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Lamar State College

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Port Arthur, Texas



Lamar State College-Port Arthur
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Early Expressions

2010
Volume XI

WE THE PEOPLE of the United States, in
Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic
Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general
Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our
Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United
States of America.

*Preamble
Constitution of the
United States of America*

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Early Expressions 2010 - Winners

VOICES FROM THE TOMB

First Place

Inscriptions Kathleen Hall

Second Place

Green Lawn Memorial Park.....Amber Garner

Third Place

Different Direction Eduardo Garcia

Honorable Mention

Memory Gardens Natalie Wester

Loved Ones Left Behind..... Tyler Cox

RepresentationsKelsey Cook

Love Has No Boundaries..... Anthony G. Chatman

VISIONS OF PARADISE

First Place

My Beautiful Paradise Tyler Cox

Second Place

To Explore All Angles Anthony G. Chatman

Third Place

Somewhere Special Kathleen Hall

Honorable Mention

Home Eduardo Garcia

Iguazu Falls.....Mariana Alvarez

The Field Daniel Jordan

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

First Place

Jamie..... Jamie Domingue

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How I Got My Name..... Jared Phillips

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Honorable Mention

My Name Makes Me Feel Strong Sonia Cardenas

My Name Describes Me Karinthia Adams

Unique Synthenyal Noel

Named by a Wise and Noble Loved One Donte Mayfield

THIS I BELIEVE

First Place

This I Believe Latabita King

Second Place

This I Believe Kelsey Cook

Third Place

I Believe Asia Bennette

Honorable Mention

This I BelieveAzalie L. Kunu

The Ultimate Gift..... Martina Dickerson

What Cardinal Mortati Believes..... Natalie Wester

I Believe Anthony G. Chatman

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

First Place

My Dreams..... Eduardo Garcia

Second Place

My Dream for America..... Kathleen Hall

GENERAL FICTION

First Place

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The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Voices from the Tomb

Voices from the Tomb-First Place

Inscriptions

Kathleen Hall

The day was dark and dreary. There were no birds songs to hear, no chirping crickets or buzzing bees. Nothing moved except the light sprinkles of rain on the graves, and myself. In the distance, a procession of cars slowly crept by, and the low hum of the motors only added to the dull and dark mood in the cemetery. Wandering, I wined slowly through the vast variety of headstones, reading as I walked. Ahead, a massive granite heart read:

“Babyland”

“Here God’s Angels hover near each little form,
Guarding them lovingly safe from harm.
Here Mother Earth tenderly takes to her breast,
Over babies at peace at sleep and at rest.”

My attention drifted to a mushroom, an earthly brown and golden red, sprouting between two identical, small and simple, undeniably old headstones. As I strolled closer, my body shivered, and the hair on the nape of my neck rose. As I read I was overwhelmed with a disturbing sadness.

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Nanci Ann Clayton | June 1 st 1933/ June 2 nd 1933 and |
| Paul Lambert Clayton | June 18 th 1934/ June 19 th 1934 |

As if my emotions came tumbling down from the clouds, sheets of rain started to pour down. While the fresh smell of dirt rose up from the newly fallen rain, I wiped my eyes and trudged, heartsick toward my vehicle. Pondering how a mother could lay to rest two children in twelve months left me weary. My

heart was in agony. Leaving the cemetery, my heart was conflicted with emotions of sorrow for a woman never met, and gratitude for never having known that same misery and torment.

Voices from the Tomb-Second Place

Green Lawn Memorial Park

Amber Garner

Hearing that I had to go to the cemetery to write an essay was quite a shock. The thought of writing an essay at a cemetery had never crossed my mind. It started off as a challenge. Getting myself to do the assignment was not easy. Getting an A was more important than my fear, so I decided to give it a try.

As I drove up to the cemetery there was a sign that read Green Lawn Memorial Park, Est. 1898. There was also a sculpture of Jesus bowing his head. He had his hands slightly lifted in front of him with his palms up as if he was welcoming me into the cemetery. He was surrounded by flags. The only flag I recognized was the American flag. The cemetery was huge with winding roads and forks. No matter which way I turned, there was always a choice between at least two pathways that I could take. The ground was wet with little puddles of water from the rain the night before.

There were legions of trees all over the cemetery. I do not know if the trees were planted there to give a sense of peace or to give shade to each tomb for the visitors, but they were beautiful. There were all types of tombs, all different sizes and shapes. I assume that some were made of brass and the others of cement. Some of them had little mushrooms growing all around them. A lot of the tombs had flowers that their loving families had placed there. There were also many without flowers. That made me wonder if they had family and friends, or if they were loners.

Exiting the cemetery was a relief. There was a calmness about the cemetery as if everybody there was resting; however, death is not easy to think about. It looked like there were millions of bodies buried there. Those people .

no longer have to worry about bills, traffic, or sickness. On the other hand, they no longer get to experience the joy of hugging and kissing their family and friends. Death is a hard thing to think about, but it is inevitable that we all must go one day.

Visiting Green Lawn Memorial Park made me appreciate life. It made me want to live life to the fullest. I want to make sure that everyone I love know that they are loved by me. When I pass, I want people to say that I made the most of life, and they could feel the love that surrounded them when they say that I made the most of life, and they could feel the love that surrounded them when they were in my presence. Most of all I want to be one of the people with flowers on my tomb.

Voices from the Tomb-Third Place

Different Direction

Eduardo Garcia

The light was green and I took a left. I slowed down and realized where I was. All around me were tombs, of all sizes and shapes. Looking left and looking right, I was thinking to myself, where do I go? The door opened, and I went to the right, as my mom followed behind. What caught my eye were five marble tombs that were identical in every way.

The one all the way to the right held the picture of a woman. She looked nice, and it was lamenting that she left the world at a young age. I stared at her name and the others which all were Asian names. On four of the five tomb stones, there were small round pictures of each person, making the tombs, to me, even more beautiful. Looking at the pictures in front of me, I wondered what their life was like. What I felt was weird and not at ease, but glad I was there. Then I noticed the flowers each person had. They were so fresh, brilliant in color, and life-like, a metaphor representing the person to the world and their loved ones. The flowers led me to the design of the actual marble. Each stood tall and proud. The design of each marble was a beautiful cross atop a marble step, which was atop of a marble bed. The smoothness of the faces and tops complimented the jagged, rough sides. The details of the work made one wonder how long did one take to make such beauty. Then I noticed the far left tomb stone. It was a different color, sepia, while the rest were gray. I wondered why this one was a different color. Then I saw the date, and the picture; it also was in sepia showing that it was much older. I was surprised that, even though the time of each placing of the tombs were different, they all stayed the same. My mom said let's go, and that the place gave her the creeps. I wondered why;

yes, I did feel awkward, but the place gave me thought.

Walking back to the truck, around me was quietness. The day was bright, and the sun was leaving the earth, momentarily. The wind was so refreshing; one felt in bliss, all making the experience more thoughtful and amazing. I didn't want to leave, but knew I had enough information. Not only that, but I saw why the lovely teacher chose this assignment. People are comfortable in their own world. This experience breaks us, the students, out of it. We now see new images with the different eyes. We must try new things, not be afraid, and not see what we want to see. That day I left in a different direction from which I came.

Voices from the Tomb-Honorable Mention

Memory Gardens

Natalie Wester

A trip to the cemetery, to most, can be emotional, creepy, or even overwhelming. I was feeling all of this and more the day I decided to visit my grandmother's grave site. I just wanted to "get in and get out" as quickly as possible. Not knowing this was going to be an interesting day, to say the least, I turned in the drive of "Memory Gardens".

I took the long walk down the dark, slippery pavement, hoping my feet would lead me in the right direction. I was ashamed to say, it had been almost two years since I last visited my Nanny's grave. I honestly did not remember exactly where I was supposed to go. However, I took a left to see where it would take me.

I took a step onto the overly saturated grass, taking notice of all the graves along the last row. It had rained heavily only a few hours prior, so every headstone looked as though they had just been cleaned. Some even seemed to sparkle. As I got to the end of the row, I noticed a group of about 25 headstones unusually close to one another. I thought to myself, "How would they bury so many people in such a small section?" My curiosity was peaked, so I headed over to see for myself. I walked about the tombs, noticing the names, dates, and designs on them. I suddenly realized that these were all children. I could not help but look at just about everyone of them. Most of the babies either died the day they were born or within a short time after. I started to feel a lump in my throat and chills all over my body. I was thinking about the parents of all these babies. "This is not what is supposed to happen", I thought to myself. "Parents are supposed to die before their children". However, as I could see, it doesn't always work out that way. Out of all of these graves, one caught my

attention the most. "Baby Jesus Sanchez Gonzalez," is what is written along the top of this tiny, marble-slatted headstone. July 31, 2008 – July 31, 2008" were the dates written below his name. The fresh flowers on the grave led me to believe he was visited by his parents or loved ones recently. The beautiful arrangement of blue and white flowers filled the air with a smell that reminded me of the flowers that lit up the air in my backyard as a child. I loved that smell. These brightly colored flowers sat in a unique vase, unlike the usual ones I've seen at other grave sites. The vase has gold-trimmed religious crosses painted along the bottom of the vase. The words, "You will never be forgotten, our sweet baby" are etched above the designed crosses. There were also two pearl white statues- one on each side- of the headstone. I can only imagine the pain that the parents of this little baby boy have endured, a pain so enormous, I am not sure I could ever handle. As I pondered on this sickening thought, tears began to fill my eyes. I said a short prayer for this baby and his family and wiped the wet mascara off my face. I brushed the headstone with my hand as I left the group of small graves.

After visiting my Grandmother's grave, I found my way back to my car. As I entered the busy road outside the tree filled cemetery, I noticed the sky was the bluest I think I have ever seen. The clouds were unusually high and "cotton-like." It was absolutely breath-taking. I feel in my heart that it is a sign from God, telling me that even though some things are hard to understand in life, He has a reason. What that reason is, I believe, we will all know one day. Until then, I will live my life as though it is my last and love with everything I have in my heart. It may have taken me going to "Memory Gardens" to be reminded of this, but I will carry it with me for until my time on earth is up.

Voices from the Tomb-Honorable Mention

Loved Ones Left Behind

Tyler Cox

Driving through the gates of Green Lawn Cemetery, I got the feeling of reverence in and around me. I never thought about going to a cemetery or a burial site until my grandfather's death in 2005.

As I walked around the cemetery, I came across my grandfather's grave. The burial site has a lot of openness around it, except for one large tree which spreads its large leafy branches nearby. As I stood there looking at the grave and all the surroundings, I felt warmth and comfort. I also read the tombstone engravings. As I stood there, all I remember were the things about my grandfather, including the great person he was and all that he accomplished.

