunned as I saw a woman below me. I stood frozen in my place as I glared at the mysterious woman. She sounded exhausted as if she had been running for a while. She looked like she was in her early thirties, and she had long, goldish brown hair that ran to her shoulders. Her dress was covered in bright red blood as if whatever had occurred had happened recently. As she began to look up to me her left hand was raising with a shining gray object. The sun's rays blocked my sight, and I couldn't make out what it was. As I looked up into her angry face, I could see glistering eyes looking back at me. The anger had consumed her completely, and she didn't seem to know what she was doing. She was pointing a gun at me; I could not believe it. I was so scared and wanted to scream but couldn't move or talk. I was paralyzed in shock and fear. I could hear my brothers screaming for my mother. People that were passing by were panicking asking for someone to call the police. The police sirens began to sound. The lady began screaming and acting as if she was insane. She began to run down the street and soon she was out of sight. My mother came and carried me inside. She cried and hugged and hugged me and thanked God that I was alive. I didn't understand why that woman was covered in blood and acting insane. For ten years I was traumatized. I would not play outside without an adult supervisor. I was too scared to even talk about it, but finally when I turned seventeen my mother explained the truth to me. The lady killed her husband because she had suffered from domestic violence for about three years and couldn't take it anymore. Now that I know the truth, things became clearer for me. I'm able to move on, comprehend why those events happened, and stop asking myself why.

Creative Writing 2006-Honorable Mention

Teenage Love Michael Abalos

The first time they saw each other was at the “feed and seed.” Nicole Heart was a beautiful girl with the prettiest hazel eyes, dark brown hair, and the kind of tan that cost money. She had just started her new job working at the front counter. John Drave, well, he was a cowboy, dark brown eyes, crooked smile, with a rough look about him. You could tell from his build that he was no stranger to hard work. He was a ranch hand, so he went into the feed and seed quite a bit. Now John was not the worst, but he was not the best looking guy in their small hometown. However, there was something about his charm that got the attention of young Miss Nicole. Every day he went into the store he would say, “Smile, pretty lady, your prince is here.”

She would always ring him up first then say, “What makes a dirty boy like you a prince?”

He would always say, “Ain’t you my princess?” Then he would give her that half grin and walk out, never saying another word, not even a name.

One day Nicole was driving down an old dirt road. She saw a boy, no shirt, old camo hat and jeans tucked halfway in his boot. The boy was carrying a tackle box and a fishing pole. As Nicole got closer she recognized him as the boy from the feed store. She slowed her car down right next to him with the window rolled down and said, “Does Prince Charming have a name?”

The boy said, “John. Does the princess?”

The girl said, “Nicole. You going fishing?”

He said, “No, we are. I got an extra rod and reel here.” She pulled off the side of the road and walked with him down to a small stream.

He asked her, “You ever gone fishing?”

Nicole smiled and said, “Once or twice.” As he was giving her instructions on how to cast she pulled the rod back and threw the most beautiful cast John had ever seen. He looked at her in shock; he didn’t think a girl was capable of such things. The next words John spoke were, “What are you doing for the rest of my life?”

She smiled and said, “Just fish, and maybe we will talk about tomorrow.”

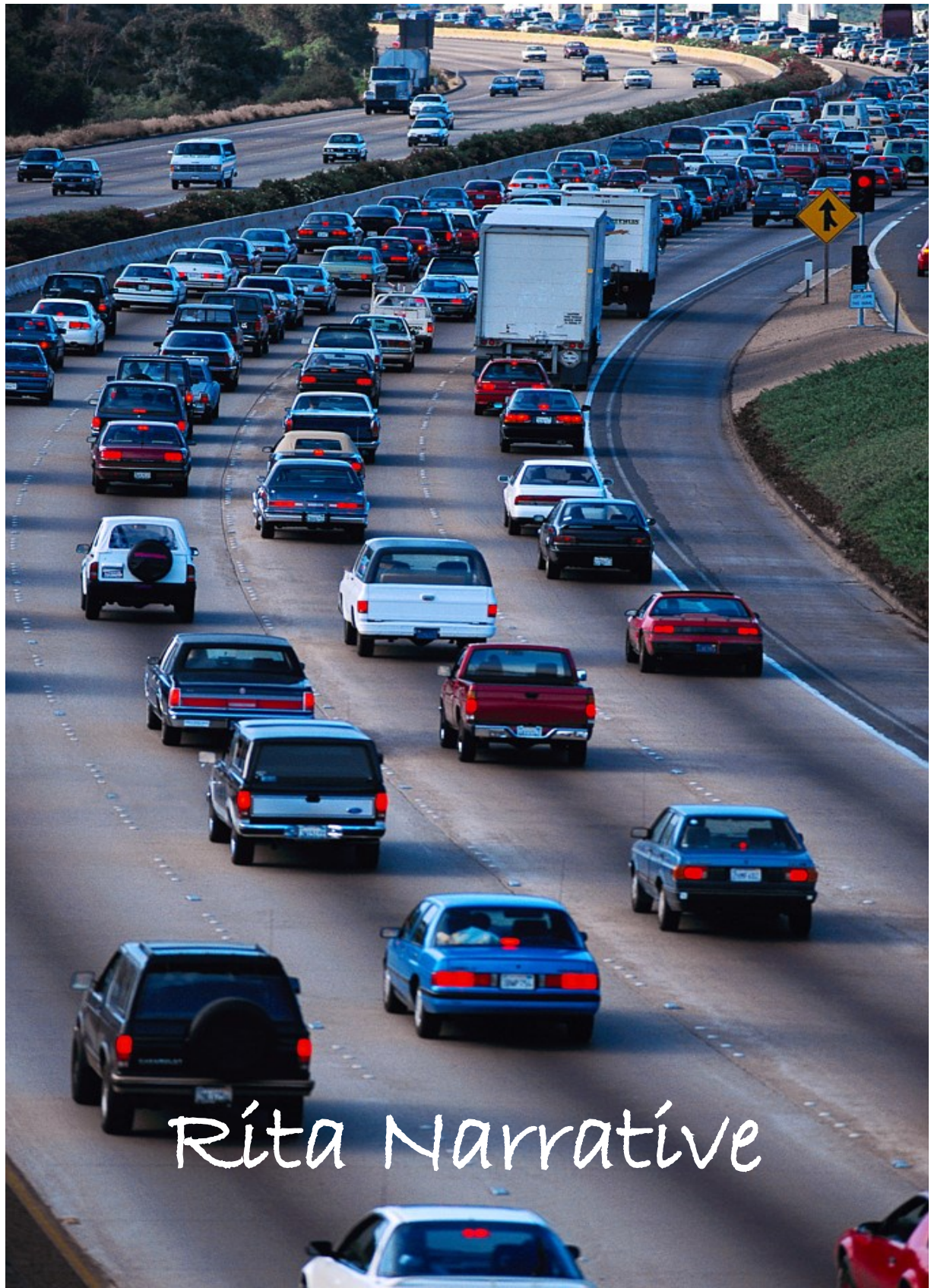
They became inseparable. If he wasn’t at work, then he was with his new girlfriend. Those two kids were crazy about each other. The longer they hung around each other, the more they discovered they had in common and the more they felt for each other. But it didn’t stay that good for long. Little by little, she started talking more about her ex-boyfriend. John could tell that she missed him, but he could not help but want her so he tried to ignore it. He could

not ignore it when Nicole saw James Dune, a good looking, brash, hot tempered type that didn't do anything but hurt her and break her heart.

This was the first time in a long time Nicole had seen or heard from him. The bastard started filling her head with lies and false promises, just like he used to. She could not help it, she still loved him. One night when the rain was coming down hard, it reached its worst. John didn't know what to do. The girl of his dreams was in love with another guy. He did what any cowboy would do when his heart was breaking, he drank. She was crying because she knew she would be happy with John, and he was the better man, but James was her first love and it didn't help that he was tormenting her constantly making her feel bad for him. John did not want to, but he knew what he had to do for her to make it easier. He knew that her pain would not stop until one of them stepped down. He cared about her far more than he cared about himself. However, there was something he had to say before he left.

He stood outside her house in the pouring rain, face full of tears masked by the rain, but he could not hide his blood shot eyes. He said to her, "I'm only doing this because I want you to be happy and because I want your pain to stop." Then after a long silence, except for sniffles of two crying teenagers after a long hug and a kiss on the forehead, he told her for the first time how he felt..."because I love you baby!" Then he turned and walked out of sight into the rain.

