

expressions
2006



Lamar State College-Port Arthur



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Expressions

Spring 2006

Volume XX

Dedication

Rita will never let us forget. Signs of her visit are ubiquitous. Destruction takes much less time than construction. I will not live to see the replacement trees which are planted grow to the height and stature of those that were lost. The scenery of our cities has changed forever; however, as in most tragedies, we as a people are determined to replace, restore, and adapt ourselves as survivors must. Rita may have come, but we will conquer.

It is to those who are striving to make the community as well as their own lives better that we dedicate this edition of *Expressions* magazine.

Sally Byrd
Editor



Rita's Touch

A tree fell and with it went
An old man's pride
And a young girl's dreams

Expressions 2006

Student Winners

SHORT STORY

First Place

The Qutavi Bridge Incident William H. Davis, Jr.

Second Place

An Editor's Correspondence William H. Davis, Jr.

Third Place

The Box Alfred Roberts

Honorable Mention

Archie and Nizbit R. A. Flowers, III

Ms. Nature Said Keith Demps

Unplugged Waymon Stepeherson

ESSAY

First Place

Let Nazis Speak John D. Jorden

Second Place

Grunts and Spooks John D. Jorden

Third Place

In Defense of Conservative Federalism Robert Shane Orr

Honorable Mention

Man's Wild Heart William H. Davis, Jr.

Hurricanes Keith Demps

POETRY

First Place

Burn No More William H. Davis, Jr.

Second Place

The Vixen William H. Davis, Jr.

Third Place

Lady Luck William H. Davis, Jr.

POETRY

Honorable Mention

Music Man	James Wesley Schexnider
Addicted.....	La'Darrian Wade
Time	Liliana D. Contreras
Tear Drops.....	Joshua Payne
What Keeps Me Going	Devan Callihan
The Coming Storm.....	William H. Davis, Jr.
Enveloped	Michael Highfill

LITERARY CRITIQUE

First Place

Masculine & Feminine Love as Seen in <u>Medea</u>	Tara Schrieber
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Second Place

The Ruin of Abortion.....	Melony Williams
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Third Place

Am I a Murderer?	William H. Davis, Jr.
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Honorable Mention

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	William H. Davis, Jr.
Wait for Me	William H. Davis, Jr.
The Sadness of Our Society.....	Debbie Stehlik

SPECIAL CATEGORY-Funded and Sponsored by: Phi Theta Kappa

Gold, Gods and Glory: The Global Dynamics of Power...	Bruce White
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HURRICANE RITA-ESSAY

First Place

The Eye of the Hurricane.....	Fabiola Villanueva
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Second Place

Rita.....	Debbie Stehlik
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Third Place

Anticipation Along with Dread.....	Gwendolyn McFate
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HURRICANE RITA-ESSAY

Honorable Mention

Opening the Door to Devastation ... Kendriah Boudreaux
Scars Jason Campbell
After the Storm Kendra Greene

HURRICANE RITA-POETRY

First Place

End of Another Day April Arredondo

Second Place

The Wind Blows Harder Through the Night
Walter Durham

Third Place

If I Were a Hummingbird..... Anastacia Gordon

Honorable Mention

The Queen of the Season Tshitenge Mutamba
On a Warm Dark Night Gwendolyn McFate

COVER ART

First Place Joseph Torres

Second Place Lori DeRosier

Third Place..... Kyle Haviland

Honorable Mention William Simmons

GENERAL ART

First Place

My Hero, Dad David Lawhon

Second Place Phillip Trevino

Third Place..... Shane Miller

PHOTOGRAPHY

First Place April Arredondo

Second Place April Arredondo

PUBLISHER'S AWARD

Cover Art Second Place Lori DeRosier

Table of Contents

SHORT STORY

Davis, William H., Jr.....	3, 8
Demps, Keith	23
Flowers, R.A., III	19
Roberts, Alfred.....	14
Stepherson, Waymon.....	25

ESSAY

Davis, William H., Jr.....	39
Demps, Keith	41
Jorden, John D.	31, 34

POETRY

Callihan, Devan	55
Contreras, Liliana.....	53
Davis, William H., Jr.....	47, 48, 49, 56
Highfill, Michael.....	58
Payne, Joshua.....	54
Schexnider, James Wesley	51
Wade, La'Darrian.....	52

LITERARY CRITIQUE

Davis, William H., Jr.....	69, 72, 80
Orr, Robert Shane	75
Schrieber, Tara	63
Stehlik, Debbie.....	83
Williams, Melony.....	66

SPECIAL CATEGORY-Funded and Sponsored by: Phi Theta Kappa

White, Bruce	89
--------------------	----

HURRICANE RITA-ESSAY

Boudreaux, Kendria	104
Campbell, Jason	108
Greene, Kendra	111
McFate, Gwendolyn	101
Stehlik, Debbie	98
Villanueva, Fabiola	95

HURRICANE RITA-POETRY

Arredondo, April	117
Durham, Walter	118
Gordon, Anastacia	119
McFate, Gwendolyn	122
Mutamba, Tshitenge	121

COVER ART

DeRosier, Lori	2
Haviland, Kyle	44
Simmons, William	86
Torres, Joseph	Cover

GENERAL ART

Lawhon, David	30
Miller, Shane	62
Trevino, Phillip	46

PHOTOGRAPHY

Arredondo, April	13,40
------------------	-------

FACULTY & STAFF

Byrd, Sally *i*, 141, 143
Constantine, Delores 124, 137
Gaspard, Damon James..... 128, 132, 134,136
Gongre, Charles Dr. 82, 88, 107, 114
Judice, Michelle 130
Peeler, Robert..... 125
Polk, Janet G. *ix*, 94, 116, 138, 140, 142, 146
Ross, Don 127, 131, 133, 135
Rudd, Mysti..... 139, 144, 147
Thigpen, Albert Dr. 129

Student Contributors

Jamesia Alexander	Kendra Greene	Trang Pham
Alcestis Arago	Kayse Griffin	Steven E. Presley
April Arredondo	Ryan Andrew Hanson	Denisse Ramirez
Veronica Batiste	Kyle Haviland	Alfred Roberts
Kendriah Boudreaux	Michael Highfill	Lee Robinson
Delenya Cadena	Tyesha Hope	James W. Schexnider
Devan Callihan	Renata Jacob	Tara Schrieber
Jason Campbell	John D. Jordan	William Simmons
Alexis Castillo	Charlotte Joseph	Debbie Stehlik
Dee Chamberlain	Kristin Kelley	Waymon Stepherson
Kevin Champagne	Raymond Lake	Travis Tallant
Liliana D. Contreras	David Lawhon	Joseph Torres
Derick Cooper	Anthony Latimer	Tanika Traveler
Julia Curl	Alicia Lavergne	Phillip Trevino
William H. Davis, Jr.	Gwendolyn McFate	Leigh Tullis
Keith Demps	Mark W. Martin, II	Cody Underwood
Lori DeRosier	Kayla Matthews	Maria Vallejo
Angela Deshotel	Cecilia Medrano	Megan Vickers
Walter Durham	Shane Miller	Fabiola Villanueva
Jason Ferguson	Karla Moreno	La'Darrian Wade
Lea Flores	Tshitenge Mutamba	Brittany Walters
R. A. Flowers, III	Maggie Nguyen	Bruce White
Kyle Fontenot	Nga Nguyen	Keith Williams
Cristal Francis	Marvin C. Nowell	Melony Williams
Kevin Gilbert	Katherian Odom	
Tara Gillette	Robert Orr	
Anastacia Gordon	Lyndsay Palumbo	
Kendall Green	Joshua Payne	



Welcome 2006
Janet G. Polk-Staff

Short Story

Expressions 2006



Cover Art-Second Place

Lori DeRosier

Short Story-First Place

The Qutavi Bridge Incident

William H. Davis, Jr.

Reconnaissance confirmed that about one hundred Panthera Verde insurgents were only fifty kilometers from Qutavi, a peaceful village fifteen kilometers south of the Pena River in Southern Panama. Though lightly armed, they were a threat to the village. They advanced down the El Gato Road-a decaying paved road that reached to within a few kilometers of the bridge. One battered American Dodge truck was reported to have a long tube-like piece of equipment mounted on the bed. Franco suspected a Soviet 122mm rocket launcher-a nasty concern that can "bring big smoke." To delay their advance, a small group was dispatched to destroy the bridge spanning the turbulent Pena River.

How I became a party to this rag-tag group of would-be saviors, led by a Panamanian CIA operative, was sheer coincidence. As a writer and avid river exploration freak, I was given a rare opportunity to survey a short uncharted stretch of the legendary Pena River in Southern Panama. This was set up by my publisher who had a friend in government, who had a friend at the Panamanian Embassy, who had a friend, who had a friend. I lost track of who did what. All the while I kept hearing hushed mention of the "Panthera Verde," a Marxist group committing robberies in southern Panama around the Pena River. Lately it seems their numbers had increased, as well as their crimes. Yet when I officially requested information-any Embassy warning-no one would even acknowledge there was such a group. If the Embassy didn't acknowledge these thugs, there must not be much to them.

I was more worried about the Bushmasters that infested the jungles there. Ah, the Bushmaster: Lachesis Muta, an ornery bastard attaining lengths of over twelve feet. Lachesis has the second longest fangs in the snake world -over two inches. A bite in the field is certain death.

Even with anti-venom a victim would still have less than a fifty-fifty chance of survival. And then with severe heart or nerve damage. The Panthera Verde were way down on my list of worries.

When the Panamanian River Society (P. R. S.) called and offered to sponsor my expedition, I forgot all about the Panthera Verde and their reptilian counterpart. My publisher would get a submission to read, the P. R. S. would get a report, and I would get to do what I love—float a new river, then write about it.

The Pena River is unique among rivers. Located just south of the Panama Canal, it's only actually a river when it rains enough to overflow the Pella Basin, up high in the hills. This can happen at any given hour. When it does, the Pena flows in two directions bisecting the Isthmus of Panama—West to the Gulf of Colombo, east to the Caribbean Sea. For now it was calm. ...for the Pena River.

I would put in (launch) at Manual, a small village, and with a combination of free-floating and rowing, float west to the Qutavi Bridge. I would take a few days, a week, however long I wanted. That is the beauty of "isolated free floating," all I needed is a launch point, a pick-up point and a little knowledge of what lies between the two. A few tattered topographical maps furnished by the P. R. S. and interviews with some of the locals would suffice. The Qutavi Bridge was a simple, but stout heavy wooden frame supported by four twelve-inch diameter poles. It spanned the two banks—approximately thirty-five feet—and stood over twenty feet above the swift current. The only problem was that the bridge was actually fifteen kilometers from the village. But, as time was not pressing, I would cut a trail to the river, easy enough because a semblance of a trail ran to within a few kilometers of the El Gato Road that led to the bridge. It took three days—three days of ass busting to cut a trail of one-and-one-half kilometers. The jungle seemed to regrow as I cut it.

When I first reached the American Embassy, I met a fellow I would see again, Franco Valderman. I first noticed him talking to an American Marine Lieutenant. Then I saw him here and there as I prepared for my

expedition. He seemed to get around a lot. I wondered about his presence until I managed to "accidentally" catch him following me as I worked on the trail that I would use to return from the river. He laughed when he realized I had managed to disappear, then come up behind him. I could have laughed too, had he not brandished a Sig Sauer P-229-9mm pistol with blinding speed. It was this incident that broke the ice. We became friends and Franco wasn't too surprised when I suggested his Sig 9mm was "issued." But, it wasn't just the fifteen hundred dollar pistol that made me suspicious. Franco's neck and forearms-they hinted at a thousand fingertip push-ups a day. People don't maintain Olympic-level fitness to be tour guides. Of course, he never admitted to anything. But surely he was a Ranger, maybe even "Delta." He did give me some specific information about the Panthera Verde, "meaner then 'Matas Caballo.'" which was Spanish for "kill a horse," a reference to the potency of the Bushmaster's venom.

Franco knew of the P. R. S. sponsorship of my expedition. He finally confessed to me that keeping me from harm's way was an unofficial assignment.

"So you are agency...?" Franco smiled, but made no reply. It was through Franco that I obtained a Ruger MK-II .22 cal pisto, a couple of extra magazines, and one hundred rounds of old Winchester High-Speed ammunitions -just a security measure.

I had camped at the Qutavi Bridge the night after finishing the trail. I was exhausted. I had crossed the bridge after dawn to discover a stunning view from a cliff that overlooked the El Gato Road's approach from the north. It was amazing, of all the jungle I could see for over a mile. I took several shots with my Nikon F-E. I had just crossed back over when I heard the sound of movement on the trail. I retrieved the Ruger MK-II from my pack and took cover behind a giant Philodendron. Minutes later I heard Franco call out.

"River Rat, its Valderman ... " I was surprised and curious. Franco and two others stepped into my campsite, all dressed in full woodland camos, all armed, and an air of urgency about them.

Franco spoke in hurried Spanish so I only caught bits and pieces of what he said -something about avoiding any direct contact with the Pantera Verde. When he caught me staring at what I recognized as C-4 medium grade general-purpose explosive and #2 radio wire, he introduced me.

"This is Eduardo, my demo-man. We don't have much time." He quickly explained to me that my river trip was postponed. When he ordered another fellow to reconnoiter the North bank, I found myself speaking.

"I already have, there is this killer view. . .," Franco showed a faint glint of a smile. I felt he read my mind, "this was bound to be more fun than floating the river."

"Davis, no American agencies are officially operating south of the Panama Canal. . .: a certain gravity in his words. I waved him off. " There was a certain gravity in his words. I waved him off.

"I'm not agency, I'm a rafter, and besides y'all are in a hurry." He nodded to another man he had just introduced as Bobby, who I recognized as the Marine Lieutenant, at the embassy.

"Lieutenant Norton-go with the good American."

When we reached the cliff movement was clear in the valley below. Lieutenant Norton whispered to me, "Pinchy Muta".

I saw what he was referring to, a fuming old Dodge pick-up with a large recoilless rifle mounted on the bed.