As I continued to walk around the cemetery, I saw all the roads that wind throughout. I also noticed how old they are and wondered how many cars have driven over them. Still walking around, I felt the breeze blowing and noticed that flags near the entrance were being moved by that breeze. I also glimpsed a car driving by the cemetery and thought about how many times I drove by and did not pay any attention to what was going on inside. I found a bench and sat down to collect my thoughts. While sitting, I listened to the birds chirping in the nearby trees. Looking around I realized how large these trees were and wondered if their arm-sized roots could knock over the headstones. I saw how well kept the cemetery was and that pleased me. There was a grave by the bench, and I realized how old it was and how it had sunk into the ground; yet, you could still read the name as if it was placed there yesterday. I soon noticed that there were other people walking around, and a family was placing flowers on a grave. Not far away I saw a grave that was covered with fresh dirt, and just about the last

thing that I noticed while sitting there was the stillness every where and how peaceful it was.

As I got up and started walking around again, I noticed the mausoleum and went over to investigate. When I walked through the doors of the mausoleum, the air was stuffy, and it smelled musty. I also noticed that there were no lights in the building, besides the security lights, and the only light was from the large glass windows along the two walls. Walking further into the mausoleum, I could see all the names on each square covering the other two walls.

Climbing back in my truck, I left wondering about the people buried there. It crossed my mind what caused them to die. As I drove away I thought of all the loved ones left behind and realized I was included in that group.

Voices from the Tomb-Honorable Mention

Representations

Kelsey Cook

Death is the most inescapable part of life. No one knows exactly where our souls go, but our bodies remain on earth. Most of us are buried next to a spouse or other family member. Others who were probably alone in life are now just in a lonesome grave. Then there are the free-spirits who wanted to be cremated and spread all over the world. No matter what becomes of us, there is still a part of us here. Tombstones were created to help keep our memory alive. Where a person is buried, what their tombstone represents, and how well it is maintained is a reflection of the personality of the deceased or the relatives left behind.

As I pulled into the unknown graveyard, I felt nervous because the neighborhood we were driving through was not the safest part of town to be in. The cemetery was very aged and needed some work. It had a dark and creepy feel to it. The tombstones I saw were almost ancient, going all the way back to the eighteen hundreds. It had a very dark and haunting feel to it. While looking around for a headstone, I saw many that were broken and worn down. I thought to myself, "You should have gone to a newer burial site; there would be more to see." Then a broken gate surrounded by bushes caught my eye. When I walked up to it I saw unique tombstones; then I saw it, and I knew it was the one.

It was the rarest of them all, standing taller than the rest. It was aged and worn down, but that did not take away from its appeal. There were five columns of stone, each one a different shade of grey. The top was in the shape of the french symbol Fleur de Lis. The next row had an elegant flower on it, which symbolizes a shortened life. I had to stand close to see the name Anni Runnels inscribed. It did not declare the date, but she was born in 1829 and died

November 29, 1902.

Although the tombstone had character, I still believe it and the cemetery could be maintained better. The grass was so long it was almost up to my ankles. Most of the trees I saw were dead and rotted. The single road leading in and straight out was bumpy and made out of rocks. The bushes had not been trimmed in what looked like decades. The fence leading to Anni's tombstone was rusted and falling apart. It sounds like a terrible place, but its flaws made it somewhat beautiful.

Our memories live on whether it be in a exquisite cemetery or frightful graveyard because there is no escaping death. A tombstone is a representation of a person and how he lived their life. It is the place we are laid to rest forever. How well our tombstone is kept up, the location, and the surrounding all have an effect on how people see us after death.

Voices from the Tomb-Honorable Mention

Love Has No Boundaries

Anthony G. Chatman

It was a startling night, the winds were high, and my heart was buried in my stomach. I went to visit my grandparents, Julia and Lionel Gunner, who raised me from a baby until I was a teenager. I didn't know what pushed me to go because some strange vibe kept telling me that I was wrong for just going to visit them after all this time. I would have never gone on my own free will, and I prayed asking them to forgive me and understand what I was trying to do. I raised my head from praying, and instantly I could have sworn I saw a shadow flash from the corner of my eyes. I got to telling myself all kinds of possibilities of where that shadow could have come from and was hoping I wasn't losing my mind.

As I really got to thinking, I felt sad, but I also felt joy because I knew my grandparents were proud of me for what I have become. All of their hard work of raising me and teaching me the ropes about life was paying off. I pictured in my head Granny dancing and Grandpa saying nothing because he always let his facial expressions speak for him. They always made sure that I knew that nothing or no one could be perfect, and only a fool continues to make the same mistakes, that when you fall down, dust yourself off, and get back up, and next time look where you are going.

They started on me about education and treating people with respect because they never had an education, and respect is what got them a lot of places in life. Life was good living with them. It was nothing a grown man could do in a work field that they weren't going to teach me.

I can't even remember a single day I was broke or couldn't make any money. The dinners they prepared every day were like what some people have on Sundays or even Holiday meals; but now as I look back and remember, I didn't know I was that blessed.

The evening becomes darker as the birds start chirping and flying from tree to tree. This distracted me from my thoughts of glory days being around such people who were overachievers, but under educated. As I notice my face was full of tears and it was only blasphemy that God would take such good people. He needed them more than I to complete his tribe of angels to fight on Earth.

I observed their tombs with great care as they slept right next to each other, as if they almost died simultaneous like one couldn't live without the other. I could see them in the ground holding hands finally at peace, never to return to such a wicked world. The shadows didn't bother me anymore because I knew it was him watching, doing what God assigned them to do all these years, be my guardian angels.

As I left the grave site, I knew that life is too short, that you should be preparing for the next life not this one. What you do while living in this world reflects on your soul making it to Heaven because I know my grandparents made it, and I hope to see them again, but I have some work to do. Not to compare myself with them, but I must be better prepared to help other people make it. Last, love has no boundaries. It can take you anywhere you wish to go.



Visions of Paradise

Visions of Paradise-Descriptive-First Place

My Beautiful Paradise

Tyler Cox

I have visited many beautiful places from the white, pristine beaches of Florida to the awe inspiring Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, and from the grandeur of Alaska to lush tropical island of Hawaii. Of all the beautiful places I have visited, to me, the most beautiful is Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado.

Rocky Mountain National Park is breathtaking at any time of the year. The highest mountains are almost always snow capped. Even though the wind howls, they often have a veil of clouds covering them. Most of the year I can see icy frozen lakes that lie above the tree line. There are many lakes in the mountains which during the warmer summer months have water falls that cascade down the mountainsides. Streams of melted snow water also flow down from these lakes. This water will numb feet and make teeth chatter. These crystal clear streams flow, so ferociously at times that they are able to move gigantic granite boulders. The trees in the mountains are so abundant and lush at times that they often belie the steepness of the slopes. The most prolific of these are fir, pine, and aspen. Firs remind me of Christmas trees. There are aspens with their white, rough bark and slimming leaves that dance in the wind. With riotous fall leaves of yellow, orange, and red, the mountains almost look ablaze. Tall, slender, pine trees can also be seen along with others. Many of the pines have died or are dying due to the pine beetle. Their brown brittle skeletons bring sadness to the vibrant mountains. The living pine trees have a sweet smell to them that is very relaxing to me. Tundra is also very common at the mountain summits. These have very thin, rocky soil, and tiny, delicate flowers grow there in the summer.

The meadows are both enormous and petite in the Rocky Mountains. They are verdant grassy areas which provide food for the abundant wildlife. These lush meadows have meandering streams of water for the wildlife.

The weather is always unpredictable in the Park. Violent thunder storms can develop very quickly in the summer. Even snow can be possible at any time of the year in the highest elevations. Yet the best thing about the weather is that it might get warm on a summer's days, but at night it can get downright cold. I enjoy the chilly night air.

The most beautiful part about Rocky Mountain National Park is the wildlife. The extremely large elk, with its eerie calls in the fall, and the huge antlered moose that I have only glimpsed a few times are fascinating animals. There are mule deer that are unafraid of most anything, and nimble big horn sheep that nibble their way up and down the steep slopes. Then there is the black bear that runs around with its black glistening fur, looking for food to store as fat for hibernation. There are also chattering squirrels with bushy tails scampering across the ground as well as dwarf chipmunks begging for handouts. Lean, cautious, coyotes run across the meadows looking for straggling young animals for a meal. The flat tailed beavers hide in their sticks huts and marmots come out of their holes to search for food. Last, but certainly not least, there are many varieties of birds. From the beautiful soaring hawks and raucous jays, to ugly crows all these animals add to the natural beauty of the mountains.

So, from the mountains themselves to the meadows, the wildlife and the weather, to me it is the most beautiful place in the world. Amazingly it is right here in the United States of America.

Visions of Paradise-Descriptive-Second Place

To Explore All Angles

Anthony G. Chatman

It was a hot summer day, and I was working at B A S F Petrochemical Refinery. It was about lunch time, and we heard a loud boom from the central part of the refinery along with sirens that had a sound that nearly made my ears bleed. Immediately, the flares kicked on by burning the chemicals that were not being produced correctly. The Process Operators were running from all angles to stop the problems by shutting down the unit. Instantly, everyone knew what the problem was. The heaters went down and that meant we had to work late. You could see the frowns and the faces glare because it was pay-day along with the last day of the work week. Our supervisors came in the cafeteria to let us know we had to work a sixteen hour shift and possibly the entire weekend. The heaters play a very important role in petrochemicals refinery, dealing with the amount of heat the put out, how long they stay heated, and the process for the chemical production. I was very excited to hear something about overtime, knowing I was the lowest paid person out there, but if I was qualified for the job, only time would tell.

The supervisor went over our job description, and he said we had to build scaffolds at the top of the heaters. I paused for a second and thought about what he was saying. Yes, I had heard him correctly. The top of the heaters were about four hundred feet up, thirty flights of stairs. There was no elevator. This meant we had to rope or carry up all of the supplies we needed. My body started burning right as the thought passed through my mind. Hard labor was staring me in the face. Lunch and the meetings took place at the same time. It was now time for the trials and tribulations to begin, and I didn't want any part of it; but I

wasn't about to go down as a quitter. I grabbed my tools and the work started. I noticed everyone looking at me to see if I could do this job, so that they didn't have to do any additional work.

I felt like an astronaut getting ready to fly to the moon, but instead I had to climb. I went up the stairs at a steady pace and tried hard not to look up because I didn't want the vision of all the flights I had left to climb. I had to stop for a while to get the feeling back in my legs when I noticed I wasn't halfway up. I started again this time two steps at a time and that wore me out even quicker than before.