Then about four seconds later, he heard her say, "I love you too, Boo!" He turned around and watched her run towards him. Only before she got there she slipped in a massive puddle and fell flat on her face. He laughed, helped her up and said, "Come here, you dumb broad."



Rita Narrative

Rita Narrative-First Place

Rita Experience Mohammad Arshad

Hurricane Rita was the first hurricane which I have seen in my life. We were being advised to leave before the hurricane. We were also planning to leave, so we could go to a safer place. My father owns a gas station at 9th Avenue in Port Arthur; he was thinking to keep the store open because all the stores were closed before the hurricane.

We kept our store open on Thursday, August 22 for the whole day, so we could help our community in that difficult time. Our store was the only one in the whole city which was trying to serve the community. Our store announced on the radio that we were open. There was a huge line of cars on 9th Avenue just to get gas. We were not even able to control the crowd of people in the store, and finally we had to call the police for security reasons. Three police cars were patrolling around the store, and two officers were standing inside the store to control the customers. The whole community was very thankful to us, and they appreciated that we were open. We kept the store open until 12:00 o'clock on Friday the 23rd, and then we evacuated to our store in Silsbee. We stayed the whole time in our gas station in Silsbee, and we were standing near the door for the whole night, watching the horrible devastation caused by Rita. The canopy over the gas pumps fell down, and we were afraid that the roof would blow off the building. Fortunately, we were saved by the mercy of God.

While evacuated to Silsbee, the store in Port Arthur was broken into, and the thieves stole all the valuable goods left behind. The total damage of goods stolen was worth about \$50,000. They entered into the store by breaking the wall of windows. When the hurricane hit, the winds tore off the roof. Now the store looks as though it was hit by a bomb. We have started repairing the store, and it will cost us about \$35,000.

We have been vandalized by the same community that we stayed open to serve in the wake of a terrible storm, during a time of tremendous difficulty. We were rewarded by being robbed and destruction of our gas station. While we were evacuated and gone for one week, we were being continuously robbed and vandalized.

There was severe and massive damage to both of our businesses. Our house, fortunately was spared and totally secured. Hurricane Rita was scary; and it disturbed everyone's life, but thanks to God there were less casualties, and God saved us all.

Rita Narrative-Second Place

The First Responders

Rena de la Rosa

My family and I rose early that morning to have breakfast. During the night Rita had made landfall along the Gulf Coast. While we gathered around the television to listen and watch the devastation that had impacted the area, we knew John would receive the call. The instruction would be to go back home. A clean-up crew would have been assigned as First Responders.

As we finished breakfast, John's cell phone rang. "Hello, okay, I'll leave shortly." As he hung up the phone, I knew it was time for him to leave.

The bad weather had not subsided yet, as the system was traveling North, in our direction. He would have to go into the storm. While he prepared to leave, he instructed me to leave lines of communication open! Knowing food would be hard to find, I packed him food and necessary supplies. He walked out the door accepting my offer with a smile and a gentle kiss. Hugging the kids, he said, "I love you," and was gone.

An hour into his absence, the phone rang. He reported driving rain, fallen and falling trees and utility poles, and extremely dangerous driving conditions. He really didn't know if he could get back into the city. We were both praying for his safety. Stunned, I sat and watched everyone else in the house as they too had worries of their own.

Later in the day, after many anxious hours, John let me know he was back in Groves. He had checked on our home, and reported to the city for duty. Also, he was shocked at the devastation. Trees were down. Roads and streets blocked. Utility wires were down everywhere. Homes were destroyed. Roofs were gone. Fences lay everywhere. It was a ghost town. I was relieved to know he was safe, and he began the stressful job of the First Responder.

Rita Narrative-Third Place

Leaving Thaddous Guidry

I packed all of my belongings in my car and fled to Beaumont, Texas to escape Hurricane Rita. All of my family met up at my Aunt's house and from there we left together in a group. I brought as many of my things with me on our seemingly bewildering journey. After taking about two hours just to leave Beaumont, we finally merged our way onto Interstate 10. There were many different vehicles on the highway, many different license plates such as Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, even California! It was extremely hard to stick together in our caravan. My family had filled about four recreational vehicles and losing track of someone could have been easily done that day.

Watching other people's driving techniques was my only form of entertainment, along with watching the morning hours change to afternoon. After multiple hours of traveling on the highway, we finally arrived at a distant Aunt's house in Lafayette. I had never met her before. One of the first things I heard was Louisiana's favorite jazz man, Keith Frank. Zidico is very popular there, and I had a feeling that I would be hearing much more of this while I was there. I unpacked all of my things in the room where I would be sleeping. As the day fell captive to the night, my family from Louisiana threw a party in celebration of our arrival. It seemed as if partying was almost as common as breathing, cooking as well. I think that I may have gained about seven pounds while in Lafayette. There was a substantial number of children whom my older cousins brought along on our evacuation. Every single one of them was irritating! It was as though I couldn't get a moment of peace, all of the noise, noise, noise! After deciding that a vasectomy wasn't such a bad idea, I accompanied my parents to the Salvation Army, [then the Red Cross, the Medicare center and any sign that stated, "Food, Water and Ice"]. I now have no tolerance for waiting in any line.

Over all, my evacuation wasn't so bad. I got to visit someplace I had never been. I went to a few clubs. I figured that I might as well make the best out of this experience; also, I received money out of this ordeal. Other than the children and trying to figure out what everyone in Lafayette was saying, it was almost like a mandatory vacation.

Rita Narrative-Honorable Mention

Family Barbeque Shaquita Posey

On a hot boring Saturday, my family and I were sitting down in the trailer the church had allowed us to use. My family and I were not used to being around each other for a long period of time. We had plenty of arguments and disagreements, but we had to make the best of it. A couple of moments later, I told them I was ready to go home because I missed my grandmother's and my cooking. Sometimes we have to make the best of every situation, and that's exactly what we did.

They had food for all of us to eat which Red Cross had prepared for us to eat, but the food they prepared was horrible. They should not even be allowed to serve that food to anyone. They had fat green wieners and no chili. It was just pitiful, so we decided to ask the pastor if we could have a barbeque. There is nothing like a good family barbeque. The pastor of the church said he did not have a problem with us having the barbeque. We had smiles on our faces then.

Later that evening my mother and two of my aunts collected money from the rest of the family, so they could go to the store and get all the things that they needed for the barbeque. When they returned my mother told me that she bought \$300 worth of different kinds of meat, because we were feeding everyone at the shelter. It would not be right for our family and the other families to eat the Red Cross food. My two aunts came back with the side dishes that we were going to have. They put everything in the refrigerator and cabinets so that the food would be fresh for the next day after church. This was just like what we would do back at home.

Sunday morning my dad and his friend started the pit while everyone else went on to church. After church the ladies went to the trailer to change from their Sunday church clothes. Later on they went to the kitchen in the family building and began cooking. We had our gospel music; we all were laughing and having a good time with no arguing.

Around 6 o'clock in the evening everything was ready to be served. We had meat, rice dressing, potato salad, beans, macaroni and cheese, salad and cake. We served the pastor, his family, members of the church who were there to help, and everyone else. There was enough food for seconds, and they all thanked us for the great barbeque.

What a wonderful day for a family barbeque. It lifted all of our spirits and brought the family close together.