"Simple bandits?" I asked. We hurried back to give warning. As we crossed the bridge, Franco motioned for us to take cover quickly. As I looked back, my heart pounding in my ears, I saw several insurgents emerge from the woods on the North bank, all armed with Soviet AK-47's and all looking in our direction. I noticed Eduardo had connected the radio wire to a standard M-3 detonation generator. All eyes were transfixed as two insurgents stepped onto the bridge. I caught Franco's look as if to say, "oh well." Suddenly one of the insurgents yelled out, "Alambre, Alambre" (wire).

Franco quickly but calmly ordered, "Blow it."

Edwardo replied with, "Fuego en el pozo" (fire in the hold) and depressed the plunger. A bright orange flame enveloped the bridge momentarily. The bank shook violently, and the air was suddenly filled with thick, black caustic tasting smoke. Bits of wood and splinters of all sizes rained down. As the reverberations of the explosion died out we became aware of the rattle of small arms fire coming from the North bank. We were well on our way, but the whiz of 7.62 rounds followed us for sometime. We returned to Qutavi, and the village was safe for now. Franco never mentioned any repercussions from the death of the two insurgents on the bridge.

Note: It is not the policy of the American government to conduct covert operations on foreign soil. Any mention of American agencies or US military material, equipment, operations, or locations of such operations, are, of course fictionalized.

Short Story-Second Place

An Editor's Correspondence

William H. Davis, Jr.

Editor Snodgrass; Snodgrass Publication

Enclosed you will find the first three chapters of A Pleasant Summer Day, a contemporary summary of life in a mid-western plains valley. Also enclosed is the customary SASE.

Sincerely, H. Binkman

* * * * *

Dear Mr. Binkman,

I am returning your manuscript. While the writing itself is grammatically perfect, it lacks something. In fact, it is boring. You use twelve pages describing the thoughts of a single Dandelion, not to mention the reflections of the honey badger. And for God's sake, why does the badger think with a British accent? I don't even think the honey badger is indigenous to North America. Better luck next time.

E. Snodgrass

* * * * *

Editor Snodgrass; Snodgrass Publication

I have enclosed my life's work for your consideration. I am sending the entire work because it is such a dynamic achievement. I'm sure you will recognize the truth of what I have written. Every single page of, Details of the World is the result of scrupulous study. I anxiously await your response.

Yours truly, G. Nerdendox

* * * * *

Dear Mr. Nerdendox,

This letter is to inform you that I cannot return your manuscript. You failed to enclose return postage, and I will not be responsible for the cost of the 3,415 pages you sent me. Also, I read very little of your work. Not only is your opening line of "In the beginning" unoriginal,

but you offer no factual evidence that life began as "little wiggly things." I would suggest you condense this work and always enclose return postage.

E. Snodgrass

* * * * *

Editor Snodgrass; Snodgrass Publication

Say Snodie:

Cool McCool here, say'n "Ho Ho Biddly poo, oh do I have it for you." Not since Jack Kerouac has there been a hipster like me. Me Me Me, I'll set you free. OK Snod man, here you have it. The next sensation of the nation. On The Ice. You can dig its' a cool, cool lit-o. Check the return, got got got you.

(Beat) Nick McCool

* * * * *

Dear Mr. McCool,

I feel relatively certain that Jack Kerouac was not from the planet Vendicar. You, however, I suspect may be. Never have I read such, to use your own word, "kink-mikery." I'm afraid we have no need for such work. May I suggest you slow down on your drug use and seek professional help?

Sincerely, E Snodgrass

* * * * *

Editor Snodgrass; Snodgrass Publication

Please carefully review this manuscript. It is vitally important that this work be published, that the world knows of this phenomenon. One small imbalance in the inter-dimentional time clock and we could all be thrust into an interdimensional transposition of cataclysmic proportions. You can exercise great wisdom in seeing this work be published.

Hopeful, Astro Zooble

* * * * *

Dear Mr. Zooble,

I read your work with some interest. I must say, some of your technical jargon was difficult to understand. And these "others," who imparted this knowledge to you, I don't suppose they were from ...? Do you by chance

know of a Mr. McCool? Anyway Mr. Zooble, I don't think that E=V-Tm is for the Snodgrass Publication. I wish you luck in your writing. Oh, and give my best regards to Zyglib should you see him again.

E. Snodgrass

* * * * *

Editor Snodgrass; Snodgrass Publication

Heil Snodgrass,

Enclosed you will find my manuscript, Actung Juden. I understand you to be a very perceptive editor. Perhaps in the New World Order I can find a place for you. It won't be long either. I have great armies. ..Well, you will read all about it.

Zieg Hen, AdolfHitlerheim

* * * * *

Mr. Hitlerheim,

ActYnB Jude is quite offensive. Your ideas are disgusting. Your constant use of the term "Jewish Pig" is reprehensible. Your wish to see Israel flattened is damnable and your proclamation that everyone who does not agree with you will "die, die everybody die", is demented. I did take the liberty of forwarding your manuscript to someone who may be interested—the head of the hate crimes department at the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Have a good day Mr. Hitlerheim.

Snod

* * * * *

Editor Snodgrass; Snodgrass Publication

Harken Infidel Snodgrass,

Allah is not without his mercy. Prove your worthiness and you will be greatly rewarded. If you show yourself to be true of heart we will accept you as a friend. Help the world see the futility of resistance. Publish, The Fist of God: Death of the Blue Eyed Devil, and perhaps He will withhold His mighty wrath.

Amasa lin Baden

* * * * *

Mr. lin Baden,

I had our technical advisor look over the schematic of the 1 kilo-ton thermo-neuclear device that will fit into a bread box. He assures me, with some alarm that it is accurate. The long list of targets of which you intend to use this device is not only disturbing, but also monotonous. Just what do you have against ice cream vendors? Or for that matter pet stores, or ATM machines, or baseball fields, or (continued next three pages). At any rate, I have forwarded your work to an interested party.

E. Snodgrass

* * * * *

Editor Snodgrass; Snodgrass Publication

Editor Snodgrass,

Enclosed you will find my work for your consideration. I have had difficulty in finding a home for the important work. The oppression by the male member has stifled many of us truly insightful lesbians. It is time the truth be known. I hope you will take to heart to the message and reply with enthusiasm.

Butchy Djike

* * * * *

Miss Djike,

I must say, I've never read a work quite like, The Prong: Scepter of Life and Death. It is well written and undoubtedly you have put much work into it. I have trouble with the concept that all men should have their genitalia surgically removed. And as much of what you wrote about "improvised surgery" performed on transients is illegal, I doubt you will ever see your dream become reality. There are those who will be interested in your work.

E. Snodgrass

* * * * *

Editor Snodgrass; Snodgrass Publication

The timely propensities of fate have propelled my wisdomatic virtues to undertake this endeavorment of which I am strategically and immortally qualified. Choose your life's goal-thrust now or perish. This

work will shock you, but if you acknowledge your black masters, you will not be harshly judged.

Shaka lahar X-man

* * * * *

Mr. X-Man

You were correct on one point, The African Fire Bomb did shock me. I believe that Fredric Douglas' words to the educated Negro after the civil war were to "agitate, agitate, agitate," not "incinerate, incinerate, incinerate." Dedicated research would further reveal that the expression "honky" was not in use by the American Negro until the early 1940's. Therefore it's unlikely he advocated "burnen' them honkies out." I do know someone who may "acknowledge" your work. You should be hearing from him very soon. I believe he will be quite interested in your ideas. We at Snodgrass Publication, however, are not.

E. Snodgrass

* * * * *

Editor Snodgrass; Snodgrass Publication

This is to inform you that the information you sent to this department has led to the arrest of several very dangerous individuals. On behalf of this country, I thank you. Also. I am submitting an outline for a book I have been working on. I'm not really a writer, but I've always dreamed of trying. Just thought I would bounce the outline off you. Kind of test the waters. Anyway, thank you again from the Department and all of America.

Avery Levi, Special Agent
Liaison F. B. I. / Dept. of
Homeland Security

* * * * *

Dear Mr. Levi ,

What a pleasant surprise your letter was. I'm glad I could help in some small way. Also, your outline for your book, Malignant Narcissism: A New Threat to America is the best submission I've read in a good while. Here at Snodgrass Publication we look for the informative, the suspenseful,

and the interesting. Your outline promises all of this. I would be very interested in reading more. The publication of such a book could help the average citizen prepare for what lies ahead. By all means Mr. Levi, work on this and let me know if I can help in any way.

Sincerely, E. Snodgrass



Photography-First Place

April Arredondo

Short Story-Third Place

The Box Alfred Roberts

"Huh," she mumbled as though she didn't quite understand. "Oh," she said, "the box." Not just any box, the box.

I was on a mission, and it had to be finished and turned in by Friday. I couldn't do it alone. Whether she was willing or not, I had to enlist her help. I needed a story fast. Call it plagiarizing if you want to; I was desperate.

She's full of stories. That's why for most of our young lives we would meet up at her house after school and sometimes on weekends to hear her tell one of her stories. Of course, her home-made cookies were a good attraction too.

You know her. The sweet elderly lady that even your own folks called "Granny," Well-she probably wasn't that old; but for as long as you can remember, everyone has always called her "Granny."

I couldn't remember ever seeing it before, but it must've always been there. The thing on the mantel along with Granny's knick-knacks could've easily been from the middle ages. It looked a lot like an old miniature treasure chest, especially with the four claw and ball feet it set on and the bands that seemed to hold it together having tarnished so badly they had turned black.

"What's in it?" I asked.

"Secrets," she replied and smiled as she softly repeated herself.

"Secrets."

I wasn't sure if Granny just didn't want to tell me what was in that old box or if she had finally taken leave of her senses.

Granny told me to have a seat and then hobbled off into the kitchen. I was almost sure then that I would make my dead-line. My English professor was in for a treat. I was taking some evening college courses

toward my degree while working during the day.

I knew that I would have a story when she came back into the spacious living room carrying a large tray of cookies and a glass of milk.

Granny set the milk and cookies down in front of me, walked over to the mantel and got the box. As she held it to her bosom, she went over to her rocker. That's where Granny always told her stories, her old cushioned, high-back rocking chair.

Granny was silently but lovingly rubbing that old box with her lacey silk handkerchief while slowly rocking. I couldn't understand what was wrong. I was already on my third cookie. The stage had been set. The cookies and milk were handy; Granny had a subject and was in her cushioned, high-back rocking chair-rocking, smiling-and stroking that damn old box.

"Uh -Granny; what kind of box is it?"

I was already forming my own answer in my mind- Silly, it's a box to hold secrets in. I really needed for her to start.

"A magic box," she said, never missing a stroke.

That was interesting. I liked magic tricks. Who didn't? I had even done a few from time to time. With a six year old little girl of my own and a handful of her friends to impress, what daddy could resist?

Granny sat there, her expression unchanging, rocking and stroking that box for several more minutes before she finally started talking again.

"So, you want to know about my magic box, eh 'Jimmy Boy'?" I've been called a lot of things but Granny is the only one who ever called me "Jimmy Boy."

"Well-I say. After all these years no one has asked about my magic box. One thing though, Jimmy Boy, you must promise-Okay?"

"Sure, Granny-what's that?"

"You promise?"

"Yes, ma'am."

From now on I'm going to find out just what it is I'm promising to-before promise it!

"I want you to remember this story. Every word of it, Jimmy Boy, every word." I pulled out my miniature recorder and put it on the table between us...

'My grand uncle Al, he was my mother's uncle, gave me this box on my seventh birthday. Uncle Al was a wandering man, more or less and the black sheep of the family; but we loved him. He was an artisan, a skilled craftsman. Very good with his hands, he was. In his wanderings he learned a many different trades. He may not have been a master of any of them, but he was good at what he done.'

My seventh birthday came around and just like every year, Mama had a party for me. Uncle Al, like I said, knew lots of things. One was some magic tricks that he would do for us kids. It seems Uncle Al saved one trick. That was for my birthday. In he comes and done a few of his regular tricks which always delighted us and him as much. Then he pulls out this very box and says to me; Princess, this old box has been across this country and back with me. I don't rightly know why I'd kept it for so long, except for it being magic.

Uncle Al showed us all an empty box. Of course it had its white padding, but otherwise it appeared to be empty. He takes the seven colored birthday candles and put them in the box. He closed the lid and turned the box around. All the while he was saying a few nonsense magical words. When he opened the box, the candles were gone.

We all were laughing and clapping, all but uncle Al who was saying right then "No, No; that's not what's supposed to happen."

'If that weren't the trick; what is the trick?' everyone was asking almost as one.

Uncle Al just smiled and closed up the box and says; "I knew I forgot something; the birthday girl has got to say the magic rhyme."

Of course, I knew there weren't no real magic rhymes, but Uncle Al insisted that I was to recite it. Anyway, the rhyme went like this:

Magic box of cherry wood
 Take these candles if you could
 And now that I am seven years old
 Give to me, seven jewels -or gold.

When uncle Al opened the box this-time, there sit seven of the prettiest stones you'd ever want to see. A diamond; flickering with fire, an emerald; so green and bright, a sapphire; outshining the brightest star, a topaz; as clear and bright as the sky, a jade and opal; all polished and shiny, and a ruby setting them all afire.

 "Princess," he says, these stones and box are yours. There's still magic in this old box. I hope you will keep it to hold your secrets in."

After that night, uncle Al went away again. No one ever knew where to, or why. He never did come back."

Granny opened the box and showed me the stones. Sure enough, there they, were, just as bright and shiny as if cut and polished yesterday.

"Jimmy Boy," Granny says leaning forward, "I'm going to show you how this magic box works now, so pay attention."

She closed the box and turned it around one time while reciting this rhyme:

 Magic box of cherry wood
 Take back the jewels you could
 Now that I am sixty-seven years old
 Give me back my seven candles-If I may be so bold.

This time when she opened the box, there were seven brightly colored candles; slightly burned, but not in bad shape, considering they were sixty years old.

Granny made sure I knew what I was doing before letting me take the box. It was two weeks before Stacey's seventh birthday and everything had to be just right. The box was to be a present, along with the jewels, from Granny, to her grand niece, through me, the family magician. Granny fell ill a few days after putting the box in my care-she never recovered.