Finally, I made it and I threw my tools off my shoulders while my heart was racing, sweating like crazy, and I was bent over with my head between my knees. It took ten minutes to catch my breath and nearly thirty to forty minutes to get to the top of the heaters. When I raised my head I was stunned. I could see the entire cities of Port Arthur, Groves, Bridge City, and the Louisiana border. I have never seen anything like this my entire life or even noticed how beautiful the town looked from this height. I could point out many locations, buildings, roads, Pleasure Island, and rivers from this miraculous view. I almost forgot what I was supposed to be doing up there, surprised by the gorgeous view. The breeze blew the sweat off my body and sent a chill down my spine. I could almost imagine how God feels looking down on us and could see why he chose Heaven as his home. If you were ever scared of heights before, you wouldn't be if you saw this view. Everything was peaceful and orderly like I was watching a motion picture on the geography channel with no sound and in high definition. The world was in my hands, but I could not control it. I watched ships pass by about the size of a peanut moving slower than turtles, as if the wind guided them through the water. The signal was made indicating that they were ready for the material to be pulled up by the rope. This broke my concentration.

You can never judge the world unless you explore all angles from different

elevations because you can never judge anything without considering all the angles and elevations. In some areas in life the situation might seem scary, but once you have a different view, being scared at one point in time may lead to excitement, beauty, and peace.

Visions of Paradise-Descriptive-Third Place

Somewhere Special

Kathleen Hall

The Cascade Mountain Range extends from northern California, through Oregon and Washington, and up into British Columbia, Canada. A magnificent volcano dubbed Mr. Rainier in 1792, sits quietly near the Seattle-Tacoma metropolitan area. This active volcano, full of wildlife and diversity, often wanders colorfully through my mind, bringing back childhood memories I will never forget. Throughout my youth, I was able to experience a fascinating variety of plant and animal life while enjoying the beauty and splendor of this outdoor woodland paradise.

With sublime, and color filled springs, and marvelously, mild summers, Mt. Rainer was the perfect place for scenic hiking, and camping. A two mile, winding, serpentine trail took us through dense sub-alpine forests to the pristine Crystal Lake. An iridescent, blue glacial river ran endlessly to and from the lake. Its icy-cold, luminous water, maintained the unclouded visibility of the unforgettable waves I still see in my dreams.

Winter on Mt. Rainier was by far, the most beautiful of all the seasons. Once, driving to the summit, for sledding and tubing, my father turned off the main road to take us “somewhere special.” I was dumbfounded at the spectacle of a frozen waterfall. In all my life, and still to this day, I have never witnessed such a radiant, magical color of blue and white glittery ice. The sun glinting off the frozen sheets of ice, resembled a rainbow of stunning grey-blues, and silvery-white translucent hues. The cold on that mountain was bitter. However, the warmth my heart felt at the phenomenal glimpse of majestic beauty could have melted the snow that surrounded me.

The memories that I made on that mountain were many, unforgettable memories, that will be etched into my mind as long as I live. To me, it is the most beautiful place in the world. The gloriousness of Mt. Rainier opened my eyes as a young girl, and aided my appreciation for the outdoor world as I grew into a woman.

Visions of Paradise-Descriptive-Honorable Mention

Home

Eduardo Garcia

It's ostensible really. What makes one feel serene, calm, a-okay, and just dandy is home. The door mat says it all, "Home sweet home." Sure the roof leaks, colds are blistering, and summers are sweltering, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Ah, the good times! It's cold outside, and inside are people running around like crazy. I look around and smile. Everybody is so busy trying to make the best food or create the best ambiance. However, what makes the holiday so special is the people themselves. No, the lights came off, and out from a screen a light converts a family. Laughs and even louder laughs are heard shaking the sky above. And down comes snow and out comes a family with their imaginative snowman brains. An eight is formed and blown with a wish. Around people are applauding and waiting for cake. No, the sad times. Dad comes and tells the kids that mom have been in a crash. Still young I did not fully take it seriously, even when I was at the hospital. However, now I see her, and thank heaven she is with us. As I think about this in front of the computer for motivation, I am failing high school. At home just trying to pass a session in Star Lab, I remember the quietness, the earth seemed to stand still. Outside was pure blackness, thinking it was getting later and later. I realized where I was and slept better than a baby that day. Oh, the languidness. In socks sliding on the tile floor, while The Killers are just testing the breaking point of the speakers. Meanwhile, dad is outside making some homemade American burgers. The cheese is melting, the patties are steaming, and the mood is just right. Capone, our dog, just looking up seeing if any "crumbs" would fall to the floor. The next day coming from school, I will go

to my room, and not realize that I entered the most beautiful place in the world.

Home is where laughs are made, where tears are born, and where time slips the fastest, where children feel safe in their beds nice and tucked, even though it is raining out and thunder seems to shake the world effortlessly. The kids know it best. Without family, home is just wood. When 90 years have passed, looking back at my actual home, it won't be home to me. No dad, mom, parties or family. However, now it is where I go at the end of the day, home, the most beautiful place in the world.

Visions of Paradise-Descriptive-Honorable Mention

Iguazu Waterfalls

Mariana Alvarez

I think that the most beautiful place in the world is a place where you are happy and want to visit, a place that is not just beautiful from the outside but also makes you feel happy inside. To me the most beautiful place in the world is the Iguazu Waterfalls. The Iguazu Waterfalls are located on the border of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. They are really a true beauty. I would like to visit the Iguazu Waterfalls one day.

The Argentinean side allows visitors to walk right around the water or to explore the National Park. The Brazilian side is known for its panoramic views and splendor. The area of the falls provides a lot of opportunities for rock climbing as well as water sports. Iguazu has the distinction of having the greatest annual flow when compared to any other falls in the world.

The Iguazu Waterfalls have a lot of green trees and grass, which covers some of the rocks. The falls have different layers of rocks that make it look even more beautiful. Some of the rocks are shaped like pools and filled with water. When the water falls and hits the ground, it looks like steam just comes out. It almost looks like there is a fog outside.

The waterfalls are really a place I think people will enjoy visiting. If you like to travel I think that the Iguazu falls is the place to visit. I myself cannot wait until the day that I will be able to visit the Iguazu Waterfalls. I love to travel and visit new places.

Visions of Paradise-Descriptive-Honorable Mention

The Field

Daniel Jordan

The most beautiful place to me would have to be a soccer field. I used to play on a turf field all the time when I was in high school, but I always wanted to play on a really well kept grass field. You do not see too many grass fields that are taken good care of anymore.

The one field that made me stop and just stare at in amazement was the Lufkin, Texas field. We were in a tournament my sophomore year, and I could not believe how good this field was. It is what I think about all this time, playing in a perfect grass field. It had this gorgeous Bermuda grass that I could lie down and go sleep. It felt really great to run my hands through and not worry about any stickers. Whoever cut the grass had to be a pro. He had cut it into perfect horizontal lines going through the entire one hundred yard field. When I ended up getting to play on it, it felt so real. I felt like I was playing on TV because I had never see a field like this one around very often. I would sometimes get in trouble with my coach because he would catch me staring at the field and not playing.

That was the only time I ever got to play at Lufkin's field. They were a 5A school, and we were 4A School, so we never played again. I still to this day think about playing on the type of grass field. I have never had a feeling about playing soccer on any other type of field. Soccer and the type of field one plays on can really mean a lot to you. It really is beautiful.

Visions of Paradise-Descriptive-Honorable Mention

Alaska

Marceline Banks

When you think of the word “Paradise,” people might think of the Garden of Eden, Heaven or the Bahamas. We choose places that are beautiful, have the perfect weather and are calming. My vision of paradise is where I was born and raised, Alaska.

I believe Alaska has the most beautiful scenery I have ever seen. The mountains are huge and green with flowers of all colors. The flowers are colorful and bright like the Fireweed, a vibrant dark pink and big like the English flower that is a vivid light purple. There are trees that tower over buildings, full of branches and leaves. The leaves are a deep dark green or a brightly colored of green, and the branches are long and thick enough to support birds and their nests. The rivers are roaring and crystal clear so that one can see himself in the water. A person can see the fish swimming upstream, animals getting something to drink, or trying to catch the fish to eat. The air is so crisp and clean that one just wants to take deep breaths every time a breath is taken. The forests are thick and full of trees. They are so thick that the roots cause a person to stumble over them. All sorts of animals hide in these thick forests, animals like bears, moose, fox, deer, and wolves to name a few. The weather is cool and refreshing, not too hot or too cold, just right. This is all during the summer months of Alaska. The winter is just as beautiful as the summer. The winters are cold, white, icy, dark, and silent. The summers are cool bright and colorful. This is what makes Alaska beautiful.

Visions of Paradise-Descriptive-Honorable Mention

My Backyard

Kelsey Cook

We all have our own version of paradise whether it be on an island, a winter wonderland, our own backyard. Paradise is a place where you feel most at peace. When there, you should feel sublime and in your own world. It is the feeling of being on cloud nine. In your kingdom, nothing will ever go wrong. It is the one place you can get from the stresses of your life. I am in paradise in my backyard from the moment I arrive, while I am enjoying my surroundings and activities.

When I walk into my backyard, I am sent-into another world. I have realized that the difference between nature and civilization is the difference between calmness and misfortune. My backyard is the channel of this peaceful change. When I arrive, I feel the weight of the world come right off my shoulders. It is almost like I am in my own little world. In my world I feel relaxed and blissful. As I look at all the trees and bushes I pretend I am in a jungle.

When sitting on the deck in the middle of the yard, I forget that I have neighbors on each side. The exotic bushes are surrounded by tall trees. The tree that stands out the most is the first one you see. The leaves are shiny and green on the top; underneath is dull and almost brown. This tree is very tall, but skinny. While I am sitting in my comfortable white rocking chair, the rays from the sun beam through the limbs and the wind blows. This makes me feel infinite and I forget the rest of the world for a little while. Behind me there is a fig tree. It always brings me back to my childhood summers when I would pick the figs. Lining the fences around me are bushes with dazzling bright pink flowers.

While I am in my exotic atmosphere, I like to read a good book that will make me laugh and feel happy. I sometimes also enjoy good company in my

paradise. I do not invite just anyone to my happy place, though. He has to be someone I truly connect with. He must be someone I know will make me laugh and laugh at my jokes. I share my Utopia with my boxer named Dixie. I love to watch her run around and chase squirrels. I know when she and I are both feeling carefree and happy. When I am running around the trees playing with her, I get some of my best exercise and don't even realize it.