Rita Narrative-Honorable Mention

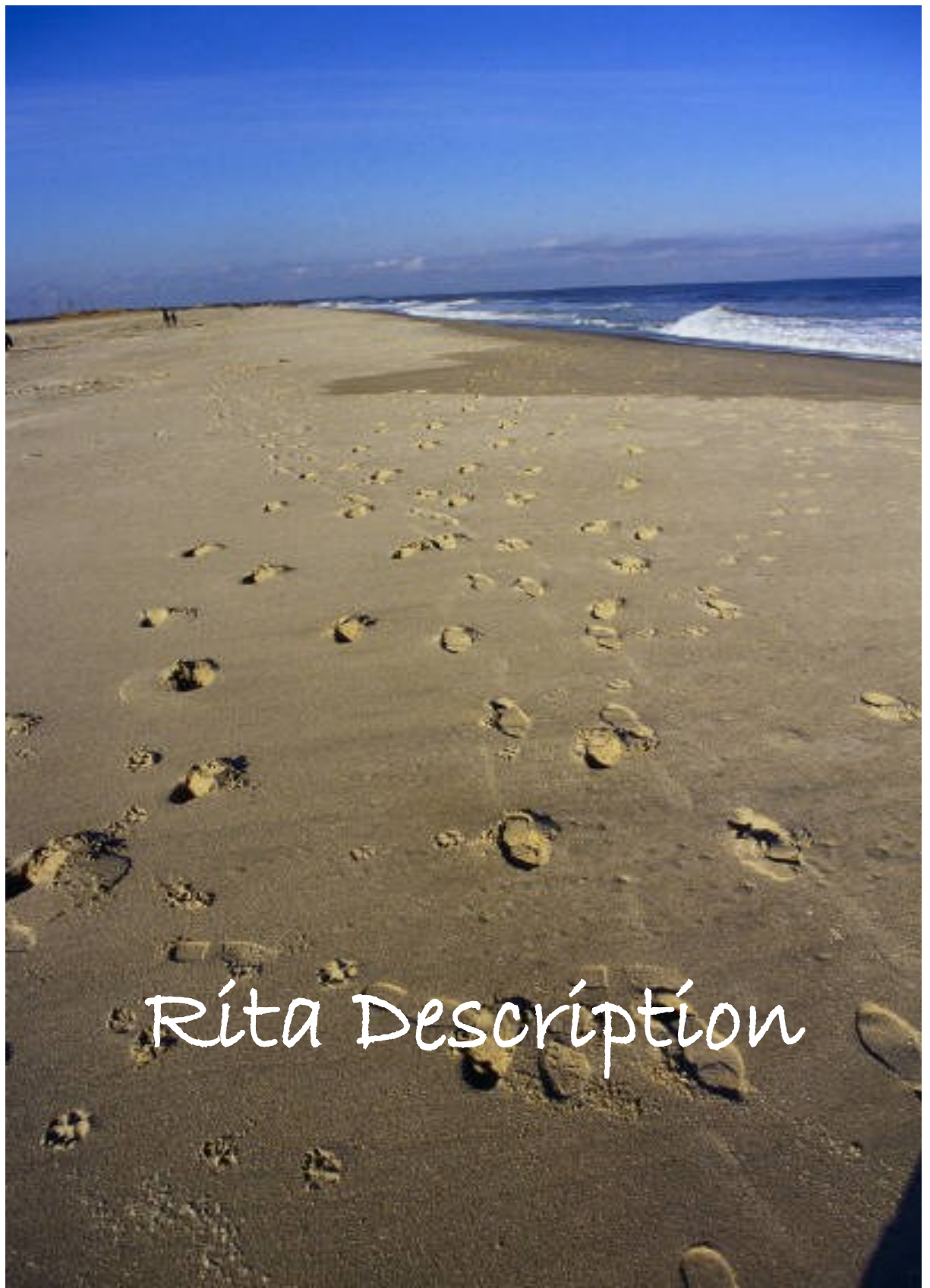
Coming of Age Rolando Perez

During Hurricane Rita, I became more of an adult on the road than at home. It was my first evacuation that I had to actually drive and navigate. Driving for long periods at a time can create many unpleasant feelings. My behind would be so sore that I wouldn't be able to sit down comfortably. Stress would go and come as I would drive.

While heading north, being stuck in major traffic isn't what I ever want to be again. Every ten to fifteen minutes, we would move up one car space. The exhaust fumes from all the vehicles made me sick to my stomach. While the sun was up and beating down on us really hard, many cars were pulled to the side because they were out of gas or had car trouble. I would see many people help the stranded. I had to switch lanes a couple of times to head in the right direction. Many people wouldn't let me pass across them to get to the other lane. Others would just honk their horns as if they were crazy.

I got to Woodville where we slept for about two and half hours near a closed store across the street from a motel that was full. I woke up and my brother took the wheel until we arrived at Lufkin. We were getting hungry, so we ate at the Sonic. The aroma of the warm chili cheese coney made my mouth water because I didn't eat much before leaving from home. It tasted so good, that in about five minutes it was all gone. Then we waited to decide our next move. Gas was becoming a real issue because the gas stations were running out. Unfortunately we were not able to get gas, but someone came to the car and told us where to find shelter.

We stayed at the Expo Center, where we were able to stay for a couple of days. We felt and heard strong winds that rattled the signs on the upper level of the benches. A few signs were knocked off and water dripped from the ceiling a bit. We called a cousin who was staying in Tyler to bring us gas. A few hours later, he arrived with the gas, and we followed him to the motel where he was staying. We checked in for about a week and watched the news while we were there. We went home after seeing that many Port Arthur residents were heading home. I was relieved that we were to go home without the traffic or the detours. While driving through Beaumont and into Port Arthur, a bad sewage odor just took over the clean air. I really wouldn't want to experience a hurricane again.



Rita Descripción

Rita Description-First Place

The Fury of Rita Rena de la Rosa

September 24, 2005, Saturday in Southeast Texas, we felt the rage of a powerful category 3 hurricane. Rita, was a storm that came with the force of wild horses running down the plains at a fast rate of speed, not stopping until she chooses to leave with victory. This was a victory that would show her strength and might, destroying everything in her path.

The winds seemed to be dancing to a maddening sound, as they swirled tightly around the sky, as Rita entered the gulf waters. The damp musty smell of the green sky filled the air, as thunder echoed in the distance. The rolling roar of the ocean tossed and turned as the force of Rita covered miles and miles of land. Whirlwinds swooped to the earth, hurling objects in their paths, as by the mighty hand of God.

We waited to see her fury and were shaken with fear. In the end, the path she will leave behind, will be bitter. Homes will be broken, trees will be splintered and the town will be silenced, as Rita wins her sweet victory.

Rita Description-Second Place

Gulf Coast Fear Amanda Davis

The fear of hurricanes grips the Gulf Coast every year from June 1 to November 31. This year our fear was finally put into play. On September 24, 2005, Hurricane Rita made landfall near Port Arthur, Texas. The experience of Rita is like nothing I have ever experienced before. The literal miles of traffic while leaving home, not knowing if anything will be there when I returned, was the worst part. Soon a new fear gripped me, the gas shortage. At the gas stations, people were yelling and shouting about the gas problems. However, we were fortunate not to run out of gas. The weirdest part through was that on the entire way to Fort Worth, we saw fellow evacuees and knew they were fleeing too, because of their faces. You could see the worry, fear and even tiredness of their faces. The sight of so many people who were hurt, made me want to cry. The children were restless, but luckily, they had little concept of the hurricane. I wished that I was a child many times during the evacuation. The biggest effect that Rita had on me was the fact that it threw me even more into adulthood. I have lived on my own for over a year now, but I still always looked to my mom for answers. Now I made all my own decisions. Everything is my responsibility. I will never forget how I felt when I watched the hurricane on television as it landed on my hometown. Soon after I was very anxious to get home. When I was finally able to drive into my driveway, I have never felt so alone. My home was much damaged. Metal and trees were everywhere. For the first time in my life I knew I was alone. Yes, Hurricane Rita has brought many physical changes to people's lives, but Rita changed so much more for me.

Rita Description-Third Place

Rita's Wrath

Tina Coe

The sights, sounds, and feelings I experienced on the trip home the morning after Rita, left me with a feeling that I was living an episode from the Twilight Zone. With no idea what we would be driving into, we left the Dallas area early Saturday morning. For the first couple of hours the only thing that was strange to me was that there was no traffic, which was really ironic considering the day before.

As we drove further south, I noticed the clouds starting to thicken, and getting darker in color. The clouds seemed different to me than any others I had ever seen before, they had a look of control, and they were screaming across the sky. The wind was blowing very hard. We were in an Ford Excursion, which is a rather heavy vehicle, but we could feel the truck being pushed around on the road, as the wind whistled around us.

The rain was falling in sheets, but through the rain I was starting to see some of the effects of Rita. I saw lines of trees bent at a 45 degree angle and all in the same direction. Trees were everywhere, in the road, on houses, on cars; it was just unbelievable. We came upon a car that apparently had driven head on into a tree that had fallen across the road.

I found it very ironic how we would see one house blown totally flat, and the house next door would look as if it had not been affected at all, just as if God himself had placed a finger upon it to keep it in place, and untouched. Another thing that caught my attention was the storage buildings. I saw at least 15 different storage building facilities that had been destroyed. They all looked like a bomb had gone off inside them, the doors on each unit were blown out, and all the contents had been thrown in different directions by the wind.