 "Okay Princess, here we go."

I sat Stacey up on the large chair with the kid seat across the arms.

Some pillows and the big purple comforter from the guest room made it appear as though there was a throne right there in the dining room.

As she was setting the last of her freshly unwrapped gifts on the table, I got the box from under her seat. With a lot of fancy mystical motions that I had been practicing, I opened the box and showed that it was empty. I put the seven candles in the box and closed it. I did a bunch of fancy mystical gestures and just like old Uncle Al, I opened the box and showed everyone before I looked myself. Granny would have been proud of me.

I closed the box again saying my lines to Stacey who was now to repeat the same rhyme Granny did so long ago. When I opened the box this time, there they were. The children were delighted and Stacey was having a good time. So was I.

When it quieted down, I pulled out my recorder and played the tape for all to hear-Granny's last story.

Stacey took the box from my hands and said to it, "Thank you, magic box," and then looking upwards as if to the heavens, she whispered "Thank you Granny, and thank you uncle Al." She gave the box one big ol' hug and kiss.

"What about the magician?" She put the box down to give me what I expected to be a real big hug and kiss and that's when it happened. A secret drawer, cleverly concealed sprang open and the familiar old tune "Happy Birthday" began playing from the box. In that drawer was a beautiful tiara and with it an old yellowed piece of paper with words printed on it. Granny's story will be preserved for many years to come and Stacey will have it for her own grand niece.

The paper? Truly magical words. It simply said:

"Happy Birthday Princess

Love forever,

Uncle Al"

Short Story-Honorable Mention

Arlie and Nizbit

R. A. Flowers, III

“Damn!”

Nizbit chuckled quietly as he watched Arlie shake the fire from his finger.

“I heard that, old man! Don’t think I’m so young and inept that even my ears won’t work!” Arlie snapped, embarrassment piling itself upon his anger. “I don’t understand. I turn tadpoles into frogs with just a glance, then freeze the very water they stand in with a single wave of my hand, yet I still can’t cause a simple flame without setting myself on fire!” Arlie muttered in self pity.

Nizbit barely kept himself from laughing out loud. At a hundred-years-old, Arlie was certainly no new born in anyone’s glass, yet beside Nizbit, Arlie had not begun to live. Even so, Nizbit looked on the young wizard with a love only mothers had to endure. “How many of our families have had to endure this?” He pondered again what he already knew. While he had not been the first, his collective memory could recall the histories as if they had happened this very morning. His smile faded as he remembered that Arlie would soon face his awakening. “Let’s hope the Born spell won’t send him into the tirade his father suffered. Five years I spent dousing those fires.”

Regaining his composure, Nizbit peered over at Arlie. From his vantage point, slightly higher and to the other side of Arlie, he saw him sitting there pouting while solitiously sucking on his finger and brooding over the dinner being warmed by the costly fire.

“Growing frogs, freezing water and consuming fire are all natural shifts or parts of nature. These things need little prompting. Turn your focus to the air. Remember me showing you the molecules? Of course it’s best

not to forget that fire often has a mind of its own. Look, if you're that worried, just use some of that balm Estris gave you. After all, it's not like you've never burnt your fingers before." Nizbit turned his head to assure the smile wasn't seen, and fought back a devastating belly laugh. He knew, however, his efforts were in vain.

"OK, so now we're really going to have to laugh, huh? And turning your head is not going to accomplish anything either! Did you forget that Sight is one of my Givens? Maybe you're just showing how senile you're getting, eh?"

Arlie's wrath and venom were neither new or poignant to Nizbit; this simply is the way with all the new ones. What sobered Nizbit was the sharp reminder of his Sight. "How can he see my turned face, even events on the other side of the planet, yet not see the essence of all unraveling around him?" Nizbit pondered.

"Calm down, Arlie. Focus. Try to remember: 'The Magic Is You.' All of the universe hangs on your understanding that. It's not just another abstract lesson in philosophy for you, especially you for that matter, but it is the essence of how all Creation is supported and entwined."

"There you go! If you're going to get all cryptic with me about all of this, why don't you just slink off to one of those vault parties?" Arlie threw over his shoulder in childish rage. Reaching into one of the many pockets of his Magician's robe, he fishes out the seasoning he wanted. Smiling, he remembers the last time he reached for his pocket; half a town had cleared out in panic. Of course it didn't help their resolve knowing that he was the one who torched the entire other half of the town in an attempt to earn some food by a small display of his prowess.

"Wait a minute," Arlie turned to his friend sarcastically, "did I just hear you say 'Creation'? You'd better be careful, old man. You know the Council's decree on those who wish to discuss a Creator, and what happened to them."

"You'd do better to continue your reminiscing of those torturous moments of glory with simple villagers, than to indulge in the ill advised to

adventure of counseling me. The last wizard to challenge me was quite baffled by the sudden pressure and darkness he found. Not until he looked into the eyes of his hand maiden, as she cleansed him from her sudden delivery, did he begin to fathom the depth of his error. Nor was he thrilled to age five hundred and sixty years in three days.” Nizbit turned to favor Arlie with a smile that froze his stew solid and heaped frost on every hair of his body.

“That’s cute.” With a shrug Arlie thawed everything out, allowing his disdain to hover thicker than the ice blanket he just melted. “What is it with you and cold anyway?” Offhandedly he casts a flame back to his stew. Nizbit’s heart soars in pride as Arlie hunkers down oblivious to the fact he’s without a burnt finger.

Shadows lengthen as the two sit in silent restraint and revelry. As Arlie ate he looked to his friend, almost his only friend since birth. Always nearby he seemed larger than life, yet often he spent hours showing Arlie the smallest things of the world, like tiny violets, sagebrush in the fields and the insects that tended them, down to the atoms that comprised them all. The love Arlie held for him he couldn’t find words for. Nizbit always shrugged it off to the Bonding, yet even Arlie’s mother never received love like he held for Nizbit.

Startled out of his own musings by Arlie’s thoughts, Nizbit sneers at Arlie.

“Should I bring you a nice large wet nurse or a shapely wench as barren as the last one?”

“That’s it!” Arlie snapped. Jumping up he raised his arms and pointed at Nizbit.

“Now slow down, my young one...”

Suddenly Arlie is engulfed in a cloud of smoke from his botched attempt to hurl a column of fire. Frantically waving his arms to get a breath of non-sulphuric air, Arlie loses his hat, dislodges several magician’s props and plops himself most undignified to the ground.

Nizbit, gripping the side of the mountain let loose the belly laugh he so richly deserved and lost his heroic battle. The ensuing shaking of his massive form cause a small landslide of scree, furthering Arlie's humiliation. "All right, Arlie, I'll leave you alone for awhile, before one of us brings this whole mountain down," he managed between gasps and laughter. Fanning the stench of the new sulphur cloud Nizbit had left, Arlie waited for the mountain to stop shaking before he sent a massive column of fire into the night sky.

"Damn dragons!" He cursed. However, his beaming smile fought with his desire to remain angry. Fought that is until he sat back down to the refrozen stew Nizbit had left as his final gift.

Short Story-Honorable Mention

Ms. Nature Said

Keith Demps

“Mother come quick!” Rita bellows excitedly, “There is something that you must see. She did it!” Rita continues, “She is famous.”

“What is all the fuss about Rita? Ms. Nature asks her daughter, “Why are you twirling about?”

At that moment Ms. Nature observes the horrific scene before her and she then lets out a sound which rumbles the sky.

“How can I be a good mother,” Ms. Nature thunders, “Yet I can produce such horrible things.”

“Why are you so mad mother?” Rita asks with a twisted face. “Katrina is famous. The whole world is talking about her and I want to grow to be strong and powerful like my sister!” Rita continues passionately, “I want to be famous also.”

The words struck Ms. Nature like a jolt of lightening, and she was suddenly engulfed with severe depression. Like any mother, she wrangled with fear as to what her children would grow to be. Ms. Nature was now facing her fear again. Ms. Nature had forecast a day to come when Rita would want to take a journey west of their home in the Atlantic Basin. Ms. Nature did not calculate it to be so soon after her daughter Katrina had churned her way into history. Finally, Ms. Nature spoke to Rita.

“Rita I know you will gain strength and when you do you will want to travel. There is nothing that I can possibly do to stop you, but, there will be many people praying you will not harm them as you cross their path.”

Rita, believing her mother did not want her to famous, grew furious. She was determined to become famous like her sister Katrina. Rita stormed from her home in the Atlantic Basin and began her historical trek westward.

The following morning Rita noticed she gained substantial size and strength. She also observed people talking about her and comparing

her to Katrina. Rita sounded off as if she was taunting the people.

“I’m big, I’m bad and I’m coming to your town.” Rita gained confidence and began to pick up speed as she thought about becoming famous. Rita faced only one problem. She did not possess any idea what town she wanted to visit and turn upside-down. Katrina had swept through Mississippi, Alabama and caught New Orleans off guard, so Rita decided to focus on Texas.

“Yeah, Texas will make me famous,” Rita whistled loudly. Rita had a plan. First, she wanted to be bigger and stronger than her sister. Second, she wanted to impress a larger number of people and lastly she desired to be remembered always. As she cruised towards Texas, Rita imagined all the people who would be around to greet her. She couldn’t wait to flood them with her presence. Rita made her final turn and started moving inland. A few miles out from the Southeast Texas coastline, Rita heard sounds, but could not identify them. Something began to occur within her. Rita suddenly grew weak. Rita became alarmed because if she did not reach Texas with the same force Katrina possessed when she landed, she would not be famous. Rita heard more sounds, and she grew weaker. There was something about these sounds. There was a flash of light in the sky and Rita remembered the words spoken by Mother Nature.

“There will be many people praying you will not hurt them as you cross their path.”

Rita could now identify the sounds. They were the sounds of hope. They were the sounds of faith. They were the sounds of praise. The people of Texas were praying. Rita grew weaker as she finally touched the Texas coast. As she passed through, Rita was only recognized by a few people. Unknown to Rita, the people orchestrated what came to be the largest evacuation project in the United States. Rita twisted through the Texas coast as rapid as her approach. She shook up the people of Texas just enough to gain her fame but, Rita was powerless to the power of hope, faith and praise. Rita had her eye on Texas but, the eyes of Texas were upon her people.

Short Story-Honorable Mention

Unplugged Waymon Stepeherson

“A divorce huh?”

Thalia hesitated, tried to take her mind anywhere but here. The restaurant was beautiful, quaint and elegant. To her right was a huge mural from the cornice to baseboard of a woman, a mother pulling her four children through the streets of what looked to be New York or Detroit. Thalia focused there instead of her husband’s intense, unwavering eyes. She loved him too much, and if she looked at him, she would lose all the resolve it had taken her days to build up. The eyes never told tales, only the lips did that chore of sinning. It had all gotten too dramatic for her, the nightmares jerking him awake late at night, the trembling night chills, the starry-eyed frighten looks. It was beginning to eat at her and depress her. In her condition it was just something she could not bear, It had taken every ounce of fortitude divinely stitched into the fabric of her soul to leave him, but she knew he would soon explode or implode. From a restricted place inside her, one built to protect her from all that was unfolding in her life she found her voice. It was soft, but firm which was customary of her; it was certain also, a defining quality she possessed. “Yes,” she answered.

Kenyatta glanced over his shoulder, found Quest and Domino festively dinning on sesame noodles and double-sautéed pork. They were his bookends, his supporting cast. After two years the decision had finally been made; they would help him find some peace and closure. His eyes found his wife and tried to read the weariness and strife that were etched into her beautiful face. At thirty-three she looked twenty-three, an extremely handsome woman, deftly proportioned and intellectually gifted. He studied her for all of a minute, then said, “I hate it you know; I need you now more than I ever have. Do you want me to beg you to stay?”

She shook her head, not so much in response to his question, but in disbelief that he would make such a ridiculous statement. “You know that’s not what I want. It’s not what I need from you. I just need you to let the past stay in the past.”

“My daddy once told me, ‘Pray for a good harvest, but keep on hoeing.’ That meant hope for the best, but don’t rest on hope. Rest on the work that you do, rest on the advocacy, rest on the educating, rest on the lobbying, rest on *not* accepting what is.

“For two years I’ve waited, losing my mind, trying to fight the good fight per se, I’ve been patient, praying that God would see the injustice and not allow it to go unpunished. Like a damn fool I waited. God said he helps those who help themselves; my daddy said never rest on accepting what is. So now I’m going to handle things on my own.”

“Is that all your daddy had to say? Don’t misrepresent him in his absence.”

“It’s all that applies.” Kenyatta smiled at the way the candle lights played reindeer games in the brown sauna of her eyes. “I would never misrepresent him.”

“Indulge me and tell me some of the other values he passed on to you.”

“*Damn*,” he exclaimed, snapping his fingers and swaying rhythmically to Percy Sledge’s *When a man loves a woman*. “Let’s dance?”

Thalia noticed how quickly he had abandoned the look of a possessed and deranged madman, reverting back to his pleasantly beautiful Hershey chocolate self. She watched as his muscular shoulders swayed methodically to the beat, eyed him lovingly as he extended his hand. “One last dance.” He crooned.

In taking his hand it was in a way, her silent plea for him to acquiesce to her more rational sense. Maybe it would be her closeness on this dance floor like nothing was wrong, like they were a happy couple. “Yat Jr. would be seven,” she heard him saying.

“Yat’s gone—”

“But not forgotten,” he interjected.

“Let’s allow him to rest in peace.”

“He will—,” Kenyatta stated dreamily while running his hands down her back, gently stroking her behind then resting his hands on her waist, “after tonight.”

“This isn’t for him, it won’t please him, it’s for you Yatta, so quit trying to give my baby your negative bullshit!”

The dinosaur bit down on Kenyatta good, the pain was almost unbearable, the dinosaur would always seize him at the remembrance of his son’s death, an unshakeable memory. “I let him down, I’m his father, I should have eaten that bullet.”

“It was an accident, Kenyatta. We could not have known,” she cried.