People have the misunderstanding that paradise is hard to find. Some believe it is only a place wealthy people can afford to go on vacation. Little do people know that they can just take a step outside and find their very own seventh heaven. Paradise is a place one feels carefree and at their absolute happiest. It should make one forget all the problems of the world, and see how beautiful life truly can be. You should feel in absolute ecstasy on arrival, while engaging in activities, or just enjoying the surroundings.



What's In a

Name, *n.*

Origin: Middle English < Old English *nama* > Latin *nomen*

A word or phrase by which a person, thing, or class of things is known...

A word or words expressing some quality...

A family or clan...

Good reputation...distinguished...

To nominate or appoint to a post, situation, or office...

In appeal or reference to...by authority of; as the representative...

Belonging to...

Left to Right:

Benjamin Franklin:

Printer, Author, Inventor, Delegate, Founding Father,
Ambassador to France

John Adams:

Farmer, Lawyer, Author, Delegate, Founding Father,
1st Vice President, 2nd President

Thomas Jefferson:

Farmer, Inventor, Builder, Author, Delegate, Founding Father,
The Declaration of Independence, 1st Secretary of State, 3rd President

Drafting The Declaration of Independence

What's in a Name?-First Place

Jamie

Jamie Domingue

A name is a special gift that a person is given by his mother and father. My name was given to me because I was thought to be the last child my parents would have. So, I would be named after my father. My name is known as being a unisex name because either a boy or girl could have the name. Jamie started out as a nickname from the original name James. Then over the years Jamie became popular and was started to be used as common name between boys and girls. A better way to describe what Jamie actually means would be supplanted. I used to dislike my name all together because it just seemed boring, and guys would have the same name as I. On top of all that the rest of my family had long beautiful flowing names such as Heather, Sabrina, and Victoria. I was so jealous that I did not have such a pretty long name like they did. When I was younger, I would sit and tell my parents that I was going to change my name when I turned eighteen. They would always tell me that I would grow to love my name. It is really hard for me to admit that my mother and father were completely right about me appreciating my name now that I'm older. I would never change my name now because it gives me personal individuality, and it is a big plus that a lot of famous men and women share my beautiful short sweet name.

What's in a Name?-Second Place

How I Got My Name

Jared Phillips

The original spelling of my name is "Jared," a Hebrew name meaning "Ruler." Jared was an ancestor of Abraham and Jesus. His life span was nine hundred and sixty two years. He was that father of Enoch who lived three hundred and sixty five years and according to the bible walked with God. When I was born two things helped my parents choose my name.

First, my father was a minister, and my mother was the director of music in church. They had a strong belief in the bible so naturally my parents chose a name that would represent a strong servant of God.

Secondly my mother's favorite television show was the "Big Valley." One of the main characters was "Jared Barclay." His character portrayed a strong man who was the head of his family. He was honest, trustworthy, had a strong sense of family, and compassion for those he came in contact with. This character seemed to have the same trait of both my parents. If you compare the two names it is obvious the kind of young man my parents hoped that I would become. If I had to choose another name, it would be the one that comes very close to the meanings "Jarrod." There is an old saying, "what's in a name?" A name can be than just a title. If its origin can be defined and explained, the bearer of that name can strive to use it as a guide for positive growth and living.

What's in a Name?-Second Place

What Should We Name Her?

Gustavfia Moore

My name is Gustavfia, and the German part would be the Gustav which means “staff of the Goths.” Six kings of Sweden have been borne with this name, including the 16th –century Gustav I Vasa. My name is an odd one but unique in its own way. Strangely, it took me a good while to pronounce my name correctly, but I have it now.

My mother was in the Women’s and Children Hospital delivery room waiting on me. When she asked my father “what should we name her, he answered,” I don’t know. I can not think of anything at this moment.” My father remembered they had an electric bill due, and in that era the company’s name was Gulf States Utilities. So my dad said,” Jean, let’s use that and make a name for her”. My parents came up with my name, Gustavfia. My dad cannot to this day pronounce my name, and I think that is so funny. All my life my dad has called me Slim.

I was always called Gus in school, and I didn’t like that because that was not my name, and the kids were mean. Would I change my name? No, I love my name. Remember, it took me a while to pronounce it correctly. I am odd and unique. I am Gustavfia. I am me. I love having the chance explaining how my name came about. Friends and family do not know me by my first name. They only know me by my middle name Denise. When I need them for anything, then I have to let them know my first name, and then they ask who that is, and we will just laugh. It is so funny having my friends and family hear my name. I only use my first name for business. I feel very lucky having the name that was given to me. It makes me feel like I am one of a kind, and I for one am loving that feeling.

What's in a Name?-Honorable Mention

My Name Makes Me Feel Strong

Sonia Cardenas

Hola, my name is Sonia. Maybe you wonder how I got my name and where it comes from. Sonia comes from the Greeks and it means Wisdom. My name is used all around the world from United States to Rome. I got my name from my mom. She was named by her godfather when she got baptized. He named her after an ex girlfriend he had dated. That was why mom got her name. Then years later, I was named also Sonia. My name means wisdom, and maybe not everybody knows what it means. It means the ability to make sensible decisions and judgments based on personal knowledge and experience. My name makes me feel strong and believe that nothing is impossible and that I can overcome any obstacle. Maybe the same name is too strong for a baby, but the name shapes the person later in life.

Sometimes I am not happy having the same name as my mom because a lot of people get confused with our names. Whenever they call me or my mom, we have to ask if they want little Sonia or the big Sonia. That sounds hilarious, but truly that is the only way we can find who the call is for. That is why I'm glad I have a middle name; it makes everything easier. If they ask me to change my name I would say no because I am proud to be a Sonia in this life.

What's in a Name?-Honorable Mention

My Name Describes Me

Karinthia Adams

My mother thought for years of what she would name her first daughter. She never could decide until in 1976 when I was born; my mother named me Karinthia. I was born on Christmas day, so my mom decided to name me after one of the books in the bible. After all, she was a very religious person and wanted my name to have a religious background. She decided that she liked the sound of Corinthian, and after that it just stuck with her. She obviously changed the spelling, and left off the "n" at the end.

My name means "grace," which I think describes my personality. I am uplifting, mild mannered, and graceful in my everyday lifestyle. If I had to change my name I would change it to Summer. I like this name because summer is my favorite time of the year. I like it because my kids are out of school, and I get to spend more time with them. I also like it because it is usually bright and sunny, which improves my mood. On the other hand, I really would not change my name. I feel that I was blessed with this name; it is different and unique, just like me.

What's in a Name?-Honorable Mention

Unique

Synthenyal Noel

A very unique name for a unique person, I say my name at least ten times a day. At work my badge Syntenyal is kind of weird to the human eye. I repeat it so much I find myself pronouncing it the wrong way. It is pronounced just like it is spelled just leave off the letter L. As a kid I have been teased about my name; now I am an adult, and it all remains the same. Now it's not Centennial Wireless, or Bi-Centennial, somehow that's what I have been called. Yes, we laugh together so my feelings were hidden. But when I would go home I questioned the name Syntenyal.

I know my name has a meaning, though I have no idea what it is. My grandmother didn't live long enough to tell me the true meaning. It was her mother's name, and it was passed down to me. I was the first born of seven girls in my family so I was the chosen one for the name. If I could change my name, I couldn't do it at all. It's a family name that must live on. That is the only name I have known to represent me. It's unique and beautiful just like me.

What's in a Name?-Honorable Mention

Named by a Wise and Noble Loved One

Donte Mayfield

The name Donte was given to me by my grandmother's sister on the glorious night of August 9, 1986. I never had the chance to meet her because of her untimely passing, but from family and friends testimony about her, she was a wise and noble person. She was mostly defined by her cool and confident demeanor accompanied by her undeniable loyalty to her family. When I was informed of what type of person she was and the type of life she lived, it gave me an adrenaline rush which made me feel honored to have been named by such a respected and distinguished person. My name in Latin means everlasting, kind of like a message to everyone stating that the name will live on despite my death. My name in Italian means lasting, to the finish. It is like a soldier in battle who fights until the war is over or until he himself perished. My name in English means enduring. When I think of what my name means now that I have learned of these meanings it is much deeper and somewhat intriguing. It gives me a sense of pride when I think of my name now, enduring through all of the ups and downs in life mixing the good with the bad. This name had to be created just for me. I remember as a young man my older sister often called me Donatello after the teenage mutant ninja turtle character. I never took it personally though, and I still answer to that name today but I would appreciate it if everyone else would just call me Donte, thank you.



This I Believe!



In the future days which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression -- everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way -- everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want, which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants -- everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear, which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor -- anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called "new order" of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb.

**Franklin Delano Roosevelt,
excerpted from the Annual Message to the Congress,
January 6, 1941**

Norman Rockwell's Four Freedoms

| | |
|--------------|------------------------|
| Top Left | The Freedom of Speech |
| Top Right | The Freedom to Worship |
| Bottom Left | The Freedom from Want |
| Bottom Right | The Freedom from Fear |

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This I Believe!

Students in writing classes are allowed to vote for a novel they choose to study. We read and discuss aspects of the novels throughout the semester. One of their last writing assignments involves selecting a character from their novel and becoming the voice of that character.

This is the foundation of THIS I BELIEVE!

Last semester's novel choices were:

ANGELS AND DEMONS

RAGTIME

THE ULTIMATE GIFT

MY SISTER'S KEEPER

This I Believe-First Place

This I Believe

Latabita King

What is the true meaning of being naïve? Is being naïve when you're still a child yourself with a child? Is being naïve leaving my baby in harm's way even though I knew better but I just wanted to run from my problems? If that makes you naïve, well, I'm guilty of being naïve. I'm not sophisticated but who is? I'm ignorant, but who's not, and I have limited myself to the things of the world because of the times we live in and I'm just comfortable that way. However, this I believe. I believe that I may be naïve, but I can't help who I love. I believe that no matter what life throws at you, you can make it with faith, and I truly believe that being married is the most joyous thing in the world.

Love, it's such a strong word, but how do you really know when you're in love. I believe you want to have that sense of security, sense of stability, and want to feel those butterflies in your stomach to call it love. Me, I'm in love with Coalhouse Walker, and I believe he loves me, but he's not the one for me. He plays at a club; I've never been to one. He loves his car; I never sat in one. He has the heart to kill, and I cry when I swat a fly. Opposites attract, but I'm seriously starting to doubt that. I love him, and I see myself married to him. I don't want to live without him, but maybe it's the best for me. Now I wish I had that mind frame about two weeks ago because I wouldn't be here in Harlem in a bronze coffin taking my final ride.