As we approached the Beaumont area there were a few more cars on the road. There were DPS vehicles sitting at every exit on the highway, not allowing anyone to exit onto the feeder roads. As we approached the Port Neches area, we came to a roadblock where DPS was checking credentials to see if we could be allowed to pass, or if we had to turn around. Jim is part of the first responder team, so we were allowed to continue through the roadblock, and into town.

Coming into town was a very eerie feeling. It looked nothing like the town I had just left the day before. The businesses that I had passed everyday were unrecognizable to me at a glance. There was a stillness all around me that gave the feeling that time was standing still.

neighborhood dogs barking. There were downed power lines, poles, and trees on just about every road that we drove down.

There was an overpowering sense of loss and sadness as I witnessed all the destruction around me. In the same breath I thanked God because I know that the effect of Hurricane Rita could have been much worse. I think I can understand the feeling of being marooned on an island. Everything that we take for granted everyday had been taken away by the storm. We were just like the people that you see on television when it happens someplace else, but it was happening to us, not them.

Rita Description-Honorable Mention

Back in Town John Schroeder

When I arrived in Texas on Sunday October 8th, the sight was unreal. All the destruction for Hurricane Rita looked like the war in Iraq was now the war in Texas. When I pulled into Orange, Texas, right on the other side of Vinton, Louisiana, I pulled over on the side of the road to videotape some of the damage. When I got out of my truck, I felt like I was standing next door to a power plant because of all of the generators running electricity to all of the powerless buildings. I videotaped mostly fallen trees and signs blown down. The seriousness of all this didn't really hit me until I got to Bridge City.

The odor was like the smell of dead cows and skunks. I had to hold my breath for as long as I could until I got to my house. When we drove over the Cow Bayou bridge coming into Bridge City, I could see most of the buildings were without roofs. The stoplights weren't working, and there were no stores open. There were hardly any cars on the road because everyone wasn't back from evacuation yet, and debris was still scattered. I was mostly worried about our new house because I had only stayed in it for about two weeks before we had to evacuate. I was welcomed back home by tree limbs in the road, powerless buildings, roofless homes and businesses. Most of the wreckage has been cleaned up; and most homes have restored power, so now all there is left to do is get the people who lost their homes back on their feet again and living their normal lives.

Rita Description-Honorable Mention

Rita's Aftermath

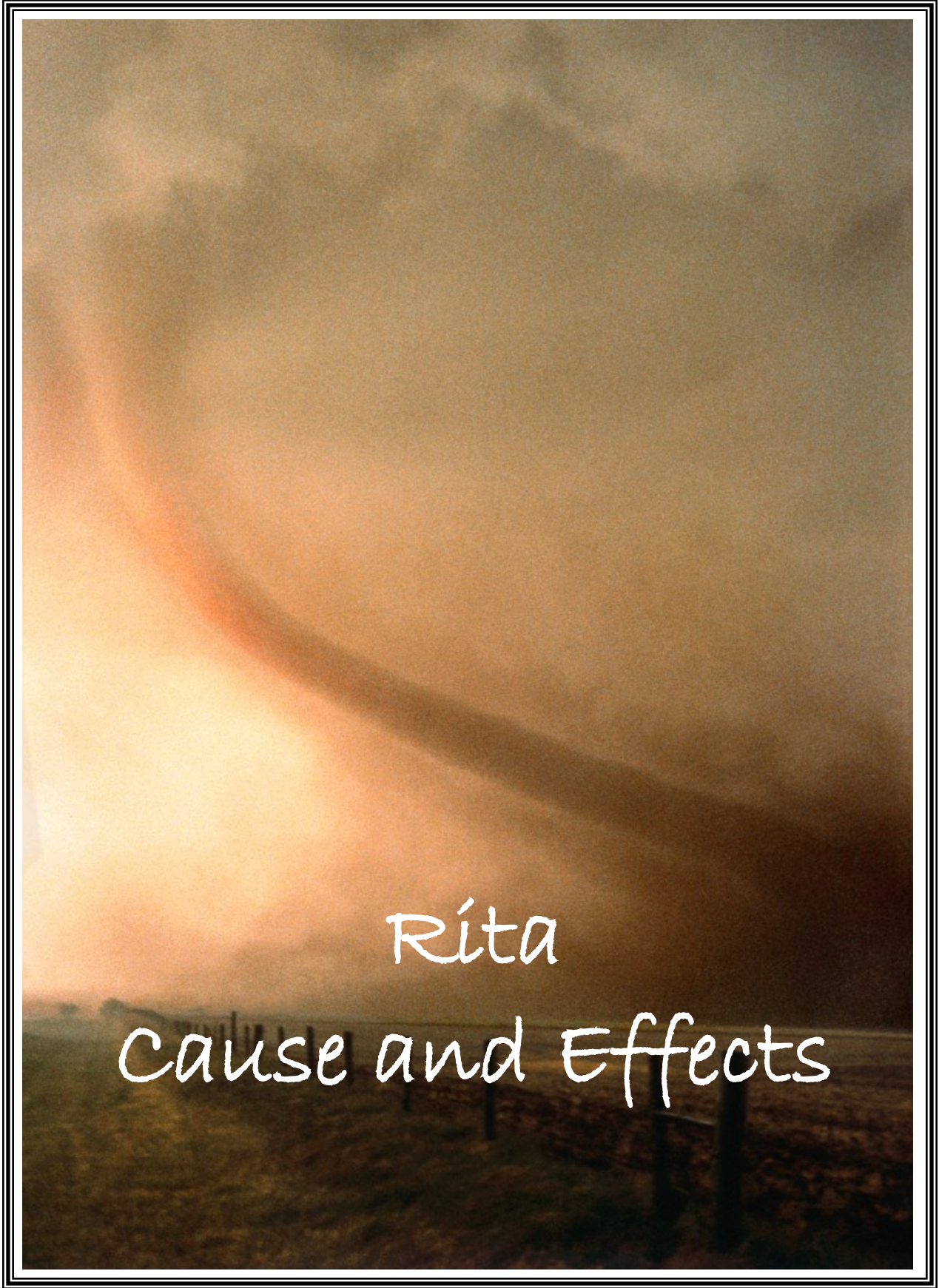
Charity Wells

The aftermath of Hurricane Rita is an experience that I will never forget. When the hurricane landed Saturday morning, I was in Monroe, Louisiana. The sound of the wind whipping against the house sounded like horses tramping on a tin roof. As we experienced only a mild portion of the storm, I had a gut-wrenching feeling about my hometown's devastation.

When I arrived back in Beaumont, the destruction that I saw was incredible. Debris was everywhere, as if a child had thrown around toys in his room. I could sense the emptiness in the city as we moved more through town. My mind began to wonder as I thought of what it would have been like to experience the storm.

The odor of the air was tainted and reminded me of a combination of onions and sweet scented roses. Unfortunately, my house was no better. When I opened the door to my apartment, I was completely overwhelmed. My entire apartment smelled like a bag of soiled diapers. As I walked slowly towards the refrigerator, I paused as if I was walking towards a snake in the grass. I opened it, and to my horror, there was mold on everything. Touching anything in that refrigerator was completely out of question. Once I began to clean out the refrigerator, the horrid odor began to dissipate.

I am grateful that the hurricane did minimal damage to my property, but I will never forget what I experienced. It was truly an eye-opening event in my life.



Rita

Cause and Effects

Rita Cause and Effects-First Place

Beyond Rita Tina Coe

It seems every time I turn on the television, I see a natural disaster happening somewhere in the world. First, it was the tsunami in the Indian Ocean. I remember thinking how unbelievable the tsunami event was, but it did not affect me in any personal way. Then there was Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Katrina did have some effect on me because it was closer to home. I found myself thinking that it could have easily been us hit by that hurricane. I felt sorry for the people in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, especially the children who were separated from their parents. I remember feeling very sad, and wanted to help somehow. I donated supplies, and some children's clothes to a local church that was sheltering evacuees.

Then within a month after Katrina, hurricane Rita landed in my town. It is amazing how different I could be affected when something like this actually happens to me, and not somewhere else in the world. Rita's wrath affected me in several different ways, financially, emotionally, and the way I appreciate the little things in life.

Hurricane Rita affected most people financially in a negative way, but in my case it actually affected me in a positive way. When I returned to Port Neches the morning after the storm, first it seemed like my daily life had come to a stop. All I could think of with my cleaning business on hold, was how I was going to pay my bills. Then on my second day home, Jim informed me that I had a temporary job at Huntsman working security. So for four weeks I worked at Huntsman, seven days a week, twelve hours a day. The hours were a lot longer than I was used to working, but the money was great. I would have had to work almost two months at my regular job to earn what I did working two weeks at Huntsman. With the money I made after paying my bills, I was able to put some money in a savings account which I have never had before. I was also able to buy things for my boys for Christmas, which without this job I would have not been able to afford.