The tension eased, the dinosaur loosened his grip, and some of the pain ebbed away slowly. Thalia seized either side of his face, looked into his eyes. He was out at sea, the ocean tossing and turning and growling fiercely. She knew the look well; it was the same when he returned from the war. The government had taken him and taught him how to kill but had not instructed him how to get rid of his consciousness. She loved him in overdrive, brought him back and put him back together again. After Yat Jr’s death, his world went jigsaw all over again, “Let it go baby, tenderly she caressed her swollen belly. “What about this one?”

This made him smile, lovingly he caressed his wife’s belly through the fabric of her evening gown. “I can’t,” he whispered, “can’t you just stay by my side and understand this is something I have to do.”

“I did that once when you decided you had to defend your country, remember? It too was something you *had* to do.” Lowering her head to hide her tears Thalia backed up, “I don’t know if I can love you still once all of this is said and done.”

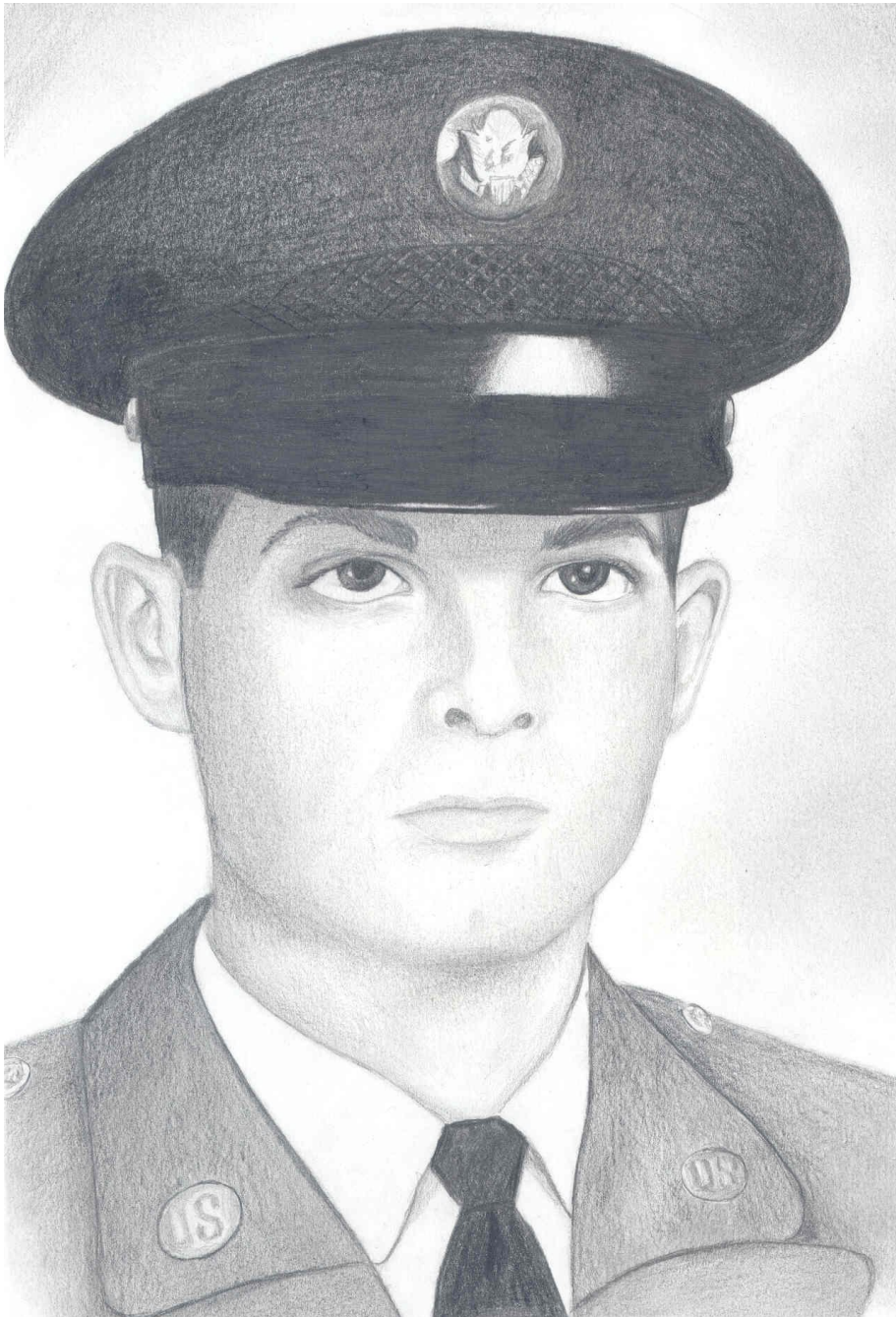
“I’m only making things right, Thai!”

She continued her retreat, “My husband would know that there is nothing right about this. *My* husband would know this.” She turned on her heels and sauntered from the restaurant. Kenyatta watched her graceful exit,

noted the aggravation in the click of her heels on the polished floor, the exaggerated bounce and wobble in her hips. She swung them like she wanted to win a Saigon award. What did she know, he thought. How could she possibly understand? She was a woman, and by her very nature, loving and forgiving. She wasn't the one being tortured by nightmares every night. There were certain realities in life, certain things that a man just could not overlook, live with, forgive, or forget. Hauntingly his father's words echoed through his head. *'Rest not on accepting what is.'* "I got it pops. I'm gonna take care of it." Looking over his shoulder he caught Quest and Domino's attention, a slight jerk of his head toward the door was all that was required to get them out of their seats and headed with him toward the exit.

Winter's selfish overseer had come through menacingly snatching up everything green and anything remotely resembling holistic enthusiasm in the weather conditions. Kenyatta's black Range Rover kept the frigid weather at bay. Silently they tackled the icy highway to their destination, the constant hum of the tires on the smooth damp pavement

Essay



General Art-First Place

David Lawhon

Essay-First Place

Let Nazis Speak

John D. Jordan

Admittedly, it is difficult to understand how there can be anything positive about allowing a Nazi to speak at a public meeting. Presumably, a person speaking at a public meeting is or should be concerned about what is good or best for the public as whole. The National Socialist German Workers' Party [Nationalsozialistische (Partei)], founded in 1919, was responsible, under the rule of Adolph Hitler from 1933 until 1945, for World War II and the Holocaust. The Nazis pretty well discredited the presumption of concern for the public welfare at public meetings (to the extent that they might be involved). It is perfectly understandable why someone not only would object to a Nazi speaking at a public meeting, but might even want the Nazi imprisoned or deported from the country for espousing Nazi ideology. It might be similar to someone extolling the virtues of slavery at a city council meeting in Jackson, Mississippi. If the laws of other countries, such as Poland, Germany, or Israel, prohibit Nazis from speaking that is certainly their right, and they have good reason for doing so. However, in the United States of America, even a Nazi should be allowed to speak at public meetings. He or she should simply be required to conform to or abide by the same rule-of-order or etiquette as the other speakers. The most important reason for permitting the Nazi to speak is Article 1: Basic Freedoms, the first of the original ten amendments (Bill of Rights) to the United States Constitution. The First Amendment trumps any objection to letting a Nazi speak publicly. The second reason why a Nazi should be allowed to speak is for the educational opportunity it provides. The third reason is because citizens in a free society strive to know as much as possible about who and where in their midst are the enemies of freedom.

“Article 1: Basic Freedoms-Congress shall make no law respecting

an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievance.” There are laws against shouting “fire” in a crowded theater and against so-called hate speech. It is against the law to incite others to riot or to advocate the violent overthrow of the U.S. Government. It is a crime of treason to aid or abet an enemy of the United States Government, especially in time of war. When the speech of a Nazi, or anyone else, fits into one of these categories, that person should be fairly punished. Otherwise, a Nazi, should be afforded the same right as any other citizen to express his or her views and opinions, however despicable those views and opinions may be.

The second reason for allowing a Nazi to speak is in order to take advantage of the opportunity to educate the public in general, and each new generation in particular, about the origins and history of Nazism. It has been 60 years, or three generations, since the fall of Hitler’s Third Reich. Not nearly enough is taught in the public school systems about the horrors of the Nazi era. Too many young people are not aware of just what the swastika represents. It was truly a sad day, when recently a young member of the British Royal Family, and a possible successor to the Throne of England, actually wore a replica of a Nazi Brown Shirt uniform to a costume party. Following that shameful event, instead of a banal apology and the excuse of youthful indiscretion, there should have been a media blizzard of information about the abominable Nazi doctrine and history. Whenever and wherever someone professing to be a Nazi appears, that individual should be confronted, challenged, and exposed for the ignorance and evil that they represent. History forgotten will eventually be repeated in some form or another. All of mankind should take to heart the Jewish motto of “Never Again.”

The third reason for allowing Nazis to speak publicly is so that they and their sympathizers can be identified and kept under surveillance. It is important to know who they are, where they are, what their numbers are, and to what degree others are sympathetic to their cause. If one knows

That there is a rattlesnake in the house, it is difficult to sleep well, without knowing the whereabouts of the snake. So it is with Nazis in a free society. It is safer to know who they are, where they are, and what evil they might be fomenting beneath a shroud of secrecy.

In the USA, Nazis have the same right as any other citizen to speak at a public meeting. Regardless of legitimate concerns of fellow citizens, the First Amendment protects the freedom of speech of all citizens. Letting Nazis speak creates an opening or opportunity to question or challenge their ideology and to educate the public about them and the danger they pose. It is very important that a free society know as much as possible about the enemy within. It is better to have the enemy in plain view than lurking in the shadows. Also, to limit or suppress freedom of speech is to venture onto a very dangerous and slippery slope. Where does it end? The former Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) was every bit repressive and evil as Hitler's Third Reich. Yet, Mikhail Gorbachev, former Russian leader of those Communist countries, is allowed to address college and university students in the USA. The cold-blooded killer and terrorist, Yassar Arafat, was allowed to speak to the United States Congress, while openly carrying a firearm on his person. Ku Klux Klan leader, David Duke, ran for public office in the State of Louisiana. Louis Farakan, calling himself the leader of the "Nation of Islam," is a virtual fountain of venom and misinformation. In today's world of instant, mass-electronic communication, it is unrealistic to believe that a particular point of view, opinion, or political ideology can be effectively censored or suppressed. One need only look to pornography and spam on the internet or to Al Jazeera TV in the Middle East to realize the scope of the problem. The solution is education and adherence to certain age-old moral and ethical values.

Essay-Second Place

Grunts and Spooks

John D. Jordan

Some jobs are physically demanding. Others can take a heavy toll mentally. A lineman for an electrical utility company works outdoors in every type of weather conditions. An intercept operator usually, but not always, works indoors and out of sight. One method of comparing and contrasting a lineman to an intercept operator is to relate the two different jobs to a particular military specialty. A lineman is similar to a combat soldier at the squad level, which is the basic infantry unit. For instance, in the Marine Corps, a squad consists of two four-man fire teams and a squad leader. A communications intercept operator, or Communications Technician (CT) can be compared to a spy. In fact, such an operator is a spy, and much of what he or she does is against international law. If caught or apprehended, the chances are slim that the operator's government will come to his or her assistance right away. The intercept operator can also be compared to a sniper who has the target in his or her sights but does not squeeze the trigger. The object is to never let the target know that it has been spotted and observed. The separate tasks of a lineman and an intercept operator can be contrasted and compared in terms of duty, mission or objective, training, and qualifications.

The duties of a lineman are comparable to a rifleman, mortarman, or machine-gunner in a combat squad. The foreman or lead lineman is the squad leader. A lineman is a member of the team. His job is to play a particular role in achieving an objective or accomplishing a mission. The objective of a combat squad might be a matter of killing or capturing members of an opposing force or routing them from their positions. A typical lineman's duty is to do his part in making the scene of an accident safe and working as a member of a crew, or team, to rebuild and replace

downed poles, electrical lines and devices in order to restore power. The command, control, and method of approach that a utility company uses to restore power after a minor outage, a large ice-storm or hurricane very much mirrors that of a military operation. The linemen in such an endeavor are like the foot soldiers on the frontline. In fact, both military infantrymen and civilian linemen are commonly referred to as “grunts” because they are the ones who do the tough, dirty work and are considered by people in other fields to be less than bright. However, when the barbarians are at the gate or the lights go out, it is the “grunts” that they all turn to. The intercept operators can be compared to the people behind the scenes who gather the necessary information and handle the logistics needed to successfully complete the mission. An intercept operator is like a bloodhound following a scent or a trapper on the trail of a quarry. The object is to not let the prey know that it is being followed and not to capture it unless absolutely necessary. Only very rarely is a target eliminated. It is a cat-and-mouse game that continues nonstop, night and day, one radio operator or a team of operators stalking other radio operators. In the military, the mission might be to capture and secure a city or a regional area. In the civilian world, the mission of a utility company might be to restore electrical power following a hurricane or ice-storm. In Afghanistan and Iraq today, the American Military, with the help of civilian contractors, is actually performing both of these tasks: attacking and routing the enemy while at the same time restoring electrical power to the area. It takes a special breed of well-trained people to get the job done.

Comparisons and contrasts in training for radio-intercept operators and line men can be made. Both jobs require extensive classroom work combined with in-the-field experience. Before learning to climb and working in the air, a future lineman must work for a minimum of one year or longer on the ground as a helper. He works alongside other more experienced helpers, linemen, and equipment operators. That is his boot camp. The work is hot, dirty, physically demanding, and dangerous. Typically, four out of five new helpers will quit before the year has

passed. Working on the ground, the helpers learn as much as possible about materials, equipment, and the use of tools. The helpers also attend school at night and begin learning about basic electrical theory and electrical devices such as transformers, regulators, capacitors, switch gear, and breakers. After performing satisfactorily as helpers, they begin a six-year apprenticeship program to become journeymen or first-class linemen. In the following years, the apprentices continue to attend school as they work on the job and progress up through the ranks. Just as in the Marine Corps squad, where every member is capable of being the squad leader, every journeyman lineman is capable of being the crew foreman. Eight out of ten apprentice linemen will quit before the beginning of their second year of climbing. Sometimes a fresh fatality will make them all quit. It takes a minimum of six years to become a newly-minted journeyman. The radio-intercept operators advance much faster than the linemen. They are all in the military service. However, some of them, especially the linguists, attend private and public institutions such as Yale University. The candidates are closely screened for aptitude and ability. Training typically involves an intense four to five month course of communication technician training to become a regular radioman, or woman, capable of operating and handling most normal or routine traffic on ship or shore. There are women in this field. For a variety of reasons, they are some of the best; however, the title or designation remains "radioman." The drop-out rate is very low. About 90 percent of the graduates will become manual-morse, teletype, facsimile, or voice operators. About ten percent of the class, who meet much higher standards than normal, will go to another year of advanced study and practice to become intercept operators. They are some of the world's best radio operators. If they pass a stringent background check, they will gain a top-secret cryptography clearance and begin work in the field as intercept operators.