I try to fix things and make everything all right, but some people you just can't help. Now my saying is no matter what and who life throws at you with faith and trust in God. You will make it. I tried to help my situation by accepting Coalhouse Walker's hand in marriage. I mean, I already gave him a son, so why

not, right? He acted so stubbornly about his car and that chief of the fire department that he ruined all my dreams in life. Now being me I wanted to help, so I did; but who benefited from my effort? Due to my adolescent train of thought, I really believed that I could just march up to the Vice President and fix this problem, but in the end I was the one that got a blow to the gut (literally). If I would have just left this situation alone and let Coalhouse handle it, I wouldn't be here in Harlem in a bronze coffin taking my final ride.

Marriage, a white dress, a boutique, and saying I do. Is it worth all the trouble, time and money that we put into it; I don't think so. I ran from Coalhouse and hid and acted like a juvenile until he asked for my hand in marriage. The car with cans dragging the ground, a night of passion, and remembrance that we call a honeymoon, is it all worth the trouble, time and money that we put into? I don't think so. When I finally pictured me walking down the aisle I was hooked. I walked around the house, singing and dancing, happy as jay bird; but how long would this last? My wedding was but two weeks ago. I believed that this was worth the trouble, time, and money that I put in this. I wished I had the mind frame that I have now two weeks ago because I wouldn't be in Harlem in a bronze coffin taking my final ride.

This I believe two weeks ago. I was in pain and sorrow, but now this is the smoothest ride I have taken since I found out I was pregnant. Everyone has his own set of beliefs, but ask yourself, Do I truly believe this or am I caught up in the moment? What I believe, is it possible? When I'm dead and gone, will I feel the same? I wish I would have asked myself these questions two weeks ago, My name is Sarah, and I'm in Harlem in a bronze coffin taking my final ride headed to Brooklyn, my last destination. What do you believe?

This I Believe-Second Place

This I Believe

Kelsey Cook

Before I became a mother, I would imagine what my perfect family would be like. Then I married a unbelievable man, and we had two beautiful children. I had the ideal family that I had always dreamed of. I never thought I would have a terminally ill child or ever outlive any of my children. I also never imagined that any of my children could have a criminal record. Then the day came when we found out Kate had cancer. That is the same day my perfect family became imperfect. My name is Sara Fitzgerald, and I strongly believe that Kate can survive cancer, Anna truly wants to save her sister, and that there is no hope for my son Jesse.

When Kate was two years old, she was diagnosed with leukemia. I promised my husband Brian that I would not let Kate die. Now here we are thirteen years later, and Kate has lived past her projected time. She has always been the one to beat the odds. She is now faced with kidney failure. My other daughter Anna is the perfect copy of Kate, and can provide her with another kidney. The doctors say she may not be strong enough to make it through the procedure. But, I know my daughter's strength. She can live through and live a long happy life.

Anna was born to save her sister's life. She was made genetically perfect to match to Kate. When I made the decision to have Anna, I never thought she would have to endure so many surgeries. It was supposed to be as simple as using her umbilical cord. Now Anna is suing me for rights to her own body. It does not make sense though. My girls are more than sisters. They are also best

friends. I know there must be a legitimate reason for Anna doing this, and I will find it out.

I blame myself for the person Jesse has become. Most of his life I have dedicated my time to Kate and Anna. He feels left out, and he rebels to get my attention. I love my son. I wish I had been a better mother to him. But I do not think he will ever understand what it is like to think that one of your children may die at any moment. I tried sending him to boot camp, but nothing has worked. Now, I can only hope one day he will see things from my view and change his life around.

Even though my family is flawed in many different ways, they are still my family. I would risk my life for any of them. I wish I could have been a perfect match for Kate when she was two. Maybe then things would be different now. But I still believe that when Anna comes around and gives Kate her kidney, things will be better. Kate will be alive. Maybe then I can try and make up my time with Jesse. I still have hope for the perfect family.

This I Believe-Third Place

I Believe

Asia Bennette

As I think about all the obstacles I had to go through to get to my ultimate gift, I am grateful that my Uncle Red took the time out to make me realize that I was a foolish person. I feel like I learned the most from the gift of work, the gift of problems, and the gift of giving. All of the gifts make a better person. I feel that I am better off now that I know how to survive by myself.

The gift of work has taught me how to survive without relying on my family for money. Before Uncle Red's gift, I had never lifted my hand or broke a sweat unless I wanted to. I feel this gift was important to me because now I see how hard successful people have to work in order to get where they want to be in life. It's crazy because I have always had things given to me even when I didn't deserve it.

The gift of problems is also very useful because in life everyone has problems. It is also necessary to know how to deal with them. If a person never had a problem and didn't have to deal with it himself, he would be blind when he was left by himself. I have never had a worry in the world before Uncle Red's gift, and I am very grateful I had to go through this obstacle of problems, because I am better off as a person.

The gift of giving is the gift that I enjoy the most. I don't know why, but I enjoy putting a smile on other's faces. All my life I have had things given to me. So it feels good to return the favor. I feel it's the right thing to do.

In conclusion, I feel that I have become a better person through all the gifts Uncle Red has given me. I feel like the ultimate gift was an eye opener for me. I will never be the same.

This I Believe-Honorable Mention

This I Believe

Azalie L. Kunu

When I was a young girl, I lived in a Catholic orphanage. I never knew my parents. I was deserted when I was a baby. I had lived at the orphanage since I could remember. I had seen many children come and go from the orphanage. I believed that I would never be chosen to be part of a family. I believe I would never be adopted happy or have anyone to love me.

On days when it rained, I would lie on the ground with my eyes closed. I would imagine an angel was watching over me. As the raindrops would fall on me, one by one, I would say, "Love me or love me not." I would pray for the last drop of rain to fall on me while I said, "love me." I believed if the rain would stop just when I said, "Love me," that my prayers would be answered. Even though I was cared for greatly in the Catholic orphanage, I wanted a family of my own. I wanted to be loved.

Then one raining day, I met a priest whom I soon would call father. He was a priest and a scientist. He changed my life. He made me one of the happiest people in the world. I believed that I would never be adopted. I believed that nobody would want an eight year old, but I was proven wrong when I met my father.

Father became my happiness. He taught me to believe in myself. He taught me about science. He taught me about the world. I believe if I had not met father on that rainy day, I would not know what it felt like to be loved. I believe if it were not for the raindrops, that I would not have been adopted. I believe if it was not for my adopted father, I would not be a scientist. I believe in God and science.

This I Believe-Honorable Mention

The Ultimate Gift

Martina Dickerson

As I think about these videos that I am making for my grandson, I think back at how my life came to be. Hopefully Jason will have the same opportunity to learn the gifts of life that made me the man I am today. I decided to come up with these videos because I'm getting older and I feel that my time is coming soon for me to rest eternally forever. Jason is the only one that I think can change for the better with insight and discipline. I am trying to show Jason that people and life are not what they appear to be and that money feels better when you know you have worked for it, instead of being given everything without a care and without seeing how the real world is.

I have decided to include Mr. Hamilton and his assistant Miss Hastings, my old friends who have been a great impact in my life. I hope that they teach Jason what they have taught me about life. One of my biggest regrets I have in my life is with my family. I have sheltered them so much that they haven't had the chance to learn the basic necessities of life that I am trying to show Jason such as the gift of work, the gift of money, and the gift of giving. A lot of people in life come to a crossroads in their life where these gifts will either make or break them.

The top of the three most important gifts is the gift of family. Family keeps you grounded in life no matter how hard life gets or how much everything in your life seems to change; family will always stay the same. And it's not always about being related by blood but also by relating through love. In life friends may come and go, and when you feel as though you're alone in the world and no one is on your side, family members should always help you out and be there for you no

matter what. This is first on my list because this is important in becoming who you are today.

The second most important gift is the gift of laughter. Because if you can't laugh when you are going through the hardest of times that life throws at you, you can never really be happy. Being depressed and worrying about problems day and night will never help solve your problems. It's just accumulating time that you could spend being happy and grateful for living and other positive things in life. This also helps life and the situations you go through a little easier.

Third and final most important is the gift of dreams. Out of all the gifts of life, this is the most important because dreams encourage you always to do better in life so that you can reach the finish line. It also helps you to believe that no matter how many times people say that you can't do it and say negative remarks, that if you keep the faith and dreams in your heart you will achieve dreams. You can't live out anyone else's dreams, but your own because if you do, you will never be truly satisfied and happy in the decision you made. This is why I am honestly happy about what I have decided and made of my life.

This I Believe-Honorable Mention

What Cardinal Mortati Believes

Natalie Wester

I was the senior cardinal at the Conclave. My name is Cardinal Mortati and I was appointed the Great Elector by the College of Cardinals. A Cardinal is a high, church official and ranks just below the Pope. The Pope appoints this person, in the Roman Catholic Church, to membership in the College of Cardinals. Having this title has also made me ineligible to be elected Pope in the future. With that said, this is not always the case. Certain situations may change things, and I was about to find out how.

When the late Pope suddenly died, I needed to take charge quickly and elect a new Pope. This job was a stressful one, but I had to be strong and get the task done. The ceremony of electing a new Pope is called the Conclave. It can be described as a closed room or hall especially set aside and prepared for the cardinals when electing the pope. I was in charge of making sure that no one is to leave until a decision is made. I had a sickening feeling in my stomach like God was trying to tell me something was not right. Things just seemed to not be going smoothly. I felt as though I am failing at my job because four of our cardinals were missing. These four cardinals were the chosen four. With that said, this means that one of these four, was most-likely to be elected, so their disappearance was disturbing to me. Trying to talk myself out of anything negative, I thought about where they could be. I gazed at the ceiling and back at the crowd of other Cardinals. Thinking to myself, "They couldn't have gone far," I swallowed hard. I couldn't help but feel that this overwhelming feeling in my gut was right and that the Cardinals were in danger.

Cardinals have approached me throughout this evening with concern of where the missing cardinals were. I tried my best to calm the cardinals, but this was very hard since I felt as though I was going to break at any moment. The door behind me, leading out of the Sistine chapel, suddenly locked. This would occur when all elections were to start. I knew that this could not be a good thing since the guards knew the four cardinals were missing. I just began to pray. I prayed for strength to keep the conclave safe and free of worries.