Hurricane Rita was a sea of emotions for me. I felt frustrated while fighting the traffic during the evacuation. I felt amazement with how the people were reacting in traffic; it was as if they had lost reality with common sense. However, the emotion I felt most was fear. My ex-husband who lives in Kountze with my two sons, was not going to evacuate. I called to see if I could get my sons and take them to Dallas with me, but their father would not let them go. The whole time I was on the road evacuating, I held a picture of them and prayed that God would watch over them and keep them safe from the storm.

Hurricane Rita also made me very aware of how much I take for granted. After waiting three weeks to get the electricity turned back on, in the future I will not complain when I lose power for just a couple of hours. Not having access to water made me realize just how important it is to my daily living. The first thing that I thought about was not being able to bathe. Then as I went through the first day, I realized I could not wash clothes, I could not flush the toilet, or even brush my teeth. Another thing I took for granted was the ability to get in my car, and go do something as simple as buying a loaf of bread. The one thing I will never take for granted again is the time I get to spend with my children. I had to live almost six weeks without seeing my sons because of hurricane Rita, and I missed them terribly.

Sometimes I think my days are boring and hum-drum and taking life for granted, assuming I have control over my life. Then either by chance, or by the hand of God, I am reminded that I am not always in control. Something as natural as the weather can bring me to my knees, affecting every part of my life, making me realize that nothing is set in stone. There is no promise of a job tomorrow. There is a good chance of heartbreak and sadness along with my happiness in life. All I know and take for granted can be taken away in the blink of an eye.

Rita Cause and Effects-First Place

Freedom and Happiness

Huyen Le

Due to Hurricane Rita, we have damages marked in our lives. Rita had caused many problems that we dealt with for weeks. Because hurricane Rita decided to make her way towards Port Arthur, my evacuation with several members of my family was an experience. The damages caused us not to come home for a little over a week. Rita gave me an experience that will last a lifetime because of the memories made during the evacuation. The boredom, the freedom, and the happy times were caused by Rita.

The boredom caused by Rita was an experience to remember. I was at Wal-Mart every time I turned my head. I would always try to make my time there worthwhile. I would walk around, ride the bike, cook, clean, or sleep. The boredom that I had was self-explained. All the time I would say I'm bored and end up doing something. I've learned to bake a sponge cake because I was bored. I would like to snack every time I was bored. I snacked most of the time anyway; it's hard to stop me snacking once I start.

Being away from home and doing as I please is called freedom. Being able to do things that I normally cannot do is called freedom. I love to just sit back in a boat and feel the fish nibbling on my bait. I went fishing a few times I was out, and I loved it. I got to eat out more than I do when I'm at home. I got to just sit on a lazy comfortable chair with my feet up. It felt as if I was unemployed and not a student. There was no worrying about getting on time and having to study for a test. It was the best freedom feeling ever.

The happy times were when I was with my loved ones. I rarely got to spend time with them. I had a great feeling when we were told to evacuate. I knew then that my family would be brought together like the old times. I truly thought it would be years until I got to see my family again. Another happy time was when I got to eat what I've been craving for. It made me jump for joy when I knew that I could please my cravings. When I crave, I intend to get it; therefore, my stomach was happy as ever. I probably won't have another time to satisfy my cravings until my sister's wedding.

In conclusion, I have enjoyed the moments, but worried at the same time. It is hard to get back on track after three weeks or so of not working or going to school. It took me about a month to snap back to the real world again. Because of Rita, the boredom, the freedom, and the happy times was an experience I could not forget. It made my life a slight change with the distant from my family and me. It was a good feeling to actually get to know them. Thank you, Rita, for bringing me the freedom and happiness, in addition to the boredom that was experience.

Rita Cause and Effects-Third Place

Evacuation Rena de la Rosa

Due to hurricane Rita, citizens had to evacuate along the Gulf Coast Region. The storm was too great for families to stay behind knowing devastation was going to impact the area. As we prepared to leave our town, I knew we were going to be facing some obstacles. Our direction would take us north where we would stay with family in Louisiana. I made sure our vehicle was packed with the necessities we would need while we were gone away. There could be tension caused from the high volume of traffic and gas shortage due to massive amount of people evacuating. With so many worries, people could become angry with the unpleasant situation. The effects of leaving involved having a route to travel, plenty of gas and being prepared mentally.

As we traveled down the highway we could see miles of vehicles ahead of us leading one another. The police would not let us travel east or west, which caused the traffic to slow down severely. We started to see automobiles broken down on both sides of the road with worried looks on the faces of so many. Not knowing what to do, they waited for help which they hoped would come soon. The ride to safety would be a very long and tiresome trip. The plan of evacuation had been compromised by last minute leaving because of not knowing where the storm would hit. Leaving early before everyone else and having a planned route to travel would have helped with the dreadfully long lines of traffic.

Knowing it would be hard to find gas, I made sure to fill up my car early that day. The lines for gas would be long, and we were likely to run out of fuel. Many people we had seen on the side of the roads had run out of gas. They carried gas cans with them knowing they might run out of fuel. A few were lucky because emergency trucks were given five gallons of gas if they had gas cans. This would allow them to travel to the next town. Gas shortage was a huge problem no matter where the destination.

Finally, being prepared helped with the transition we were about to go through. You could easily lose control of your emotions because of the unorganized evacuation. However, becoming angry and hostile would only make things worse. With the circumstances the way they were, I lost my temper. My day was ruined and so was my family's. I had become angry when we left our destination in Louisiana to travel to Houston despite orders to stay where we were. There was nothing anyone could do to change my attitude. Staying calm is a must in this

Although we felt the effects of the evacuation, leaving involved having a route to travel, plenty of gas, and being prepared mentally. We managed to have a safe evacuation. In the event that a hurricane were to come our way again, having a plan of action is a very smart thing to do. This would help with travel and the ride would go more smoothly. As I look back on this trying experience, I realize safety and being with those you love is what really matters.

Rita Cause and Effects-Honorable Mention

Port Arthur after Rita Greg Beloney

About two months ago Hurricane Rita hit the city of Port Arthur. The hurricane really did a number on the city. Port Arthur is a small city in Texas and is not built well enough for a hurricane to hit here again any time soon. The hurricane really messed up our city, and it also made the city lose a lot of money in damages. It also made people evacuate the city for a long time. Some people are not home yet, and this happened two months ago. The problem for me was when we finally got back to town, it was hard to find food, because restaurants, grocery stores, and small corner stores were closed.

The restaurants were closed because Port Arthur had no power. With no power all the food restaurants had stored went bad. Plus when you have freezers full of spoil food, the clean up job was not a joke. Some restaurants just have their drive through windows open due to damages from the hurricane. They also have some that haven't opened back up at all yet. There are rumors that some of the restaurants that haven't opened yet might stay closed for good. I'm just glad that none of the restaurants that I like to go to are closing.

Grocery stores were closed when we got back also due to a lack of power. They had the exact same problems that the restaurants had. The problems were the same, but the grocery stores' problems were bigger. A bigger place meant bigger and more freezers. With bigger and more freezers there was a lot more spoiled meat than the restaurants had. There was one good thing grocery stores had and the restaurants didn't, and that was more people. More people means faster clean up, and that's the reason they opened back up so fast.

The corner stores didn't have power either, but that didn't keep them closed for long. As a matter of fact, the corner stores around my house opened up the day after my family and I got back to town. You see the corner stores had to get back in shape, but that didn't take long because they didn't have spoiled meat and stuff like the grocery stores and restaurants did. All they did was throw away the stuff that wasn't good and keep the stuff that was good. One store by my house was selling hot sodas. Another by my grandmother's house was selling cold sodas out of a cooler with ice on top of them. So you see most small corner stores were not affected by the hurricane that much.

With restaurants, grocery stores, and small corner stores closed, you really appreciated the power of electricity. Without electricity the world would be a boring place to live. Just think about it for a second. Without electricity there would be no television at all. I wouldn't even get to see Shaq and the Miami Heat win the NBA Championship this year. I also

wouldn't get to see the New York Yankees win the World Series next year. As a matter of fact there wouldn't be any sports at all. This is why people should appreciate what they have because it can all disappear in a flash.