There are also comparisons and contrasts that can be made regarding the qualifications for these two different lines of work. Line work is a young man's game. Few linemen continue to climb after reaching age 40.

Aside from the physical demands, they become wiser and more mature. They begin to realize that the odds of surviving are becoming stacked against them. This happens to be the ideal time for them to become teachers and try to instill more caution in the younger linemen coming up. It finally dawns upon them that it was not just their skill, luck, or fate that kept them alive. They either become servicemen, trouble-shooters, non-working foremen, instructors, safety representatives, or supervisors. An intercept operator can usually work as long as his or her health permits. However, the majority of these intercept operators are in the military intelligence structure such as the Naval Security Group (NSG) and usually retire before age 50. Many of them then become employed by government agencies such as the National Security Agency (NSA) or the Department of Defense (DOD). Much like an older, more experienced hunter or fisherman, intercept operators generally get better as they grow older. Both occupations require a high degree of discipline, mentally and physically. A lineman, like an infantry man, often finds himself in a position where his fate rests within his own hands. To give out, give in, or give up means almost certain death. This is one of the attractions of the job. Linemen, like drivers, horse jockeys, and fighter plane pilots enjoy living on the edge. They become addicted to danger and risk. Like a coal miner, police officer, deep sea diver, they do not know when they eat breakfast if they will be around for lunch. They feel more alive and life seems sweeter when they lay it on the line everyday. Life is boring without their daily adrenaline fix. Most linemen are of above average intelligence. The dumb ones, who are not sifted out early on, usually die young, and quite often take a co-worker or two with them. The old military cliché of “Stay alert, Stay alive” applies equally to line work. Intercept operators are also a strange breed. They generally make good poker players and chess players. They too are attracted to living on the edge. That other old cliché of “The hunt or chase is more exciting than the kill” (which, incidentally, was the philosophy of President John F. Kennedy regarding his many dalliances; such as with the White House interns, Fiddle and Faddle) applies to intercept operators.

Because of the clandestine nature of their work, they are accustomed to deception. That same attribute which makes them good poker and chess players often carries over into their personal lives. It is not uncommon at all for an intercept operator, who normally travels a lot and works odd hours anyway, to have a mistress, girlfriend, sugar-daddy, or boyfriend who is completely unaware that the operator has a husband or wife and possibly even children. They are already leading a double-life, and it is easy to move into a tripe life. The alcoholism rate among both linemen and intercept operators is very high. It may be that they are attempting to counteract all of that adrenaline.

There are some interesting similarities and differences between the duties, objectives, training and qualifications of linemen and intercept operators. Linemen can more easily be compared and contrasted to some other craft or calling than directly to intercept operators. They are much like foot soldiers in the military. Because they operate below the horizon, it is easier to use an analogy when trying to compare and contrast intercept operators with something or someone else. Sometimes they work alone, sometimes as a team. Their work is somewhat akin to a ghost shadowing a phantom. Perhaps that is why, in certain small circles, they are referred to as "spooks." There is a continuing argument to this day as to whether intercept operators, prior to America's official entry into World War II, made Franklin Delonore Roosevelt aware of the impending attack upon Pearl Harbor. It was the work of intercept operators who tracked down the admiral in charge of Imperial Japan's Navy and made possible the shooting down of his plane over the Pacific. The elimination of the brilliant Admiral Yamamoto (who was opposed to the war and warned of the danger of awakening a sleeping giant) severely damaged the Japanese war effort. The late Country and Western singer Johnny Cash, while serving in the United States Military, was one of the first persons, if not the first person, in the free world to learn of Joseph Stalin's death. Perhaps Johnny was a spook. He certainly liked black. If so, he may very well have finally come face-to-face with his quarry.

Essay-Honorable Mention

Man's Wild Heart William H. Davis, Jr.

The American Revolution was an inevitability waiting to happen. The economic and political scene made revolution unavoidable, even more so, the spirit of the colonists.

History tells us that independence from Great Britain was the motive of only a small minority of the colonists when the war started. This is probable, at least on a conscious level. As long as the colonists considered themselves subjects of the British Crown, the only source of conflict was the economic sanctions placed on them by London.

However, something more was at play within the hearts of a new generation. We can only speculate on the spirits of the colonists. But the difference in mentality from the native-born colonists and their counterparts in jolly old England must have been drastic. The wild land itself must have had profound effects on the colonists.

There was no way to maintain more than a minority of loyal British subjects in the New World. And so, a shift in ideology was certain. The many acts passed in London's attempts to bring the colonists into submission were merely treating the symptoms of a much larger issue; the issue of man's wild heart.

How could you live in a land totally new to the world without such a heart? To even consider the courage and spirit of a people who would spend six to eight weeks on a wooden boat to get her makes one wonder. The people who came here and those later born here were hopelessly removed from England's civilized society-not just geographically, but spiritually.

Once the decision to resist had been made, the British government was helpless to stop the revolution. The logistics of keeping enough forces in place to contain the movement was beyond the technology of the day.

By 1775 the number of colonists were such that they could have carried on the fight indefinitely. With every battle their resolve increased. As with the first engagements at Lexington and at Concord show, the colonists had some major advantages. The knowledge of the land coupled with a guerrilla form of attack was more than the British could effectively stifle.

The spirit of the extraordinary people who shaped this fantastic new land made revolt inevitable-the unstoppable wild heart beating within the breast of the American people. a wild heart that still beats today.



Photography-Second Place

April Arredondo

Essay-Honorable Mention

Hurricanes Keith Demps

Any type of emergency or disaster will, can or could have a traumatic or catastrophic affect on mankind. Whether the emergency or disaster be man-influenced or natural, it will leave an imprint. A natural disaster cannot be prevented; therefore, we are only able to take very few precautions against these forces. A natural disaster which can cause the most monetary damage, property destruction, and mortality is the hurricane; In order to obtain an enhanced understanding of hurricanes, we must first exhibit the trend of increased storm activity, explain how a storm is formed, and finally we can summarize hurricane Rita.

There has been a steady increase of named storms over the last ten years. Many scientist and meteorologist attribute global warming for this increased storm activity. Assessing climate records imply a correlation between a pattern of increased cold winds and the rapid advancement in hurricane development. Since 1995 the Atlantic has been procreating vigorous hurricanes, doubling that of the previous twenty-five years. In the Caribbean, production of cyclones spiraled four hundred percent. Inside the Atlantic Basin, major hurricanes, with sustained winds of one hundred and ten miles per hour or higher, vaulted one hundred and fifty percent. An average of eighty tropical cyclones form annually in the world. The number of tropical storms in the Atlantic has increased from ten to as many as eighteen a year. During the 2005 hurricane season, which extends from August to November, twenty-six named storms have generated. Fourteen of those twenty-six became hurricanes. We can now look at how this process begins.

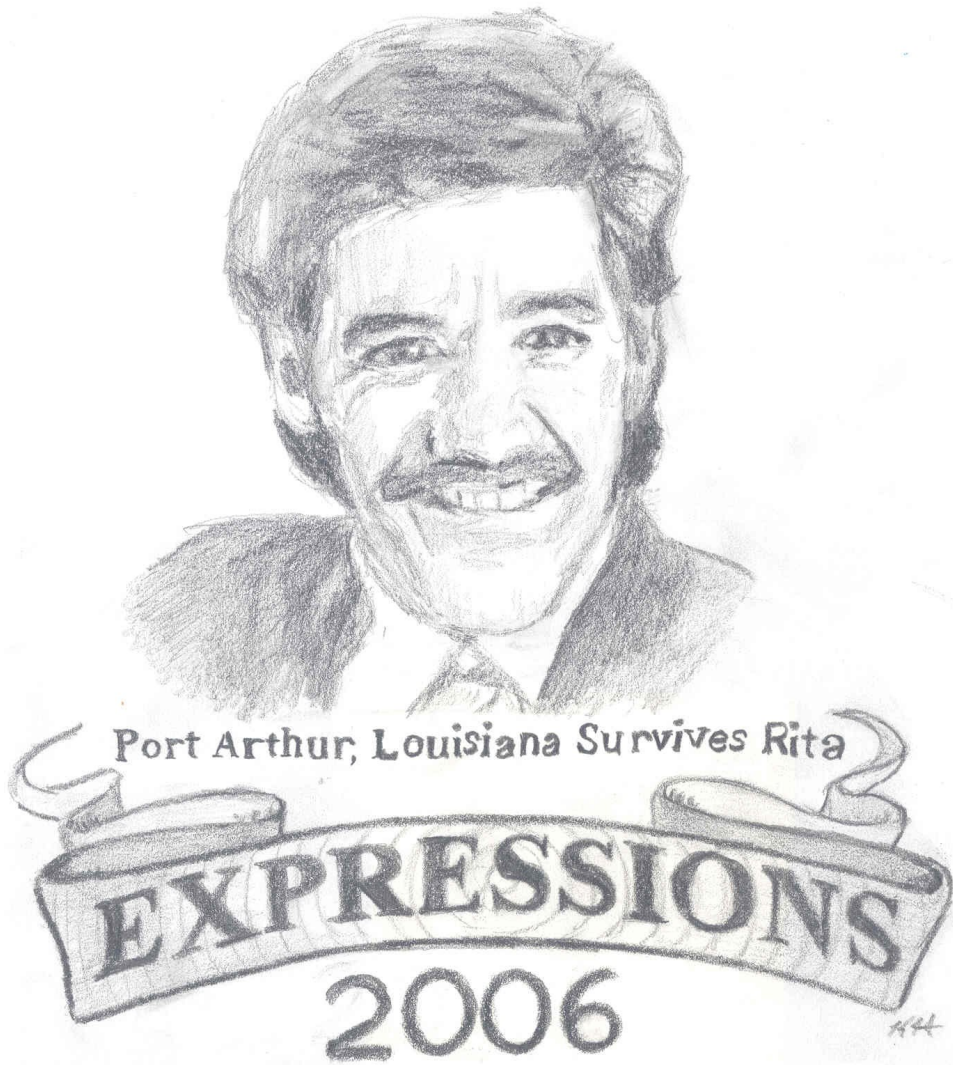
The storm begins as air spirals into low pressure zones charged with warm, humid air over warmer sea surfaces. These two winds combine and

the result clouds billow upward, further lowering air pressure and causing winds to barrel even faster toward the center. When water vapor in the clouds cools and falls as rain, the energy produced warms the eye, continually lowering the pressure and feeding the storm. The storm will grow even more if the atmospheric conditions guide it over warm water, in the Atlantic Conveyor Belt. This is a flow of upper-level water which is drawn from the tropical Atlantic north toward the Pole. As the conveyor belt speeds up, temperatures in the North Atlantic speed up. The warmer the sea surface temperature and the more warm, moist air that is available, the greater potential for a strong hurricane. A hurricane is basically an engine that functions on heat. A hurricane which contained all of the necessary qualities to be mentioned as a major hurricane was Hurricane Rita.

Hurricane Rita originated as a storm in the Atlantic Basin on September 17, 2005. In three days the storm progressed aggressively. It became a tropical depression, tropical storm and finally on September 20, the storm was christened Hurricane Rita. The hurricane continued to enlarge and gain strength. Two days after becoming a hurricane, the storm evolved into a category five hurricane. A category five hurricane contains winds one hundred and seventy-five miles per hour and higher. Hurricane Rita weakened as she approached Texas because of a continental shelf, which forms shallow waters along the Southeast Texas coast. Although the hurricane lost strength it still managed to make landfall on September 24, 2005 as a category three hurricane with sustained winds of one hundred and twenty miles per hour. A meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Lake Charles, Louisiana, claims hurricane Rita contained three eye walls with tornadic winds. The first eye wall was five to ten miles across and pounded parts of Orange and Newton counties. The second eye wall, which was about twenty to forty miles across, smacked Beaumont and Jasper. The third and largest eye wall was estimated at eighty miles across and it walloped all of Southeast Texas. The storm possessed tropical storm and hurricane force winds that stretched across one hundred and seventy-five miles. The winds began on Friday and continued constantly until the

following Sunday. Hurricane Rita is now classified as the third most intense storm in Atlantic history.

Hurricanes, such as Hurricane Rita, are forces of nature. Man, along with the use of sophisticated technology, cannot prevent these horrendous storms from transpiring. We can only take precautionary measures to protect our families and property. The advancement of global warming will promote the frequency of storms in the future. Storms will also develop faster and obtain extensive force. Hurricane Rita may be only a small sample of what the Atlantic Basin will generate in the future. Populations along coastlines must remain prepared and during hurricane season keep their eyes on future hurricanes before the eyes of future hurricanes are on them.



Cover Art-Third Place

Kyle Haviland

Poetry



General Art-Second Place

Phillip Trevino

Poetry-First Place

Burn No More
William H. Davis, Jr.

As I watch the falling star blaze a path
lighting up the cold winter sky

I burn...

As I watch the sun drop behind the tree line
on the horizon, fading from view

I burn...

As I see the drought of summer slowly dry
the tender leaves

I burn...

As I recall the passions of my youth in
hopeless longing

I burn...

As the hatred boils within me for wrongs
done I cannot change

I burn...

As they tie me to this stake for statements
made, I will not retract

I burn...