Throughout this very eventful evening, it became harder and harder to keep my composure. With a blast that sent me to my knees, I began to pray again. The entire conclave prayed. As Langdon and Vittoria rushed in, he had a video that explained everything. The Camerlengo rushed in after them. This video explained how the Camerlengo was responsible for all of the chaos. The entire conclave was shocked including me. Now I knew the Camerlengo masterminded the events of the last months to bring people back to the church. He engineered the cardinal's deaths and the antimatter threat, as well as the Pope's death. He also branded himself with the Illuminati diamond, making it look like Kohler was Janus instead of the Camerlengo. After watching this, I told the Camerlengo he was really the Pope's son. The Pope had done artificial insemination years earlier. I watched the Camerlengo as he ran out of the Sistine Chapel into the crowd of people. He poured anointed oil all over his body and lit himself on fire. I believe he did this because of the guilt he felt for being involved in the killings of the cardinals and his own father. Everything was so clear to me now.

Even though this was actually against the normal rules, I was elected Pope. I had to bury Camerlengo Carlo Ventresca next to his father a few days later. I believe everything happens for a reason. I am deeply saddened by the deaths of the Pope, the Cardinals, and the Camerlengo, but I asked Langdon and Vittoria for their silence in this whole entire matter. I didn't want the people to lose their

faith in God or in the leaders of the church. I believe that all in all, this entire ordeal has actually restored beliefs to many people, including myself. Beliefs that miracles can happen and beliefs that God is powerful and he always wins, are just a few of my beliefs. I have always known these things, but now they have been confirmed even more. I can't go back and change the events that happened that night, but I can make sure that I spread God's word. This I know now, without a shadow of doubt, is what I was put on Earth to do.

This I Believe-Honorable Mention

I Believe

Anthony G. Chatman

I am Howard 'Red' Stevens. I moved from the swamps of Louisiana to Texas with only the clothes on my back and big dreams. I pushed myself until I made my dreams come true. Now I'm multi billionaire, in the cattle operations, gas, and oil companies and I am preparing my will before I die. I have two sons, a daughter, and a great nephew that I would be leaving nothing to because of their jealousy towards one another, greed, and spoiled attitudes.

I know once I die they will be waiting at Mr. Hamilton's office, my attorney, arguing and fighting over who gets what and how much they will receive. When Mr. Hamilton reads my will, I want their mouths to drop while they are in disbelief about what's going on and why. My oldest son, Jack Stevens, probably thinks I would leave him my first company, Panhandle Oil and Gas, which is worth somewhere around \$600 million. Jack never showed interest in the company before, so I can figure he wouldn't show any after I'm dead. Letting him run the company is like giving a three year old the keys to my Bentley and telling him to drive. Jack is a fifty-seven-year-old playboy who never knew the privilege of earning a day's wages. If he only knew I was doing him a favor by not letting him embarrass himself and loose all I worked so hard to achieve. Therefore, Mr. Hamilton will announce what he could have received and why, and that I'm donating the entire company to charity.

As for my daughter Ruth, he will announce that she would have received the family home and ranch in Austin, Texas, along with all working cattle operations. I could almost see her hands rubbing together in greed along with her derailed male friend if I left her have these items. She has been married so

many times I don't even know what last name to sign the deeds over to. It's typical that they marry her and divorce her for the money and values I place in her name. After her second or third divorce, I stopped putting things in her name. If she would tend more to her men than her fashion, she probably could keep them. It was an old saying once, "That she changes men like she changes her dresses." I would hate for her to lose everything I worked so hard for in alimony. If she would learn the true values of life, I could rest in peace. As for the ranch, house, and cattle operations, it will be looked over by Mr. Hamilton and all the profits will go to the workers and what's left will go to charity.

My youngest son Bill and his heirs would have received my entire holdings of my stock, bond, and investment portfolio. If he was capable of handling business right, he would have enough money to pass around to his family when he dies. I made sure that my stocks were well above average to take care of him and at least thirty of his family members for 80 years plus. Poor Bill, he never knew how to handle his money. The will would have been set up for him to spend 5 million a year for the rest of his life, but I watched him spend 20 million a year during his life, so you can image what he would spend when I'm dead and can't get on his butt. Literally, they would be broke anywhere from 5 to 10 years. It took me more years for developing this process to see him throw it away. My will would be made out to send 30 percent to the boys and girls' homeless shelter, 50 percent to the local hospital, and 20 percent to the people running the organizations.

Last, is my great-nephew Jason, the most selfish person I have ever known. My intentions were to leave him in charge of everything. My others kids would have had no say so without his approval. The entire businesses would entitle my kids, but Jason would run the show. I always saw potential hidden deep inside this kid, but he hide it due to his mother who was never around for him. He did what most kids would have done; lash out on others who cared about him. I did all I could for this kid, and he always found a way to screw me over, and I always

found a way to forgive him. Now I'm tired of giving chances, I did not get a chance, so why should I give them?

I blame this chaos on myself. I should have been a lot tougher on them, showing them the true meanings of making a living instead of giving them a living. Now look at them. They all are ruined because I wanted to make something of myself, trying to take care of my family. I guess I learned that it doesn't take just money to take care of your family. Sometimes it take strong morals and understanding. A gift of family is that some people are born into wonderful families, but others have to find or create them. Being a member of a family is a priceless privilege which costs nothing but love. Families give us our roots, our heritage, and our past. They also give us the springboard to our future. Nothing in this world is stronger than the bond that can be formed by a family. That is a bond of pure love that will withstand any pressure as long as the love is kept in the forefront.



America the Beautiful-First Place

My Dreams

Eduardo Garcia

People cannot do right, right away. It takes an enemy and friend to help and that is time. Time is foreign in this paper, by a dream which allows anything and everything to happen without this time. So, my dream is for my country American. In my dream I want recycling to be everywhere, to reduce our huge girths, and most of all to rediscover ourselves.

Plastic! Everywhere plastic is seen and unnoticed are the long term effects. Trash! Bags of trash are being emptied out, cans, and bottles. Far away hidden from noses are mountains and hills of more trash. This ugly laziness must stop. Our solution is to recycle. Recycle these cans, bottles, papers, old cars, and even old buildings! Let children be left with clean fields filled with brilliant sun instead of fields of trash filled with batteries oozing with acid, embarrassment, and laziness. "In the time it takes you to brush your teeth (2 minutes) Carolinians send 4,657 plastic bottles to landfills." (The facts). Unbelievable as this fact may be, as in a dream, it's not. May a domino effect take place where America recycles every ounce of trash, and following is country after country.

My second dream for the stars on my flag is for the size of our belts to be curtailed. How can a man take pride of his weight record without thinking of what he should have been prideful of? He won't run, live longer, hurry because he is late, or slow dance with his love. Yes, people will be amazed for some time, but hopefully only the less amazed will feel lucky for what they have. "He consumes around 20,000 calories a day – compared to the average adult male, who needs 2,500." {World's...} He is the world's biggest man.

The fact is, we love to taste. It is a curse and blessing, so let us reduce the visits to fast food. “McDonald’s feeds more than 46 million people a day – more than the entire population of Spain.” {Sad fast food facts} May one day a lesson be learned, and from it a stop to the increase in the size of our stomachs.

The last and most important dream I want for America to happen right away, is for Americans to rediscover what America is, where the right to throw trash away, to eat how we please is oh so free. We can protest, veto, debate, march, and walk with pride down streets without being stopped. But America as we all know is in very difficult times and where we wish to fast forward this horrible movie, Rewind. Times like these one remembers to value family. Times like these one remembers to value his job, physical state, and yes even one’s working car. Let this moment be a rediscovery and reminder of America because that is why this awful gravity became heavier on us. “It’s times like these you learn to live again. It’s times like these you give and give again. It’s times like these you learn to love again. It’s times like these time and time again.” {Foo Fighters}

Can a dream really become true, or should it stay where it came from in one’s head and locked forever. I say dream on. Without dreams I might not be typing this paper. Without dreams, I might as well whiteout the word America on this paper. That is what America is, a place we go to dream. Some are living my dream, they recycle everyday, exercise and eat healthy, and even stand out because they know they have a right to. My dreams are intended for us all a recycling infection, a decrease in stomach size, and a rediscovery of what we already know. God, bless American.

America the Beautiful-Second Place

My Dream for America

Kathleen Hall

In America today, there are many pressing issues to be faced. As a person being socialized today in modern America, one would be faced with many cultures, religions, and opinions. Every American dreams of a better life in America. My dream for America would be an affordable healthcare system for the working lower to middle class, a more efficient source of energy, and for Americans to bring our next generations up with less fear and prejudice for the people around them, and to teach them respect for others' values and opinions.

According to healthreform.gov, 5,832,900 Texas homes do not have healthcare. That amount is staggering and does not include the rest of the United States. There are many hard working lower to middle class Americans who simply cannot afford Healthcare. A family of five, with a combined income of \$18.00 an hour, can barely make it paycheck to paycheck, with the cost of living today in America. With all the talk about healthcare reform in the media and in the Government, I pray this will be taken care of in the near future. I feel every American deserves the comfort of knowing, that if he needed to go to the doctor, he could do so without the heavy burden of how he is going to pay for it.

Another dream I have for America is to find a better source of energy that wouldn't have such a negative impact on our environment. There are many ideas people throughout the world have come up with for better sources of energy. In Freiburg, Germany the 200,000 residents have covered their roofs with solar panels, which power their entire house. Left over energy is then sold back to the power grid. Germany decided in 2002 to begin phasing out nuclear plants by

energy they have used in the past. America's wind energy sources are slowly coming about, but I believe we could benefit from cleaner energy sources by watching and learning from other countries.

My final dream for America is to bring about brave new ways to socialize our children and teach them to communicate with, and appreciate other cultures. America is riddled with many diverse and unique races, religions, opinions and differences. Children learn by example, and if they are shown prejudice and fear differences in others then they will pass it on. If children are taught at an early age that things and people that are unfamiliar and contrast with the familiar aren't always bad, just different, I believe the world would be a better place. Children should be taught to love and appreciate the differences in our world and not learn to hate.

America will never be perfect, but affordable healthcare, efficient energy sources and bringing up happy, well-adjusted children are just a few of my dreams for America. There are millions of dreams that belong to millions of Americans and with people hoping and dreaming constantly I believe America will always be a great country.



General Fiction

General Fiction-First Place

The Way to a Dragon's Heart

Kathleen Hall

“Ferish!” grumbled Lucius, the oldest of the Silver Dragons. “Rotten brownie!” The dragon’s ancient low growl, rumbling through the cold, dank cave, resembled thunder reverberating out into the warm autumn air, and down the path to the small brownie boy. At 123 years of age, Ferish was still an adolescent, whose thoughts were not doing chores for a grumpy, old dragon. Ferish had actually finished all his chores except for those irritating cobwebs Lucius had been complaining about the last three days.