Rita Cause and Effects-Honorable Mention

Three Effects of Hurricane Rita

Azalia Muzquiz

Hurricane Rita has been one of the first hurricane storms that I have ever experienced. Hurricane Rita has made a huge impact on most people who suffered from it. Some of the problems that have bothered me and my family for a while when returning home have been very difficult to live with. Even though everyone was happy and glad to be back home, we had to face something horrible. Three effects that bothered me since the hurricane were loss of electricity, water, and sewage, and eating the right food.

Electricity has been one of the most useful resources used by everyone. Electricity has been a big role in my life. There is no way that I could ever function without it. When being at home I found myself without electricity for one day. A day may not seem much compared to others who lived without lights for weeks, but to me it did. Having a curfew made me realize and value electricity further more. For that one day without electricity, I was unhappy and wished it would be back to normal anytime soon. Due to the electricity not working I had to get used to having an ice chest filled up with ice every day, I've always been used to having a refrigerator functioning as other people, and not worrying about ice dissolving every day. Also, not having lights in every part of my house made me realize how important electricity is. Having a candle lit on my hand was not very pleasant all the time. I soon realized that I had been used to electricity for most of my lifetime. The next day, my father managed to get a generator. Everything seemed to get back to normal, but our electricity had to be limited. Not much could be turned on at the same time due to the generator's power and the fuel remaining in the generator.

Our water supply was somewhat normal. The water sewage wasn't fully purified as said on television, but it was good to bathe with. We managed to get water bottles and gallons to rinse out mouth when brushing our teeth and also to drink when we were thirsty. Also, water is one of the useful resources that I could not live without. Water has good use for well-mannered hygiene. It helps preserve my cleanliness and health, washing out bacteria, and microorganisms. I would not like to be sick and unhealthy after a hurricane disaster. Eating the right food and having a good meal is also one of the very useful needs for a human being. Eating right is one of my favorite hobbies. I love eating good and tasty food. After returning home, our eating habits changed a lot. Mostly it was canned food, healthy, but canned. I was mostly used to home cooking and eating out at restaurants, or fast food once in awhile. There was no way for

eating out. Convenient stores, restaurants, markets, grocery stores, and shopping centers were closed until further notice, or until repairs from damages experienced from the hurricane were made.

Although some of the pantry stores were closed, there were other stores open, and we were able to buy healthy food as well as necessary things like toiletries. After having the water sewage fixed, we were able to use the water as normal as before. Even though one of the effects that bothered my family and me was loss of electricity, we were capable of finding a generator, and life became somewhat normal. This hurricane experience and effects will always be remembered and learned from just in case of another hurricane. Next time, I will know and expect how powerful a hurricane is.



Rita Argumentation

Rita Argumentation- First Place

My Life Changed Forever Charity Wells

Hurricane Rita was an eye-opening experience in my life. Going through a hurricane was something I was not prepared to encounter. Hurricane Rita shook Southeast Texas into reality. The majority of Southeast Texas was not prepared for the catastrophic event. The fact that I was not prepared to the extent that I had imagined was frustrating as well. I had never been through a hurricane before so I did not know what to really expect. Hurricane Rita changed my life forever. Dealing with traffic, family, and my emotions has indeed changed my outlook on life.

When I said that I was not prepared as I had imagined, I honestly was not prepared. I can remember my mother calling me on Wednesday the twenty-first of September. She told me in a frantic voice, "Charity, we have to leave tonight." To be honest I did not take her seriously because a hurricane had never really affected Beaumont. Nevertheless, I agree, and decided to go home and pack. While packing for the evacuation, I had no idea the amount of traffic we were about to encounter. My family and I left at about seven o'clock Thursday morning, the twenty-second. When we reached Lafayette, the traffic became horrendous. Cars were backed up as far as my eyes could see. Some people began turning their cars off, and began walking along side of the road. As I sat in my car, I began to realize that this evacuation was serious. Seeing all those people made my sense of security slowly begin to dissipate. The traffic began to make people feel frustrated, nervous, and anxious about what was going to happen. At one point I began thinking irrationally, because the traffic was not moving at all. A helpless feeling began to overwhelm me.

Dealing with the traffic was bad enough, until my family started getting on my nerves. No one in my family was comfortable. It had been a while since I had spent that much time with my family. I thought that it would be easy to be with everyone for a few days; unfortunately, I was mistaken. When we arrived in Monroe, Louisiana, all that we wanted to do was rest. Over the next few days I began realizing that I had underlying issues with my family. I never had to deal with those issues before the evacuation. Being with my family for a long period of time was difficult.

At the age of seventeen, I moved out of my mother's home, so I never really dealt with the issues I had with her. Bitterness, resentment, and anger were feelings that I hadn't faced. These were feelings I had because of situations in the past. My sister and I also had a confrontation because of the inconvenience we were in. After we settled all of our disagreements, we began to appreciate one another. As a family we began to realize that in the end, all we have is one

another. My emotions became like a roller-coaster, traveling up and down. I began to think that my emotions would never recover.

Dealing with the traffic, my family, and my emotions has indeed changed my outlook on life. Not knowing what to expect, or how to feel made me realize the importance of being prepared. When I think back on my experience, I realize that there was really no way to be prepared. As I examine this situation more, Hurricane Rita made me appreciate everyone in my life. Being older enables me to realize that even though I had no idea what to expect, God had everything under control. Hurricane Rita exposed everyone's true being. I will never forget Hurricane Rita because it truly made a change in my life.

Rita Argumentation- Second Place

Separation Kent Pierce

Hurricane Rita has been the largest devastation for Southeast Texas and Louisiana in years. Many years of intense cleansing will be involved in this horrible tragedy. People's lives have been put in jeopardy for the next couple years. Roofs have been ripped off and thrown around like rag dolls. Trees were doubled over and cracked right in half. There were no communication devices or electricity. Having no electricity made all gas stores impaired. Three things I learned from this hurricane are responsibility, patience, and love.

Being separated and being on my own helped me be more responsible than ever. I placed the dry tasting canned goods on a fire to warm them up three times daily. I learned real quick not to drive around and waste all my gas. Staying clean was a big issue in this storm. Since there was no electricity, no water was running anywhere in sight. Walking to the ice cold water every morning and bathing in the lake became a daily routine. This was a very important time for responsibility.

Being stranded at the lake made me realize how patient I had to be. After the storm there was no reason to rush home. Electricity was cut off and would not be back on for at least a month. Waiting in line at the store for gas almost drove me insane. It took us two hours just to get some gas to get back to the shelter. People rushed in like wild dogs to get FEMA goods. We had to get ice and water even if it took all day.

Being separated from everyone made me realize how important loved ones are to me. If I were with my family I would have felt more supported and relaxed to know that they were alright. Not being able to talk to my girlfriend just ate me alive. I had no possible way of relaxing thinking about what could have happened. Cell phones had no service, and there were no communication devices. The only thing I had was my two friends with me helping each other out in any way possible. If I had a choice, I would never want to be put in this position in my wildest dreams.

If there was ever another evacuation I would go a tremendous amount further than the lake. I never want to be put in this position ever again. I worried about loved ones more than anything. I was concerned about food and gas vaguely, but I worried about everyone else more. Being trapped in a hurricane is no joke. You should be very prepared for this kind of tragedy. Everything turned out alright in the end. I learned that you need to be with the ones you care for during this kind of tragic event.

Rita Argumentation- Third Place

Terrified Miriam Perez

The eye of Hurricane Rita hit land at about 3:40 a.m in the early Saturday morning of September 24, 2005. The fierce storm roared into the Gulf Coast, pouring Texas and Louisiana with heavy rain, flooding and destroying all that it could. In its path was my hometown, Port Arthur, TX. It was here where the highest wind speed was recorded. The category three hurricane passed through Port Arthur with winds of up to 116 mph. Fortunately, just about everyone had evacuated by then. Port Arthur must have looked like a ghost town. Although nothing major happened to my house, I did experience a lot of fear, stress, and sadness.

Hurricane Rita brought fear to my heart. When I first heard that evacuation was taking place, I immediately had a feeling of discomfort, the feeling of being unsafe. This wasn't a first time feeling, but never had I felt this before at the place where I was always protected, my house. My comfort zone was completely gone. Now I lived in fear, not only at my house, but even on the road during the evacuation. It was a long trip and the only thing I could think of was that anything could happen at any time. We could run out of gas, our car could break down, we could get in a car accident; that and much more was on my mind.