As the cooling rain of death gives peace to
my tormented soul

I burn no more.

Poetry-Second Place

The Vixen
William H. Davis, Jr.

You frolic in the warm water
building strength
You dance above the gulf
keeping us wondering
You have the smell of sea about you
Your cool breeze turns violent
then, like some woman scorned
You pound our beaches
thrash our city
splinter hundred-year old oak trees
razing our homes,
making rubble of our work
You leave women and children homeless,
then you pass from sight...
leaving us to ponder our wreckage
but the savage vixen you were...
We will remember you Rita.

Poetry-Third Place

Lady Luck
William H. Davis, Jr.

When I was young, I stood at shore,
looking out to sea;
I saw a captain on his ship,
and I wished that I were he.

And as I grew into a man,
I came to know what I must do;
learn to sail, build a ship,
and launch into the blue.

Three years of working night and day,
and then...the champagne bottle struck;
the words still ringing in my ears,
“I christen you, “Lady Luck.”

And so the day, it finally came,
for me to leave the land;
I walked onto my Lady’s deck,
and proudly took command.

I left my friends and family,
as I put my ship to sea;
I saw the shore grow distant,
not knowing what would be...

At night I saw a million stars,
I had never been so free,
I understood why men build ships,
and the call to sail the sea.

But one night the sea turned rough,
my Lady thrashed about;
I heard the crack of timber,
and my heart was filled with doubt.

Then lightning struck my Lady's mast,
and sent it crashing through her deck;
I could feel my Lady's pain,
as she became a wreck.

I remembered the star filled nights,
and the freedom sailing gave;
I did not regret having put to sea,
as I went to my watery grave.

Then I felt sunlight on my face,
as I lay there in the sand;
I awoke by the wreck of my "Lady Luck,"
on the beach of a foreign land.

Now I have an island woman,
suntanned breasts and a beautiful smile;
material is hard to come by...
it seems I will stay a while.

The fishing is good, the fruit grows wild,
and my woman liked to play;
work on the Lady is going slow,
I might even have to stay.

But late at night I still remember,
when the bolt of lightning struck;
and how I was spared to sail again,
saved...by my "Lady Luck."

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Music Man
James Wesley Schexnider

A song he hears in the still of the night,
Echo's his memories of yesterday times.

Instilled within with a message to bring,
His voice is felt with the words he sings.

Strings and Drums may create his band,
But only his vision creates the Music Man.

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Addicted

La'Darrian Wade

Like drugs flowing through
the veins of an addict,
getting high off your love
has created a bad habit.
Craving for your kiss...
For your touch...
For your smile...
Your love is the drug,
that makes me go that extra mile.

When I cannot have you
my mind goes into a fit,
I lose control of my emotions,
and inside I feel real sick.
You heal my pains
I need you now!
Without you I know,
that I would die somehow.

They say there is a way
That would help get over you.
Though reluctant I had to try,
for it costs too much to love you.
In order to go cold turkey
I had to avoid the slips and falls;
I have to succeeded some time without you,
but no one warned me of withdrawals.

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Time

Liliana D. Contreras

The clock waves its hand
As I look at my grays
Mocking at my life
For every passing day
The moon jumps the sky
To bring a brand new day
My heart stopped beating
The day you got away
Like hunting lions or crying wolves
Like a dreaming baby in its mother's womb
Such has been my life
On this timeless doom.

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Tear Drops
Joshua Payne

IT
COMES
OUT THE
CORNER OF
MY EYES. A
DARKNESS BRINGS
IT OUT, STUGGLES, TRIES
AND LIES. A BLACKNESS I
CANNOT DEFINE. BE NUMB,
BE NOT. IT COMES WITH A FLUSH
UNDERGOING WITH AGONY AND ANGUISH
ONE, TWO, MAYBE OF THREES, A GUSH
OF DISGUST. BEDAZZLE, SPARKLES WITH
LITTLE LIGHTS. GLITTER, GLISTEN, AND GLEAM
LUSTROUS OF MILLIONS OF DIAMONDS, RUNS
DOWN, SALTY HAPPINESS, A SENSUAL
DELIGHT, COULD IT BE PURE BISS, SOMETHING
BROUGHT FROM A DELICIOUS KISS, SIMPER,
SNICKER, AND SNIGGER, BURSTS OF LAUGHTER
DROPS OF HEAVEN, DROPS OF HELL
TEARS OF PLEASURE
TEARS OF PAIN.
WHY MUST WE CRY?

Poetry-Honorable Mention

What Keeps Me Going Devan Callihan

What happens to a dream deferred,
I suppose I'll never know,
because my dreams of better things
inspires me to grow.
I am no genius, nor scholar,
not a renaissance man.
Just a man, who's out of
his time,
trying to do what he can.

They say faith brings about fate,
and strife brings the stripes,
A dance with words, nouns, and verbs,
that parts day and night.

Some say I think too much,
or not enough,
or that I focus on the wrong things.
But I would rather been in hell,
or be a ship without a sail,
than to live without my dreams.

Poetry-Honorable Mention

The Coming Storm

William H. Davis, Jr.

Had I seen the coming storm
I would have sought a place to hide
the forecast spoke of coming storms,
but these warnings I denied

I refused to see the changing,
because I am a stubborn man
and now the storm has caught me out
I must take shelter where I can

I shelter with the lonely
as the rain falls from my eyes
I feel the lightning strike my heart
as I recall her lies

Thunder pounds inside my chest
as I long for the love we had
now she is gone and I am alone,
so I shelter with the sad

All the broken hearted fools
who like me, are left in pain
remembering a time when life was good,
before it began to rain

I stand here in hopeless wonder
how long can this storm last?
it seems there is no end in sight
as my mind relives the past

And so the sky, it finally cleared
and for me the rain is gone
but many are not so lucky
for them the storm goes on

Now I am in love again
the sun, it shines so bright
I love her and she loves me
not a single cloud in sight

And what is that the forecast says,
the threat of a coming storm?
I stand here with her laughing
as I watch the tempest form.

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Enveloped
Michael Highfill

His angry whispers
are evil,
coiling about me-
snakes slithering against my skin.

Contempt for me
alters his face
into a Freddy Krueger mask,
sneering with disdain.

Hate ignites his eyes-
blue gas flames
that lick against my skin
with icy fire.

He stalks me,
a wolf hunting prey;
silent, I shiver,
my adrenaline pulsing
like angry drum beats.

His rampage pushes through me-
a sorcerer's incantation-
losing my sense of equilibrium,
I fall.

His skin pricks, hackles rising
initiating the attack.
He pummels me,
a boxer doing warm-ups;
jaws gnashing out pieces
of my heart,
with jagged words
of animosity.

Blood bites.
Acidic.
I swallow my own life.
My defenses fail-
I succumb to his
Hell-bent rage.

I lie dormant,
like a fetus
in its mother's womb.
Piercing pain rips through me,
as though being sucked
through an abortioner's vacuum.

At my surrender,
his passionate fury subsides.
The switch flooding his
current of malevolence,
flips,
and suspends,
the ambush.

Sound strikes my ears,
waves beating against
the surf of my mind-
tearing breaths,
shredding my lungs apart.

He picks me up,
as if I am a
wounded child fallen
on his bicycle.
Cringing with each touch
of apology,
whimpering with each word
of love.

His smile comes-
a magician pulling flowers
out of a wand-
mesmerizing...tricky.

Unsure whether his
warmth is real,
or a tepid melting pool
from the iceberg of his heart;
I wait.
Cautious.
I watch him coo at me,
like a morning dove,
Awed by his emotional ballet.

Finally, I give in.
I curl against him-
a kitten,
purring at his
false sincerity.

Once again,
ignoring the monster,
pacing beneath
his layer of skin.

Literary Critique



General Art-Third Place

Shane Miller

Literary Critique-First Place

Masculine and Feminine Love as Seen in Medea Tara Schrieber

In the classic play Medea by Euripides, the characters show different opinions on love and the union of marriage. Two general views of the women including Medea herself, and the views of the men of the time when the play was set. The feminine and masculine views of love contrast sharply throughout the play.

Initially, the female characters in the play tended to view love and marriage as somewhat of a chore. Back then women were forced to marry, and usually they did not get to choose their own suitor. If they were not married by a certain age, then they were often forced into a life as a slave or a servant. Medea commented on this quite thoroughly; “Firstly with an excess of wealth it is required for us to buy a husband and take for our bodies a master; for not to take one is even worse. And now the question is serious whether we take a good or bad one; for there is no easy escape for a woman, nor can she say no to her marriage” (Euripides 230-235). In these lines Medea referred to the dowry that women were required to pay to their husbands no matter what. This view on marriage could have added to the passion that these women felt about love. The women probably felt that if they had to buy a husband and serve him, then they should at least be treated with respect by him. It is understandable why a woman would be passionate about her husband. Even if she did not love him, without him she would be a slave.

The women portrayed in this play, especially Medea, were very passionate about their love, even if they entered into marriage grudgingly. When discussing Medea, the all-female chorus said, “This passion of hers moves something great” (Euripides 182). Jason’s betrayal of Medea proved

that she had loved him so passionately that she would stop at nothing, including murdering her children, to inflict revenge on him. She was the epitome of a woman scorned. In the play, Medea's nurse said, "Her heart on fire is violent, she will never put up with the treatment she is getting" (Euripides 38-39). It was the passion that she felt for Jason that caused her to turn violent when he hurt her. Medea also felt that once Jason left her, she had nothing left to live for. She was so desperate for Jason's love that she did not want to live without it.

The other women in the play seemed to share Medea's views on love. They supported passionate actions at the beginning of the play. The chorus of women encouraged her: "This I will promise, you are in the right Medea, in paying your husband back" (Euripides 265-266).

The masculine view of love in this time period was obviously much less passionate than the feminine view. The men in this play saw marriage as something they were supposed to do to carry on their lineage. The men also seemed to believe that a wife was something that could be traded to increase their own wealth and power. In those days a man's most important task in life was to achieve high social status and power. The women's main job in life was to make babies for the men. So to the men, the women were just pawns in the game of life, whereas the women saw their husbands as the one thing between them and being a servant. The ultimate example of the masculine view of love is Jason himself. He left his wife of many years who bore him two children in order to marry the king's daughter, thus improving his social status and range of power. One example that proves the typical masculine view of love is shown early in the play when Medea's female nurse was arguing with the male tutor. When the nurse basically said that Jason was wrong for his deeds, the tutor replied, "What's strange in that? Have you only just discovered that everyone loves himself more than his neighbor? Some have good reason, others get something out of it" (Euripides 85-87). Obviously Jason did get something out of leaving Medea: higher social status and more power. In fact, when Jason's new wife was killed, he did not seem sad as much as he seemed appalled that

Medea would do that to *him*. He was only worried that he could not enjoy his new wife, rather than sad because he lost someone he loved. He said he “will get no pleasure from my newly-wedded love” (Euripides 1323). If she was really his “love,” he should have been a little more woeful. Line 1323 also proved that the men of Jason’s time were selfish lovers. It was such a selfish thing to say when one’s “love” had been killed. Jason proved here that not only did he not care for Medea, but he also did not care for his new wife either. This was obviously very typical of men in this culture.

In the days of Medea and Jason, men and women had different views of love and marriage, much like people of today. Love and companionship have always been polar issues dividing males and females. As this play makes apparent, lovers whose ideas contrast sharply can bring great tragedy.

Literary Critique-Second Place

The Ruin of Abortion Melony Williams

In “The Mother,” a poem by Gwendolyn Brooks, the narrator describes the emotions set forth after having abortions. The tone is sad and somber, while the author contemplates the emotional bombshells she has endured. The author also uses rhyme to keep the poem flowing. At some points during the poem consecutive lines rhyme, while in others only every other line rhymes. This system also adds a sense of unpredictability. Like the flow of “The Mother,” the theme of this poem is also somewhat erratic. It seems that the narrator regrets her decisions and is trying to justify her actions throughout the poem. She tries to find good results of her actions. Even though the bright side of abortion is hard to see, the narrator tries desperately to defend her behavior.

There are many obvious negatives to committing abortion, and the narrator lists some of them throughout the poem. For instance, in the poem the narrator mourns the losses that she has encountered by not having her children when she says that she will never “return for a snack of them, with gobbling mother-eye” (1152). She also regrets that her children will never have “lovely loves” (1152). They will also never enjoy their weddings or a number of other gifts which life has to offer. The narrator also regrets the fact that her children who suffered from abortion will never play games or laugh or even plan for their futures. The examples of unfavorable results of her abortions seem to come much easier than the favorable ones in her poem.

Although the good aspects of abortion are not as clear, the narrator seems to find a few. For every bad result the narrator seems determined to find a good one. This is clear because instead of listing the negative results in one half of the poem and the good results in the other half, she

lists one or two hurtful things followed closely by what seems to be a good thing. That is why it appears that the narrator is defending herself. This also makes her feelings of guilt apparent. In order to find some advantages to having been aborted, the narrator lists the pain that life brings. For example, the children will never be hurt by “stilted” (1152) or pompous love. The children will also never fear a ghost in the night. The most truthful of the pains that the children will not endure is that they will never be beaten or neglected. This leads the reader to believe that the narrator was, perhaps, beaten or neglected as a child and that is why she chose not to bring her children into the world. Perhaps she truly believes that the world is a cruel and unfair place, and she does not want to subject her children to that fate.

The poem is definitely open to interpretation, but one thing is quite clear and that is the fact that the narrator is suffering. She may be suffering as a result of her own childhood or she may be suffering as a result of her choices. It is more likely a combination of the two, and she is searching for relief through the poem. The narrator admits one damaging result of her choices, followed quickly by one that she believes might be helpful. She seems saddened and destroyed by the loss of her children. The last emotion she proclaims in her poem to her lost children is that she loved them all. She also seems to confess that her actions were wrong when she states “Though why should I whine, Whine that the crime was other than mine?” (1153). She seems to be admitting that the fault was her own, and there is no one to blame but herself. The narrator also seems to be seeking forgiveness.