Being a Brownie, Ferish was a mere, two and a half feet tall, reaching only two and three-quarters when standing on the tips of his tiny brownie toes. “How in the Great Forest, am I supposed to reach the tip-top corner of a cave, taller than that silly old dragon?” Ferish mumbled to himself, kicking rocks as he strolled angrily down the trail. Even though he felt horrible for that old and grey, sad dragon, Ferish was on his way to see his best friend, Ellylon, the sprite. It being dusk, Ferish looked back, into the golden purple sun settling behind the cliffs of the Silver Dragons’ cave, then disappeared into the Great Forest.

Ellylon often pretended to be enchanted forest creatures as she did her evening spritely duties. But to her, the tasks of whispering kisses to the purple pansies, and meadow daisies was not work at all. Elly, as her friend, Ferish called her, was often reprimanded by her mother to, “quit horseflying around” and to, “grow up, and start acting like a sprite of 19 spring times and not one of 12.” Ellylon had grown up, even if she didn’t want to admit it. Ellylon was the tallest sprite in her class at the Mushroom Academy for Enchanted Creatures. She had quit growing two winters ago, at the height of four toad stools, where all the other sprites made it to about three and a half toad stools. Her fiery red head

full of hair, also made her taller because she could never quite get it to lie down.

Although Elly was enjoying the cool autumn breeze, and her evening routine was almost complete, her mind was on her friend Ferish. She had not seen him now in three nights, and for Ferish this was very odd. Elly knew this was the season the great, Silver Dragons, went to the Harvest Moon Dragon Celebration, the all exclusive, dragon party of the year, where all the dragon clans met to do whatever dragons do while partying. Ellylon didn't really know, for she was not a dragon and therefore had never been invited. She did know that all the dragons left on the eve of the harvest moon, and did not return for seven days and that was three days ago. While she pondered all the things that could have gone wrong, a noise from behind, startled her, and immediately she vanished, as all sprites do when in danger. Coming up the path was Ferish, kicking rocks and mumbling to himself.

Elly smiled an invisible smile, and flittered, flying silently ever so closely to Ferish, moping down the mossy trail, and entering the meadow. Catching him off guard, Elly appeared silently, directly in front of Ferish, yelping with excitement, "Hello, stranger!" Ferish hollered loudly and fell backwards clumsily, onto a stick, cutting his small brownie hand. "Oowwee!" cried Ferish. Angrily he stood up and started to weep uncontrollably. Feeling horrible, and noticing the trickle of blood, Ellylon grabbed his hand and kissed it lightly. One of Elly's renowned capabilities as a sprite was the power to heal. Ferish stared at his jagged wound, slowly healing, with a slight shimmer and sparkle that lit up the darkness around the two.

For Ferish, falling down was the last straw. He continued sobbing even though his hand was completely healed. "I don't know what to do, Elly!" Ferish said softly, glancing up through his matted, reddish brown hair. He calmed himself in order to speak, and shared with his dear friend, the events of the last few days. "All the Silver Dragons have gone on their trip to the Harvest Party, but my master, Lucius, has stayed home, and I don't know why." He trembled as he

spoke, told his friend about the chores, cobwebs, and Lucius' irritability toward him. Ferish swore he would never return to those cold, dark, dragon caves ever again.

Ellylon listened quietly, and let her friend express to her how mean and intolerable the nine and a half century old dragon had been acting. Elly knew how long Ferish had been with Lucius and also knew how much he loved and looked up to the dragon. She asked Ferish, "Why did you not come to me for help, silly brownie?" Elly helped Ferish to realize there must be something seriously wrong for the eldest Silver Dragon not to attend the long awaited dragon bash of the year. Elly grabbed her friend, pulled him to his feet, and they walked, hand in hand, back toward the home of the Silver Dragons. Ferish smiled, knowing how lucky he was, and hoped that the friendship between him, and Elly would never change.

Quietly Ferish and Ellylon entered the now silent cave. Ferish knew that Lucius would be asleep, so he tiptoed quietly, while Elly flew silently on her translucent, blue spotted, fairy-like wings, above him. Her wings gave off the faintest blue-green radiance while in flight that cast eerie shadows dancing through the caves dark crevices.

Immediately, Elly got to work removing the very minimal cobwebs on the dark walls of the cave. The last few webs were in the corner where the old dragon slept. As she completed her chore, and flittered back down toward her friend, the light from Elly's faint glowing wings, descended over the dragons massive ridges and shiny silver scales. Elly's pale illumination rolled over the dragon, and there, between his folded wings, on the ridge of his backbone was a missing scale. Every elf, sprite and magical creature that had attended the Mushroom Academy had studied this, and Elly knew when a dragon was missing a scale he could no longer fly!

Ferish sensed Elly was up to something, and he began pointing to the exit of the cave. Disregarding the attempt not to wake the short-tempered dragon, Elly

turned her small, spritely body, upside down, floated down, headfirst, toward the sleeping dragon. Fitting her tiny head in between Lucius' boney raised spines, directly between his glorious wings, she lightly kissed his missing scale. With lightning speed, Ellylon flew gracefully toward her friend, landed, and looked up at him.

Glowing with sparkling blue green flashes and hues, the dragon's scale started to grow back. With a growing intensity and a flash of white light behind her, Ferish smiled at Elly, and his expression thanked her without saying a word.

Lucius raised his majestic head and peered down at the small brownie and the even tinier sprite. Ferish grabbed Elly's hand, as sweat ran down his fuzzy brownie sideburns. His heart pounded, and slowly the dragon smiled, as politely as a dragon can with jaws of jagged teeth. "Thank you, young sprite." Boomed Lucius, happily! "I can now join my friends for our seasonal festival! And Ferish, I apologize for how I've been acting. I was ashamed, and too proud to ask for help."

The air beating down from Lucius' wings felt good on Ferish's face. Ferish had to physically hold Elly's hand to keep her almost weightless form from blowing to the back of the cave. He gazed at his beautiful master fly gracefully away to join the other dragons. Ferish thought of how he almost gave up on Lucius, if it hadn't have been for Ellylon. When your loved ones are grumpy, there is usually a reason. You should never give up on them, for small, loving kisses, on booboo's can most of the time make everything better.

General Fiction-Second Place

A Tale of Revenge

Audrey Sigarst

I closed my eyes against the dry pain as I continued to dress for our special occasion. I absently twisted the gold band that was too big for my finger. It along with my now roomy, white, flowing silk dress cooled the heat that threatened to over-take my regained sanity. A hollow smile spread across my face as I side-glanced at the wedding invitations that opened with a picture of us in our wedding apparel: Pink and chocolate, my favorite colors.

The clock read 2:15. I stood and took inventory admiring my reflection before I hurried toward the door. I grabbed a silk purse sitting prettily on the end table before I exited. It was a new addition to the dress, a last minute accessory. I threw it into the passenger seat; the dull thud I heard as it landed caught my attention. I wondered but could not remember what I had put into the bag. Too excited to investigate, I pushed it out of my mind.

A smile stretched my bottom facial features, as I got closer to the church. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I began to feel a ticking in the back of my brain. No longer were there feelings of excitement, but those of detachment. The smile on my face was too awkward to be a smile; my teeth were bared. While I tried to relax the muscles around my mouth, I also worked mentally trying to recapture my element of bliss as I drove up to the doors of the church.

Restoration of my earlier happiness was blocked by images of another woman walking toward my soon-to-be-husband. The images were so real I began to feel insane: This was my wedding, who was this woman? I shook myself mentally checking my sanity. A small laugh bubbled from my throat as my eyes focused on the silk purse with brown and pink flowers eloquently stitched. I shivered seeing

another image of me tracing cold metal seductively across my body. Suddenly I recoiled from the presence of the purse. What was I doing here?

Abruptly the traditional music announcing the bride rang in my ears, I was late! I jumped out of the car and grabbed the purse, disregarding the weight of it and my earlier hallucinations. I burst through the doors with a gush. I noted the many shocked faces and the many surprised gulps of air as our guests turned towards me. I felt disgruntled and my nerves were scattered: I smiled and once more it felt too big. Rushing down the aisle, I vowed to give each one a personal apology for my tardiness. I smiled as I passed each row trying to calm them as well as myself. The smile warped my face it was still too big, I felt the air wisp against my gums. I looked away from the awed crowd, right into the eyes of my ex fiancé and his soon to be wife.

I was cold, so cold. There was a small click at the center of my head: It was mental, but I jerked; it felt physical. This was not our wedding; the wedding that he never showed for, it was his. I pushed my heavy body forward; it felt like stone, dead weight. My mind was not working, I could not think. There were only masses of empty air pockets where thoughts should have been rummaging.

The building was so quiet, the bride and groom just stared. I remembered the weight in my purse and recalled the small pistol I had purchased last year. Around the time I had heard that he was getting married, four days after the day, I had stood alone and confused at the altar. I clutched at its form as though it was my only means of survival; in fact, it was. The shame, guilt, and pain of rejection were hard enough. Having to deal with his “Happily ever after” was too much to bear.

For once, he had nothing to say as I halted looking dead into his beautiful face. I knew behind all that beauty was a soul void of love for me. Yet, his beauty was still enticing. I started to reach for him; the young woman stepped closer to him as he dodged my touch. I almost screamed in outrage, but I was breathless.

The pain was searing. I heard a small whimper escape my lips. I doubled over

wrapping around my ribs, they hurt and tightened around my lungs. I could not give him up to another woman. Someone was holding me up trying to escort me out; my body jerked in resistance. I wanted him to see me die before his eyes. I wanted him to witness firsthand what he had done. He had murdered me. I had become a walking, living corpse, and he was responsible.

The sound of the crowd stirring bothered me. The rustling fabric of the brides dress caught my ear. I looked up as they were walking away. The noise from the crowd grew louder as everyone began to whisper. I did not have to look around to know that they were mainly the same people who had received our invitations a little more than a year ago. The click in my head shattered into a million pieces at that thought. Rage bubbled over the pain in both my heart and mind. There was complete silence around me. Someone was laughing.

Unfolding I remembered the time I had spent at the shooting range. The smile warped my lips again; this time it felt right, comfortable. It matched the hate in my head and heart. The image of the target almost calmed me. I had spent hours, days perfecting speed and accuracy. I had almost forgotten my purpose.

There were two shots before the screams interrupted the black silence. The bride and groom both fell, face first. I embraced the silence once more as it engulfed me. I watched as the blood streamed from the center of their heads. The gun dropped to the floor making the same dull thud I had heard in the car. The pain and the rage within settled as quickly as they had begun. I closed my eyes to nothingness: the pain, rage, and misery were sated. My haunting laughter broke through the silence. My laughter is all I hear.