I was also very stressed out during the entire evacuation period. The stress was much worse at the beginning, from the time we started to pack-up. We had to choose between important and non-important things. My mom and I disagreed on many things and that itself was stressful. Also, it was very stressful to stay calm in front of my little sisters. I didn't want to overreact and make them feel like they were going to die if we didn't leave soon. I didn't want to scare the poor kids, but make them feel like we had the situation under control.

Although it was a terrifying time, I was also feeling extreme sadness. I didn't know if I was looking at my house for the last time. I didn't know if all my belongings were going to be there when I came back. Was I going to come back? What if we had to move and start somewhere else, after all my parents' hard work to have what we have, especially my mom? What if we had to find new jobs, new schools, and even new friends? It's sad to leave everything behind and to know that it could all be lost in just a few days.

Although Hurricane Rita caused me to experience fear, stress, and sadness, living through a situation like this, I cannot help but be shaped by it, and be influenced by the impact of nature. The coming of Hurricane Rita taught me a lot about myself and about my environment. I learned that a situation like this can make me very emotional. I learned how some feelings are

good and how to cope with others. I also learned to always have my guard up because no matter where I am, anything could happen at any time.

Rita Argumentation- Honorable Mention

In Preparation Reagan King

One day when things started to get real, I heard that a hurricane was heading to my little town. There were many things to do in preparation for the hurricane named Rita. Everyone was watching the news to find out where this monster was heading. I have learned to plan ahead, how to prepare for a long trip, and to live without electricity.

Planning ahead is very important when a severe storm is coming your way. When the news casters say, "There is a hurricane coming into the gulf," your family should sit down around the kitchen table and make up a plan. If you don't already have a plan in order you may forget what should be done. Not planning ahead also affects people and things around you. Making the wrong decisions at the wrong time is a good sign of poor planning, such as taking the wrong road thinking it was a shortcut. When people start to panic or get in a rush they become forgetful. Staying calm, and going step by step through the plan will stop a lot of confusion. Planning ahead will help in any type of crisis.

Knowing how to pack for an evacuation is a lot like packing for a vacation. The difference between the two is that in an evacuation, mementos are the most important. An evacuation is a time of confusion and despair. The order in which packing takes place is very important. You have to make sure that all of your belongings will fit in you vehicle. Make a list of the things from greatest to least that you might need. The list is mainly so that when more confusion arises you won't forget anything of importance. When packing your clothing, pack them into one another, and then fold them into the suitcase. Continue to pack all your clothes like this, and you will be able to fit about ten percent more clothes. This is one of the less stressful options for packing for an evacuation.

I became accustomed to living without electricity because of Hurricane Rita. I thought I could never survive a day without lights, until the aftermath of Hurricane Rita reached the small town of Rusk. The whole town was without power, and we had to make some sacrifices. The first of many sacrifices was to stay out of the ice box, so everything that might spoil stayed cold. The next thing was taking the ice out of the freezer, and put it in an ice chest for water. We opened some windows so there would be fresh air circulating through the house. There are a lot of things that need to be done to help cope without electricity.

I have learned to plan ahead, how to prepare for a long trip, and to survive without electricity. Knowing how to be better prepared for such disasters will help in the long run. I

wish I could have learned all these things in a different way. I hope after reading this you will think about how to prepare for the next time a hurricane threatens your coastal waters.

Rita Argumentation-Honorable Mention

Hurricane Guidelines

Marlon Scamaroni

Thinking about Hurricanes is a thought of wind, rain, and speed. We hear stories about people “riding out the storm,” the reason I quote this is that we hear it all the time. But nobody notices every year the storm gets worse and starts to create a pattern. So maybe these three help can come in handy. Take footage of your home they come in handy when insurance needs proof of your home. Another idea is that your things are priceless so take the important stuff like pictures, jewelry, and maybe even old bills. Finally, if your area tends to attract hurricanes, find another area to live or another state.

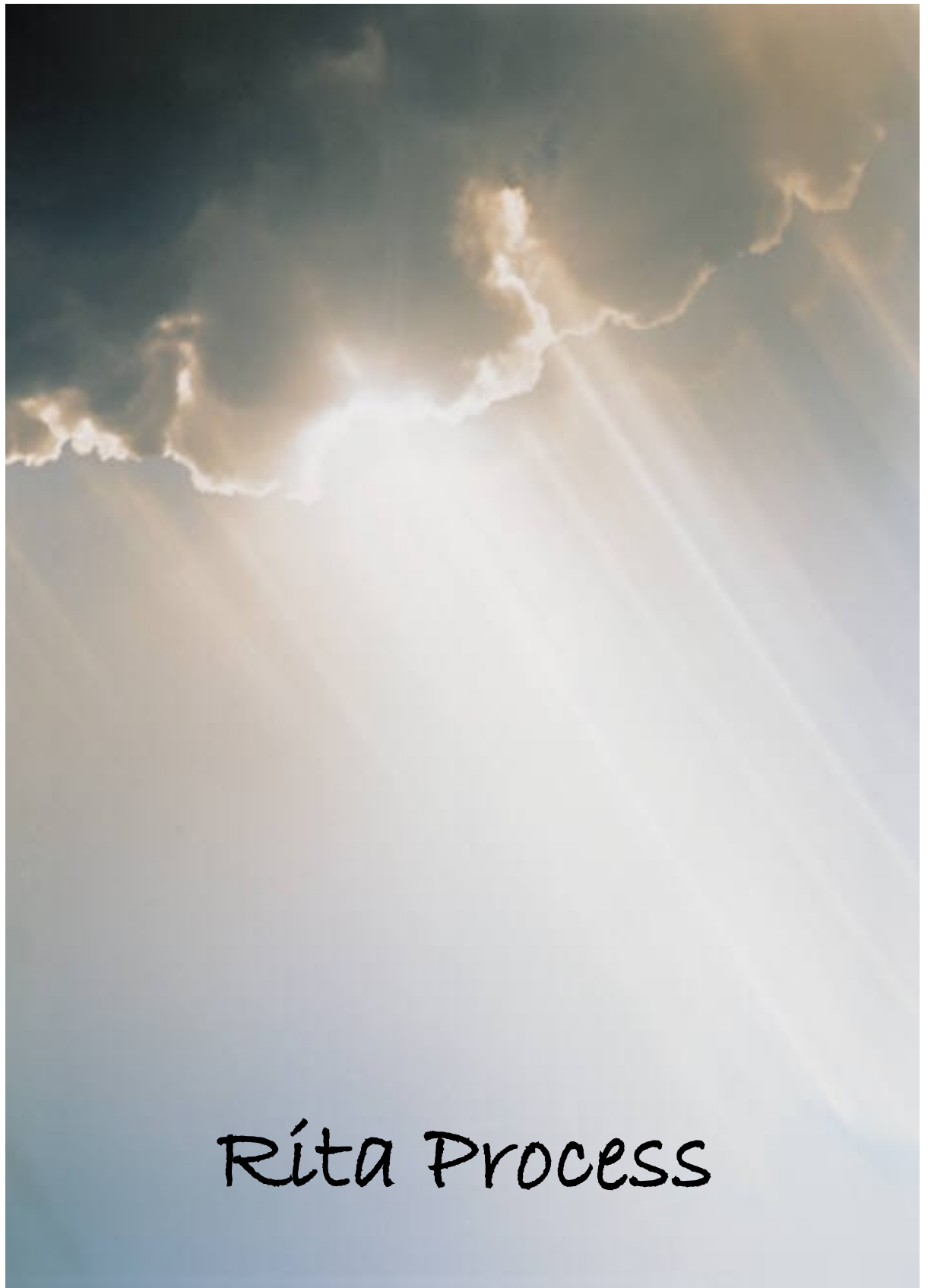
After evacuation because of the hurricane in New Orleans, I should have thought about all the things I need to bring, but I fooled myself into thinking the hurricane will be nothing but a by pass. Even though we may have lost 90% of valuable things in our house, we did manage to save some tapes of our home. And as luck has it, some of my relatives have our house on tape before it was hit by Katrina. As my uncle told me “Boy, lucky I taped that house of yours because nobody would have believed how beautiful your house was.” As a result of the damage to our home all we do now look at pictures of the house that was nice to the house that looks like hell. Now the picture that looks like hell is the only proof to the insurance people that our house was damaged and that we can file a claim on it.