“The Mother” is a mournful poem about a mother’s regrets. All the while, the narrator is seeking pardon from her children, whom she believes she has wronged. The poem could almost be considered a suicide note due to the sense that the narrator is seeking redemption. When people seek redemption, they are often inspired to ask for forgiveness when they are close to their end. Regardless of her motivations the narrator is stuck in a quagmire of guilt and remorse and the poem seems to be her release. The theme of the poem is that people should think clearly about their decisions

because in the end, they will suffer the consequences of their choices. The really hard choices always go on affecting people for the rest of their lives.

Literary Critique-Third Place

Am I a Murderer? William H. Davis, Jr.

Am I a Murderer? by Calil Perechodnik is a unique work in the history of literature. As a twenty-three year old ghetto policeman in the Nazi-occupied town of Otwock, near Warsaw, he writes under conditions and for reason perhaps new in the human experience. This record is difficult to read and harder still to critique, for an honest critique requires examination of one's own conscience. As Michal Cishy states in a review of Am I a Murderer? in the *Gazeto Wybocza*, "a book that, the less 'stomach' one has for it, the more one should read it."

No where else in literature do we have such a record of contrition among perpetrators, and indeed Calil Perechodnik was a perpetrator, as he directs his own wife and two-year-old daughter to the line destined for Treblinka.

Perechodnik writes as a man unable fully to admit responsibility; yet unable to escape it. He writes that Crezniakow-who committed suicide, rather than be a party to the Nazi's deportation plan-has "preserved the hone of the Jewry." Likewise he "bows his head to Dr. Korcyak" who readily accompanied his family to certain death. It is clear that Perechodnik admires the courage he himself does not seem to have. Yet he continues throughout the book describing the most horrible and degrading acts carried out on his own people.

This story will test the strong of heart, crush the sensitive. Frank Fox, the translator who writes the forward for Am I a Murderer? Ask the question, "How are we to judge Perechodnik's behavior in that age of unprecedented horror?"

Indeed no honest person can answer for his own actions under such unimaginable conditions. Still, as Perechodnik struggles to present an

accurate recollection of events, the guilt he is consumed with is inescapable. He writes of his wife Anka's words, "they pound in my brain day and night and reach me like loud voices from another world." The readers strays from bouts of condemnation to sometimes almost amazement that a man can carry such a burden of guilt, for he confesses his guilt even when offering some rational for what he did.

One thing becomes apparent early in the book: a question of his sanity, and how could it not? How long can a man stumble over the corpses of his own countrymen after sending his family to die and not break? One of his near breaking points comes when he returns to his home after he had sent his wife and daughter off for fear of the brutal Nazi Ukrainians. Upon returning he realizes no one has even been in their home. She could have stayed and perhaps lived a few more days. What could Perechodnik possibly have felt upon this discovery? Another point of extreme emotional suffering is when he delivers bread and a bucket of water to his aunt, hiding beneath the floor of her home. He informs her of the death sentence handed down by the Nazi's for her failure to report to the town square with the other towns-people, as ordered. He informs her the Otwock is empty-only the dead, the hiding and the ghetto police remain.

But Perechodnik's work is not done. No, it is only beginning. The dead must be buried. There are many more towns to be evacuated. Still thousands more women and children to deport. A world of suffering to witness-and witness it he does.

One thing that is strangely recognizable is Perechodnik's writing is his contempt for his own Jewishness and his feelings of alienation from his home country of Poland. He underscores the anti-semitism in Poland in a number of ways. He finally realizes the Poles will plunder the Jews, only to be plundered by the Nazis. Odd as it may seem, he ascribes to his own people the blame, for their "greed for gold" and blames the Jewish God as much as he blames the Germans. He writes "In every generation there arises an enemy lying in wait for our lives..." He repeatedly blames this 'God' he claims not to believe in. His hatred for his people's beliefs is fueled by

God's command of circumcision, this "making possible the discovery and murder of all Jews." When contrasted to the many believing Jews who died bravely, one is forced to wonder if faith in this "Jewish God" did not make dying easier.

Finally, after fleeing Otwock to the Warsaw ghetto, on May 7th, 1943, Calil Perechodnik puts pen to paper to record these events. He completes it in one-hundred and five days. What begins as a record of the Perechodnik family becomes a death bed confession, and finally an ode to his lost wife and daughter. He describes the work as a "second fetus," something to live on after he and Anka, as their young daughter should have. Upon completion, he gave the work to the city Magister, Wladyslaw Blazwski, for safekeeping.

Then in June of 1944, while suffering from typhus, Perechodnik commits suicide with a cyanide pill. His work survived the war and was turned over to his brother, Pesach Perechodnik, who delivers it to the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland. In 1944 it was published. No equally exhaustive chronicle of the provincial Polish ghetto exists. May God rest Calil Perechodnik's troubled soul.

Literary Critique-Honorable Mention

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde William H. Davis, Jr.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, by Robert Louis Stevenson, was a groundbreaking work in many ways. It is a fascinating convergence of the changing ideas of his times, the ageless concept of good versus evil and of his own demons he was battling. Stevenson was suffering from tuberculosis and used morphine-a common cure-all for the day. He seems to have rebelled against his Calvinist upbringing by indulging himself in somewhat anti-social activities and vices. While attending the University of Edinburg he earned a reputation as reckless adventurer. He frequented the seedier parts of town in his extra-curricular activities. This gave him a keen insight into the criminal world, which would serve him well in writing Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Though Stevenson obviously rejected his religious background, its influence is felt throughout his work. The dual personalities of Jekyll and Hyde are in a struggle for control and reflect society's striving with issues of good versus evil. In many ways this struggle is a model of Stevenson's own world-his-struggle with drug abuse and his knowledge of his own impending death. Despite this, Stevenson shows extraordinary strength of character and a vivid imagination.

It is strongly suspected that Stevenson discovered cocaine not long before his death in 1894. Cocaine was purported by many-including the famous Sigmund Freud-to be cure for morphine addiction. If this be true, one can only imagine what this added to his suffering. Originally titled, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Stevenson burned the first copy in a fit of depression. Then he completed two more rough drafts-about sixty-thousand words-in only ten days. The entire mindset of the author while writing this book vacillates between two polar extremes.

Stevenson cleverly used the device of “Dr. Jekyll’s Full Statement of the Facts,” and “Dr. Layton’s Narrative,” to fill in gaps in the mystery. And though the reader may have figured out the plot, it still has a great impact. Seldom does an author convey so much information to the reader with so few words. He achieves this through precise word use and a simple but powerful story-line.

Stevenson’s work also illustrates a growing idea of the time: that any mystery has a logical, if not naturalistic, explanation. It is clear from his writing that the Darwin’s new theory of man’s evolution from the lower primates influenced his thinking. Many times Mr. Hyde is described as “monkey-like,” or “ape-like.” This indicated Stevenson’s conscious or subconscious belief in the new theory.

It is obvious to the reader that the subject of temptation is a key element of Stevenson’s mindset. No doubt this is a product of a clashing of influences-his religious upbringing and his college experiences. It was surely later an issue in his drug use. As cocaine was considered a cure for morphine addiction, it is likely he attempted to control his morphine use. In all likelihood, this only compounded his problems. Many times Stevenson ascribed to his antagonist, addict-like characteristics. It is not difficult to identify the difference of effects brought on by the two substances he used. But it is clear that this work is not the writing of a madman. The concept of truth, goodness, and honor play very important roles in the story.

Stevenson displays an unusual awareness of the dark side of human nature. No doubt, much of the turmoil in his life spills out onto the pages of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. So graphic is the description of “bones being audibly shattered” and “being struck through the heart by a cold thrill of terror,” one wonders if Stevenson had not once committed this crime. Considering the vastly different physiological effects of morphine and cocaine, and applying this consideration to Stevenson’s writing, one wonders how much of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde was autobiographical.

Criticism has surfaced that point out that the potion which caused the physical changes of Jekyll to Hyde is medically impossible. This is beside

the point as Stevenson's success at suspension of disbelief is remarkable. It is an amazing and frightening irony that the very substance Stevenson was using in his time, would-in the 20th century produce very real Mr. Hydes by the thousands.

So impressive is Stevenson's story that its title has become part of our language. It is the term by which we express the duality of man, forever a concept of good and evil embodied in the split personality.

Literary Critique-Honorable Mention

In Defense of Conservative Federalism

Robert Shane Orr

I believe that a conservative form of federalism is the right form of federalism for today's America. In light of history and recent events, it only makes sense that we should start returning the power back to its rightful owner: the states.

First of all, what is federalism? Federalism is constitutional arrangement whereby power is divided between national and sub-national governments, each of which enforces its own laws directly on its citizens and neither of which can alter the arrangement without the consent of the other.

Our Founding Fathers chose this form as a way to balance the power of government by creating competition within the various governments in our country. By definition, federalism automatically makes it easier to protect the liberty and freedom of the people and manage conflict.

In 2005, our national government is a huge bloated mass that has pushed aside the states in their liberal pursuit to "do the right thing." This is a huge mistake, as more and more our national governments is out of touch with city, state, and local needs. How did we get to this?

At the framing of our Constitution, the states' role in our system of government was to be powerful. The constitution allowed Congress 17 specific grants of power (Article 1, Section 8). Combined with the national supremacy and fatally ambiguous necessary and proper clause, the national government was much stronger than under the previous Articles of Confederation. The states were put on par with the national government by the Reserved Powers clause (10th Amendment), the concurrent powers they shared with the national government, and also by the fact that the scope of national power, while strong, was limited. Also, because the intent of the

founders was so obvious that the states should retain the wide range of powers, for 150 years the national government simply restrained itself from overstepping his bounds.

The argument that the framers expressly desired a strong national government is built on the National Supremacy clause of the Constitution (Article IV). This clause states that the constitution and the laws and treaties of the national government shall be the supreme law of the land. What is easily forgotten is the atmosphere in which it was derived: in terms of power the national government in 1787 was nowhere near the behemoth it is today. The national government today is exactly the type of government the framers were trying to protect the people from! Indeed, one of the strongest arguments that the federalists used to get the Constitution ratified was that the national government was one of *Enumerated Powers only*.

Three events changed the balance of power from more or less equal to totally lopsided in favor of the national government: the Civil War, the Great Depression, and the societal unrest that surrounded the Great Society programs of the 1960's. The Civil War proved that the states did not have the power to succeed-no matter the law the national government doled out, and the power that the government accumulated was never given back. The Great Society program threw off the disguise that the federal government was simply assisting the states in anything and proved that the national government had their own *national* goals and intended to impose them.

During this time, there were many court decisions that pushed this shift of power from the state governments to the national government. These issues sparked an erroneous mind set to form in the people; they believed that the power should be almost completely vested in the national government because it is their responsibility to take care of all of these various issues. This mind set culminated in the landmark Supreme Court decision *Garcia v San Antonio Metropolitan Transit Authority (1985)*. In essence, the Supreme Court ruled that the only power the states have in our federalist system is the right to elect senators, representatives, and the president. I don't believe there has ever been a more ridiculous ruling in

the history of our courts!

Today, liberals in our national government are enjoying the freedom and power this shift has afforded them. According to Thomas R. Dye, author of Politics in America 5th Edition, the argument for a strong national government includes:

1. State and local governments are not sufficiently concerned with social issues.
2. State and local officials are not competent enough to achieve change.
3. State and local governments contribute to inequality by imposing different standards for different issues. (131)
4. State and local governments don't have sufficient concern for social justice.

Generally, the liberal view is that state and local officials are incompetent and shouldn't be trusted with any decision outside of the mundane. I believe that this view goes directly against the ideology of the founders of this country, what the constitution says, and what I feel in my heart is right-Freedom!

The Constitution begins "We, the People", not "We, the Government." That is the core foundation of this country, and it should never have been forgotten. The Declaration of Independence state "[men]...are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, among these, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Even when it addresses government it clearly states that the "[government]...derives its powers from the consent of the governed". The entire Bill of Rights is aimed at protecting individual and state rights against the federal government.

There were many reasons the Colonists broke away from England, but one reason was certainly the oppressiveness of a monarchy (i.e. very strong national government). The entire checks and balances system is in place to try to stop governments, specifically the national government, from getting too big and trampling the rights of the individual.

I feel that men have their own reasoning minds and that no one can think for them. Men will make mistakes, and they will learn from those

mistakes.

The overall, and overwhelming, spirit of these comments and institutions is simply to insure the power and freedom of ***THE PEOPLE***—not the national government.

The stronger each state and local government is, the closer that power is to the intended recipients: The people! That, in turn, allows more people to be involved in government decisions. It fosters a strong sense of pride in the system and responsibility in each individual. State and local officials are much more aware of the needs of their specific area, and this would give the people the real ability to make lasting changes. More people involved would mean a wider pool of talent from which to choose from the move on the national government to make sweeping changes in our social, political, and economic structure are over. We will never have a Civil War again; our Great Depression now is when the DOW drops below 10,000, and America is so diverse that racial and cultural inequalities will be duly dug up and rooted out. It's time that the power that the national government took to repair these problems is given back to its rightful owner.

Just look at how Hurricane Katrina was handled. It would have made a great difference if the state and local authorities would have known ahead of time that it would be their responsibility to combat Hurricane Katrina, given the resources to carry out their plan, and knew they would take any blame afterward. As we could clearly see, the national government didn't have a clue as to what the city of New Orleans was even like, much less a workable plan that would succeed. Hundreds of lives would have been saved, yet we are still hearing what the national government should or shouldn't have done; but that shouldn't be the issue. The national government can't micromanage a country of 50 states, hundreds of different races, cultures, and ethnicities, and 300 million people; it should stop trying and let the state and local authorities exercise their constitutional right.

Just imagine if the states had their constitutional power and held jurisdiction over such issues as:

- Abortion
- Gay and Lesbian Marriage
- Legalization of marijuana
- School choice
- Whether creationism should be taught in school
- Death penalty

Would it be so harmful if different states had different laws on these and other issues? It would give the people more choices and allow states to experiment with what laws work and which don't-both righteous goals.