General Fiction-Third Place

Journey of Love

Anthony G. Chatman

There was a young man by the name Pete “Show gun” Wilson, who was the best high school basketball player in town. Many argued that no one could beat him in two states. He was an astonishing, six foot five, smart, and had dedicated himself into loving women, in competition with his father. Love was something his father knew nothing about, but he had always tried to convince him to never trust a woman or let one get close to his heart. This advice made Pete furious because he watched his mother love his father and get nothing in return. From this point on, he made a pledge to himself that he would learn how to love a woman unconditionally.

It all started in March of 1998, when he found himself good at everything he participated in. Quite shy as a young man, communicating with others was never his strong gift in life. The only way he knew how to express himself was being outstanding in whatever he did. He let his smarts and hard work do all the talking, but he still found his life shallow and lonely. One day he really outdid himself by scoring forty points in a game, fifteen assists, eight rebounds, and he also averaged the highest grade point average in the school. There were over fifty college scouts at the school to see his performance. He had everyone’s attention even Becky Sue, one of the hottest, most gorgeous girls in school. Becky Sue wouldn’t stop until she had what she wanted, a young man with potential, who had dreams that only the sky could be his limit. Becky approached him with her eyes fixed as if she spotted love at first sight, with a smile that you knew was trouble, but couldn’t resist. She grabbed Pete by the arms and whispered soft words in his ears. Pete couldn’t reply because he had to

smile and agree with everything she said as he walked her home with such dignity and pride as they looked at the stars of the night. Pete was always silent around girls, but not around this one. He spoke with so much knowledge and enthusiasm she was overwhelmed that a guy who didn't say but only three words had so much to talk about.

They arrived at her house with plenty of conversation and love thick in the air as she stopped his words short with a kiss and a stare and into his eyes as she eased away gently while letting go of his hand. Pete was stunned, eyes wide, heart racing, with all the symptoms of love. He got home quickly so he could reminisce on Becky Sue, the girl of his dreams. What Pete didn't notice was his best friend, his only friend, Jenny Parker. She watched the incident with Becky go down and did nothing. She waited for his arrival home as she stood patiently looking out the window two houses down, blaming herself for not stepping up for the man she truly loved, and she knew the true reasons why Becky wanted him. Just in the mist passing under the street lights came Pete, swinging around the poles and singing in joy. Jenny watched closely as she wanted to shout out the window how she truly felt about him and inform him how miserable his life would be with Becky, but again she did nothing but cry as she touched on the glass of the window hoping she could feel her.

Days passed when Jenny and Pete grew farther apart from each other, having not spoken to each other in months. Jenny continued to watch out her window knowing every date they went on. Eventually, she grew tired and decided to do some research by dating. She did not care about the guys. As long as they were close to or stayed around Pete's presence, she was willing to give them a chance. Pete didn't even notice because Becky had his nose wider than an I-10 Highway. Eventually, Jenny gave up dating because the guys she was using to get back to Pete made her love only grow stronger for him. They had no interest in her thinking ability or what she was capable of, but Pete knew everything of interest to her. She decided to stop the games and save herself for

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Days passed when Jenny and Pete grew farther apart from each other, having not spoken to each other in months. Jenny continued to watch out her window knowing every date they went on. Eventually, she grew tired and decided to do some research by dating. She did not care about the guys. As long as they were close to or stayed around Pete's presence, she was willing to give them a chance. Pete didn't even notice because Becky had his nose wider than an I-10 Highway. Eventually, Jenny gave up dating because the guys she was using to get back to Pete made her love only grow stronger for him. They had no interest in her thinking ability or what she was capable of, but Pete knew everything of interest to her. She decided to stop the games and save herself for

the man of her dreams.

By the fourth or fifth date with Becky, Pete wanted her to meet his mother. Becky was convinced because she had to see what she was up against. Pete spun the entire day preparing for the date, cooking, cleaning, and getting his charm lines together. Finally, at 6'oclock that evening a soft knock struck the door. Pete jumped; running to make sure everything was in place before he answered. "Hello Becky," he said with his voice strong and deep. "Welcome to my home," as he closed the door behind her. They walked down the hall to the kitchen where his mother was waiting. "I would like you to meet my mother Angela Wilson." "Angela Wilson, I would like you to meet my girlfriend, Becky Sue." They reached out to shake hands, and Becky gave little eye contact as Mrs. Wilson stared her down. Mrs. Wilson asked about Jenny, and Pete waved her off. Then she asked Becky if she knew her. Becky replied, "Yes, isn't she the school president and in the Honors Club."

"Yes," Mrs. Wilson said, "And how about you, Becky."

"No, but I am a cheerleader."

Pete set back in his chair with his hands on his head in disbelief on how his mother was acting. Pete changed the conversation by asking if they were ready to eat. "Yes," they both replied. Mrs. Wilson came back with a sneak attack. "Pete sure can cook. Can you cook, Becky?"

"No," she said.

"Jenny is a good cook too; maybe you can get her to teach you one day, and I know she wouldn't mind."

Oh, was Becky mad, and she played right into Mrs. Wilson's hands. That night ended quickly. It was all stories about Jenny's and Pete's early childhoods growing up together. I guess Becky knew what she was up against, but was stunned to discover that Jenny lived two houses down and grew up with Pete. Becky had to do something fast or lose what she needed. The time has come for

Becky's plan to go into action. Her parents took a weekend trip to Vegas, and she called Pete over to help move some stuff for her. She knew she couldn't come out and tell him what she really wanted because of the conversation she and Pete had dealing with him saving himself until he got married. Pete arrived ready to work and Becky answered the door with a see through blouse on smelling like sweet vanillas. Pete started choking when he laid his eyes on her. She said, "Hello Pete." Nervously he started to stutter. She sat Pete on the couch and Pete tried everything in his will not to give in, but Pete was in a no-win situation, and Becky knew all the right things to say. Becky could convince Satan to go back to Heaven if she tried. All Pete knew next was he was making love for the first time. It was almost time for Pete to explode when Becky rapped her legs around Pete's waist as tight as she could where Pete could not go anywhere, but stay in her. It was over, and he was furious with what Becky had done to him. He aimed fast to retrieve his clothes asking her what were they going to do with a kid, and she said, "No, what are you going to do with a kid." Pete felt bad and used as he stormed out of the house mad at himself hearing every word his dad had spoken about women. What was Pete going to do now? Be like his father or step up to the plate and handle his responsibility.

Pete had nowhere to go, no one to talk to, but Jenny. He made it to her house, rang the door bell, and Jenny answered looking at Pete, heartbroken and full of tears as he explained what happened. Jenny started crying right along as she listened to every detail Pete said. Jenny opened up, placed Pete in her arms and said, "I'm sorry, Pete. I should have done something the moment I saw her talking to you when you walked her home."

Pete looked up and said, "You mean you were watching all that time?"

"Yes, Pete. I always loved you and didn't know how to tell you. I even watched to make sure you were asleep before I went to sleep."

“Jenny, I should be the one apologizing. I never knew you cared so much all this time, and I ignored your feelings.”

Jenny came up with a suggestion and said, “Pete, just leave her, and I will do everything in my power to help you raise the child because I love you that much, and I will do anything for you. She braced her arms around Pete and held him as if she hasn’t seen him in years. Pete felt the love and returned it and said, “I love you too.”

Jenny and Pete are now married raising little Pete, whom he had with Becky. They now have full custody over him along with two other siblings Roy and Brenda. As for Becky, she is in rehab for drug conviction, which started after Pete left her. Pete’s a lawyer at Provost Humphrey Law Firm, and Jenny is a doctor for St. Elizabeth Hospital. I just hope we all can learn something from this story that love is always a search; sometimes it is right in your face and you don’t even know it.

General Fiction-Honorable Mention

Loveless

Eduardo Garcia

As the boy went to get water from the well, paranoia stepped in. Still the blue eyed boy kept walking through the tall summer grass. He looked up and the stars were glowing with delight. His legs now slowing down; he was here. From behind the well emerged a beautiful brown eyed girl. Her skin touched by the sun, she had a face that would make any person smile. Each thought they were not going to make it, but ignored that and spent the precious time together. As they held hands, the moon lit their path. What was not said, what opinions were not expressed, and what jokes and riddles were not told, their smiles said it all, Love. Sadly they must go asunder and go back into the shadows they came from. The strong, now happy boy walked with two pails in each hand and entered the one room house. All eyes stared at him, saying without words, "what took so long?" The dimpled boy looked down and led the others to his torn faded pants, which were wet. Saying to the others that he spilled the water along the way and went for more. A lie he would, but not proudly, tell again. Off to bed he went to dream of her in marriage or streaming down an idyllic river. He turned left and looked at the moon outside the only window. The bright huge moon looked back at the well dressed girl. In her over sized room with copious things to touch and do, she did nothing but look back at the moon. The morning was as always, with war. In this place peace did not exist in any dictionary. Sword with sword, life with life, animals fighting for tawdry trinkets. The gold and diamonds are ours, the peasants, not that king's, words said by such an obtuse person. Agreeing with me was the well spirited boy. This was not the only altercation; the boy and girl were spotted yesterday night. The boy knew this when he was ambushed, caught and

saw her and his heart retarded. Word spread as if new gold was found, and all came to the castle with swords, fire and their sound. Inside the walls the boy cuddled in a solitaire dark room. It was not the awful smell, or the insects and rodents that bothered him. It was wondering if he was ever going to see her again. A boy must eat, so he grabbed something furry and started to chew. NO! A breach was made and the final battle was beginning. A risk was made, and the intrepid girl went to him. He was shocked to see her, and relieved as well. She had the idea that they both would be safe with her father, the king. They ran for his well guarded room and behind the lovers a wave of peasants followed. Up, up, up they all went and only a few guards and King stood tall atop the tallest roof. In the middle were the two doves, the boy and girl. They spoke with the best rhetoric and palpable words even I was convinced to stop. Outside the weather was blissful, filled with sunshine and breezes, despite the actual mood. With anger and hate for them for what they did, they heard nothing. Suddenly two arrows, one for each, flew at them with no warning. They did not stare at their audience but at each other and said, "I love you," and then died. With them disappeared the trees, the water, and the sweet smell of food. Even the gold and diamonds left without a goodbye. The sun was gone, the breeze never blew, and what was left was a shadow casting over the two groups forever and ever.

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Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial staff of EARLY EXPRESSIONS 2010 would like to thank all of the students who submitted work for consideration to EARLY EXPRESSIONS 2010 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 2010 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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