Many times the first thing on our minds is safety of others or our own, nothing else seems important. But, when it comes to realization we start to think about our belongings and how hard we worked for, massive hurricanes can do things like destroy your hard work and so can looters who search through your things to see what they can get off you or sell on the street. For example when I went back to New Orleans to clean up the mess in the house and throw it outside we knew it was all damaged. We left for the week and came back the following week to finish moving all the stuff outside. Then we noticed that all the dressers had been looked into and all the electronics were across the street. I do not know how that would feel to most, but to me I felt violated. Even though none of the stuff was any good, it still felt wrong they could have taken something. Always take your important things so you can feel a little safer.

When you call something home you are calling it destiny or faith. For instance, our family never wanted to leave New Orleans but it was a choice we had to make. Louisiana was our home and we never wanted to leave but living in another state always has its ups and downs. Good or bad when a choice has to be made out, take a chance and get lucky or take a chance

and face life or death. If I had a choice I would go back because that is what I'm used to and I guess I can say that I'm homesick. However, other people who lived in New Orleans may have their own say like the more wise adults. They saw it and lived it and don't want anymore to do with it. As for those who leave Louisiana and never want to come back, they know it is not worth the time to lose something then start over again, risking their lives just to say they are home.

Hurricanes are a serious threat and should never be tampered with. Always go with the gut feeling and nobody else's because you can become the one in danger. When I think back at this experience I find it a bit scary because what I been through does not feel good. Losing all your possessions and being separated from your friends is hard to take, but I feel that maybe I can help the next person who fallows in my footsteps in the future. As I examine this situation life goes on as long as we have somebody that we love close to us to make us feel better.



Rita Process

Rita Process-First Place

How to Evacuate

Kyle Manuel

How to prepare for an evacuation for an impending storm can be relatively simple with easy, straightforward, and time-wise planning. If it is done correctly with excellent organizational and time management skills, you will be successful in the foundation of your evacuation plan. You can avoid a great deal of avoidable stress, complications and delays of the evacuation if you work correctly. It basically works when you know precisely what you will be taking, and the exact amount or quantity. If not it can cause multiple problems that can prevent you from fully preparing for your evacuation. Having some help from friends or family can make the process easier for yourself, thus making the evacuation process move more smoothly down the road. Their support can enable you to think more clearly of your ultimate goal, by having someone to fall back to when you hit a snag in your plans. They can assist you in solving your problems. By performing these three functions, you will now know how to evacuate for a hurricane when the occasion will call for it.

Money is one of the most important items to have in this emergency. Since almost everything you may need can be purchased at most stores, before a shortage necessary materials and services should be bought before a shortage and everything is all gone. It is very imperative to have abundance or a high amount of cash to finance the entire trip, and to buy necessary supplies. You need to be on a well thought out budget, that includes car, food, lodgings, medical, clothing, and hygiene expenses. If not, you are in for a world of trouble that can result in poor packing, and inability to secure lodgings for yourself. That in result can lead to a nervous breakdown causing more problems down the road concerning how to replace what you lost, how to maintain it or how to get back to your home. So having enough money can supply many supplies you may need and prevent many problems from escalating into a fiasco.

Securing your house against the upcoming storm is another step that is one of the most basic of ideas on how to evacuate properly. To do is to ensure that you will have a place to come back when the storm passes over, providing that your entire area is not entirely destroyed by the flooding, tornados, or the hurricanes. It will also give your valuables that you cannot take a fighting chance to survive the storm. Also it will help to keep your house from being looted from the people who will take advantage of the current situation during a natural disaster. Since some people feel the need to violate the home of others who are not there to protect their house, ensuring that your house is moderately safe and secure is an excellent idea.

Rita Process-Second Place

Things Taken for Granted Rose Only

On September 22nd, Friday afternoon, the day before the storm hit, we got out in time. We left in early enough time that we were able to get into a nice shelter. It had food and water. We learned how to live off someone else. We also learned that we had to take showers the hard way. We had to eat frozen like food. Military base food was horrible, but we lived. The three things I learned during the hurricane, involved how to take a bath in a sink, how to eat frozen food, and how to sleep on the floor.

It was so nasty and disgusting experience when we had to showers inside of a sink in an elementary bathroom. It was so embarrassing, to see other people looking at each other and doing the same thing, but taking a bath in a sink has taught me not to take my bathtub for granted.

You know how you are used to eating a full cooked meal, all day long, well take advantage because it's not always going to be like that. When we were at one of the shelters we had to eat, I mean literally eat, frozen good. We ate corn, green beans, turkey breast. It was so nasty. We ate three meals a day. If you wanted something good to eat you would have to go the Grocery store to get something for your family to eat, because it was so sad.

Have you ever wondered how it would be like to sleep on the floor? Well I haven't, I never thought the day would come, where I would have no other choice. My family and I had to make palets on the floor, we used every blanket we had, every pillow, and every sheet, just to get comfortable. Were we uncomfortable? Yes, but we made the best of it. I will never take for granted that I have a nice soft bed to sleep in again. You never know when you won't have it.

I've learned how you should always keep track of all the things that happened. Keep up with important documents that will be of some use to you. Take pictures of everything that is of value to you. Have all your insurance papers with you at all times. You never know when you will need them. It pays to always be on top of things, and always have patience. Being upset doesn't solve anything at all. Always have plenty of food and water, get extra it will be very much needed. That's what I've learned from the storm.

Rita Process-Third Place

How to Prepare for a Hurricane Kyle Manuel

There are a few important things you should remember when you are preparing and packing up for a hurricane evacuation. Bring items that you believe that you will need where ever you are evacuating to. Also bring important papers and documentation that cannot be replaced by money. If you feel that you will not be back in a certain time frame you should efficiently clean out your ice box and freezer. If you do not, the food will fester and rot to resemble the stench of a garbage truck full of maggots in decomposing garbage. Bring all of your adequate clothing, proper oral hygiene care utensils like your tooth brush, tooth paste, shampoo, nail clippers and other bathroom items. You cannot function in a sense of normal life without these items. Pack warm clothes if you plan on going to the lake because it gets mighty cold up there. If you think that you are not going to be back home in a certain timeframe, pack things that you might need during and after the evacuation. I went to stay at my camp, so I brought my riding lawn mower, weed eater, blankets, soft pillows, shop vac, air conditioner, fans, and wasp spray. I felt that we were not going to be coming home soon, so I brought everything of importance with me. If you are packing in a truck, pack all of your light-as-a-feather items towards the front, so they will not fall out. Then pack all of your ungodly heavy items toward the back. I thought that we would be hit very hard, so I boarded up all the windows, put the brake down can in the garage, and all of the patio furniture inside the house. Do not leave anything of values outside because it might be gone with the wind when you get back.

Rita Process-Honorable Mention

Steps Sarah Pace

Staying with family other than your parents and siblings can be very frustrating. To help make peace with each other, try to be nice to everyone around you.

The main thing is to realize that everyone is safe. Then be thankful that you have family that will comfort you and help you through a disaster. My family at first was getting along but throughout or stay we got on each other's nerves. The best way to get along is to think about how loving and caring your family is by taking you in when you have nowhere to go. You can also play cards or go for a walk to get out of everyone's hair. Try to help out with the cooking to give your other family members a break from the kitchen. If you have a great-grandparent, you can keep them occupied by playing games with them. That would help your elder family by letting them have some time to breathe without making sure that your great grandparents are okay. If you just want to get out of the house, ask the person that you are staying with if they will take you to the mall when they get a chance, so they can also leave the house and enjoy the day without everyone around. If you are interested in your family history, this would be the best time to ask about it. In return your grandparents would be pleased to know that you are interested in your ancestors. It will also keep their minds off of what is going on back at home plus you might find out something interesting about your families' past.

Taking care of everyone in the house will help defuse the arguing and tend to decrease rather than increase disharmony as your time with them continues. Just think everyone around you is going through the same situation which will help you realize that it is happening to everyone.

Early Expressions 2006

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Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial staff of EARLY EXPRESSIONS 2006 would like to thank all of the students who submitted work for consideration to EARLY EXPRESSIONS 2006 this semester. Unfortunately, not every entry can be published. In order to insure fair and impartial judging and publication selection, the copy without the author's name is submitted to the judge. The judge at no time sees the copy which identifies the individual author.

The purpose of EARLY EXPRESSIONS 2006 is to publish the best entries for consideration. We are proud of the entries published in this issue and appreciate the support of all students who contributed to and enjoy the magazine.

As the editor, I will make changes to reflect correct grammar and usage to enhance each entry and the magazine as well.

Peggy Gene Knight, Editor

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