The national government is too big and out of touch with the everyday lives of the American people. As it stands today, our government is in direct opposition with the Constitution and what our framers expressly desired. It is time the states took back control of what is rightfully theirs and, by extension, ours: the power in the United States federalist system, a conservative form by today's standards, but the right form for the people of America.

Literary Critique-Honorable Mention

Wait for Me William H. Davis, Jr.

In the summer of 1941, soon after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, Konstantine Simonov proceeded by train towards the front line. At twenty-five Simonov was already a successful Russian poet and playwright. He was deeply in love with the popular young actress Valentina Serova. She had seen him off at the station. As he neared the front he scribbled down a short poem. He could not have known-as he expressed his love for Valentina in that short writing-he was producing what would become the world's most popular and world's most translated war poem in history.

To fully understand the significance of Simonov's poem, "Wait for Me," one needs some understanding of Russian life in the years leading up to, and during World War II. The hardship the Soviet people suffered-for generations-is beyond the grasp of the western world.

The tradition of the arts run deep in the Russian way of life. When an unprepared Soviet Union was invaded by Nazi Germany, it was necessary to mobilize all possible resources. The arts were among those resources.

The Soviet army of WWII was the only army in modern times that would not grant home leave to its soldiers. As the bulk of the rank and file of the Soviet army was little educated, they were given to superstition. It was convergence of superstition and exposure to arts-in this case poetry-that spawned one of the enduring beliefs of the war.

Simonov's "Wait for Me" is not just a well written piece, poignantly illustrating the pain of separation. He speaks to the hearts of men whose only happiness they have ever known has been the love of some young woman, who is now thousands of miles away and who, in all likelihood, they will never see again. His opening line of "Wait for me and I'll come back," sets the tone for the entire poem. And so, by poem's end, one

believes that if his lover waits for him, he will survive the war. “Wait for Me,” strikes a deeply romantic note easily understood by Russian front line soldiers-or any soldier anywhere. And so the poem took on mythical qualities. The belief that a lover waiting for you would protect you was born from Simonov’s simple poem. But this myth carried with it certain baggage. The belief held that if the lover died or stopped waiting, death was certain. Of course the cases of a soldier receiving notice that his lover was no longer waiting, then carelessly getting himself killed were many. To other soldiers this was proof that the belief was well founded.

The imagery Simonov uses is so basic to the idea of love that one need not be Russian to be touched by his words. Anyone who has ever spent any period of forced separation can feel what he is trying to say. He uses the changing of the seasons, so important to the Russian people, something any people can understand. “Wait when the snow is falling fast, wait when summer’s hot...” Here Simonov touches on the fact that there was no one who had not lost family in the war. He defies logic with the power of love and the strength of the loved one who waits.

He uses the Russian tradition, and indeed all our tradition, of raising our glass to those fallen with, “Even when friends give up, Sit and count the cost, Drink a glass of bitter wine, to the fallen friend-wait! And do not drink with them, Wait until the end.”

Simonov repeats the line, “Wait for me and I’ll come back,” at the beginning of all three stanzas. He concludes the poem with, “By your waiting for me, dear, you had saved my life, How I made it, we shall know. Only you and I. You alone knew how to wait-we alone know why.”

Before the end of the war, “Wait for Me,” would be translated into dozens of languages. German soldiers faced stiff disciplinary action for being in possession of a translation. Still a copy of Simonov’s poem “Wait for Me” was one of the most recovered bits of memorabilia found on the dead, the wounded, and those taken prisoner, of all nationalities.

Simonov produced in those simple one hundred ninety-one words he wrote to his lover, words that would speak to millions of war-weary

soldiers from every walk of life, words that will remain timeless and will speak to future generations.



Summer Afternoon
Dr. Charles Gongre-Staff

Literary Critique-Honorable Mention

The Sadness of Our Society Debbie Stehlik

How could this happen? Why this would be allowed to go on; it is horrible. I would never lower myself to that manner of behavior. I am sure this was the reaction several other students had to “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas” and “The Lottery.” However, the way that I understood it might have been a little more realistic. They are us, we are they. These two stories reflect our current attitude in society today. Even though both stories were written in different time frames, the theme is resounding and still true: we are an uncaring, selfish, animated lot.

I consider Le Guin and Jackson quite bold to write out the truth of ourselves in such an animate way. With each story, we are made comfortable with a scene of everyday serene lifestyle that is a slice of the all-American apple pie. Festivals, celebrations, and proverbial nuclear families running about in some stupor of happiness (it is sickening). “Round-facial jovial” villagers all satisfied, to fault, with their lives. It is easy for us to accept and feel comfortable in the atmosphere the authors’ provide. They let us slide right into the swing of things. Unless you are very astute to the extremely subtle hints given, you would have no idea of what is about to happen, how horrific these “normal” citizens are. Then all of sudden they show us the evil behind the ecstatic, the truth that none of us want to face. In fact the “the villagers” are nothing more than heartless, selfish, ogres who would be contented to live at the expense of *one* who would suffer. Masking the characters with civility gives them a form of credibility. This is not so outrageous; we do it every day, a chuckle at someone’s misfortune, gossip, or simply driving by or ignoring the destitute. On a larger scale, war is that evil that destroys society as a whole. Some of us may not be willing to look at ourselves this

way, but everyone of us has in some way or another at some time, used someone else's misfortune for our advantage or delight, just to have someone else feel as bad as or worse than we do, in order to feed our superior egos. It is not our fault, this is human nature, and that is what Le Guin and Jackson were showing us. As sad and horrific as it sounds, this is the balance of nature. This is the way of humanity, this is why we cannot have Mother Theresa without Jeffrey Dahmer.

Although the plight of the human race is not going to change because of a single act of kindness toward our "victims," these authors convey this idea differently. Le Guin's villagers find the child a necessity; in order for this lifestyle to maintain balance, the child must suffer. Jackson seems to view Hutchinson more as a victim of a cruel "ritual" or tradition. Jackson portrays this community as one steeped in fear of change, condoning "official culling" of the community. Le Guin also allows the reader to change her community to any way we see fit, to make our own determination of what a "utopia" would be; Jackson persists on what her community is, and there is no room for change. This is the way it has always been, and it cannot be changed. Le Guin allows the reader to believe that there is a way out, if you do not like the rules you can leave.

Another difference between the authors is that where Le Guin's villagers sometimes are appalled or upset at the nature of their happiness, Jackson's villagers are not only content with their "ritual," but also anticipate it. This would indicate the difference in outlook of humanity between the authors. Jackson is far more jaded, believing that we as humans crave and enjoy cruelty (look at our current media violence is rampant, and that is what sells).

Even though we generally see the similarities initially, each authors' differentiating attitudes become apparent in the fact that one may see hope for us, and the other is totally cynical.

These two stories are truly a glance at our current society and give us the opportunity to consider what we are doing to our fellow human beings. It may not be as drastic as a public stoning, but if we would take this

perception of ourselves and more closely our behavior, maybe we could become a loving, open, tolerant society.

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Cover Art-Honorable Mention

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Gold, Gods and Glory: The Global Dynamics of Power Bruce White

Whatever happened to the civics course that they use to teach in schools: The History of money and how Central Banking led to the creation of “Fractional Reserve Banking” and how this led to the creation of “Flat Money,” or money not backed by gold. It was the tireless efforts of the Federal Reserve System that did this. The Federal Reserve Act, the basis for the existence of the Federal Reserve System, was passed by Congress on December 22, 1913. A study of the Central Banks of Europe will reflect that the Rothschild Family has been a constant through all of that time, while America struggled for prosperity, generally working through the Bank of England. Their list of customers included virtually every nation in Europe and stretched across the Atlantic to South America as well. Mayer Amshul Rothschild devised the specific use of this system of economic slavery, as we see being used in America. He and his descendants have used this system, coupled with bribery and corruption of government officials and the European Royalty to obtain a choke hold on the economic fortunes of the world through ever increasing amounts of unpayable debts (interest).

As time went on, the Rothschilds brought other families and lesser individuals, who were willing to do their bidding, into their plan as accomplices. The privately owned Federal Reserve System was created by Paul Moritz Warburg, agent for the Rothschilds. Paul M. Warburg is credited with writing the Federal Reserve Act. He came to America from Europe in 1902 where the Warburg’s family banking house of M.M. Warburg Company, along with the Rothschilds, the principal stockholders of Germany’s privately owned Central Bank, the Reichs Bank. It is important to remember that the Rothschilds do not loan gold out. They only

deal their “paper credit,” but require that interest to them be made in gold. Credit created by the favored few at the stroke of a pen, so that the favored few can live idly. The issue of credit, issued by the stroke of a pen by the favored few, the “moneyed” few control the Central Bank of any nation are the true rulers of that nation. President James A. Garfield said: “Whoever controls the volume of money in any country is absolute master of all industry and commerce.”

According to Eustice Mullins in Secrets of the Federal Reserve, he points out that there is an invisible, unelected 4th branch of government, one that’s not even a part of the U.S. government but a privately owned and controlled branch called the Federal Reserve System. That’s fairly straight forward, a privately owned bank which operates for profit in the best interest of its owner who are not, for the most part, citizens of the U. S., sets all monetary policy of the U.S. including increasing or decreasing the supply of money, was created for American economic exploitation. It didn’t take long for some people to figure this out. Thomas Jefferson said “I sincerely believe that banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies.”

Few people understand how this is done. It is necessary to understand this to understand America. When one finally begins to get a grasp of this deliberate deception of the people of the world about the creation of money and couple that grasp with an understanding of how our economic system actually works the truth will become painfully clear. Webster’s dictionary defines truth as conformity to fact or reality. If what one is reading here conforms to or matches the reality of what is occurring in America, then perhaps it deserves some serious thought. A study of money in history will show that this type of monetary system has been used many times in order to steal the wealth of nations and reduce the people of those nations to abject economic slavery. Keep in mind that the Constitutional Convention of 1787 was meant to “crush paper money” by unanimous decision. This is what President Andrew Jackson said in his 8th annual message to Congress:

“It is apparent from the whole contest of the Constitution as well as the history of the time which gave birth to it, that it was the purpose of the convention to establish a currency consisting of the precious metals. These were adopted by a permanent rule excluding the use of a perishable medium of exchange...or the still more pernicious expedient of paper currency.” Despite what is heard to the contrary, currency is not money. Paper currency has no real value since it is created by the FED from nothing (interesting concept that any “man” has the “power” to create). Power represents the ability to act or produce an effect; or one that has control or authority.

Americans many know the former face of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan and now Ben Bernanke, but few know of its founders or the handful of men to whom people answered outside of parameters of their known government from the Bible era. Those men’s dealing with a very fair and honest man are a point of comparison: In the days of the Messiah, in Israel, there existed a similar duality in government. Although Galilee was ruled by King Herod the Great...and later his son Herod Antipas...the real leadership of the Jewish people at the time was the Sanhedrin Council. One of the chief duties of the Sanhedrin was in the area of money. They were known as “money changers.” In the Bible, bankers are called money changers. Quite simply, they cornered the market on the only legal tender to pay the temple tithes at that time, the half shekel, and exacted as much as the market could bear for it. They also became skilled in the debauchery of money, through the use of dishonest weights and measures. For example, if you bought 50 pounds. of corn from the temple, the priest would place a weight on the scale that was marked 50 pounds, but in reality the weight was often less than it was marked; that kind of dishonesty defiled the temple and drew the indignation of the Messiah, prompting him for the first times and only time to use force in his ministry. The Messiah kicked the money-changers out of the temple for a reason! Now that is understandable. After the Messiah overturned their table and drove them out of the temple, charging them with turning the House of God into a den of thieves, he was

murdered. Today's Federal Reserve System is the continuation of those same dishonest weights and measures within a different time frame by elite men who represent the world's wealth. These men drew up the plans for the Federal Reserve System in the interests of a circle of financiers, chief among them Mayer Amschul Rothschild.

I would not want the reader to think that what you are reading here is strictly my opinion. What I'm saying has been voiced by thousands of Americans. Daniel Webster said: "Of all the contrivances of cheating the laboring classes of mankind, none has been more effective than that which deludes them with paper money."

Hurricane

Rita

Essay



For lease information call...
Post Hurricane Rita
Janet G. Polk-Staff

Hurricane Rita Essay-First Place

The Eye of the Hurricane

Fabiola Villanueva

At my short nineteen years of age, I never thought I would go through such tense, dramatic experiences, at least not this soon into my life. I feel very fortunate when I say that I have had an almost-perfect flow in my lifestyle. I had never lived through anything out of the ordinary; therefore, at some point in my life, I would stop and wonder what it would be like to live through something that I considered could only happen in movies. Evacuating for Hurricane Rita taught me that there is much value in what one already thinks is precious in life. Hurricane Rita tore me apart from my home, family, and Javier, the love of my life.

After hearing all the commotion about the possibility of a 175 mile per hour, category four, powerful hurricane by the name of Rita coming towards the southeast part of Texas, I began to think to myself, “Well, I sure wish we could get some action around this old, boring, no-life city.” I began to grow extremely annoyed with every comment made about the hurricane; it was like listening to a barn full of chickens clucking uncontrollably when disrupted by an intruder. I soon came to find out that the entire southeast area of Texas was under a mandatory evacuation. At this point, I began to fear for what was to come. I began to pray, asking God to do as He wished just as long as He would allow me to remain in tact with my immediate family and my boyfriend Javier. I felt as though the world was bigger than ever and I was extremely smaller than what I thought I was. After making last minute decisions about an unplanned evacuation route, my parents, brother, and grandmother drove off in one group, my sister and her husband remained together, and I left with my boyfriend, since his family had evacuated the previous night. I did not give any second thoughts to putting a pause in my studies, job, nor my personal life.

I felt as though I was being pulled from all these things just like a tough piece of gum from a favorite wooly sweater, which is left with unwanted bits and pieces of the struggle to detach. Although we all left in separate vehicles, we agreed to stick together and end up in the same destination, which would be somewhere in Tyler, Texas. As soon as we all drove off, I noticed my parents and my sister were nowhere in sight. I realized my boyfriend and I were lost from our tiny caravan. No matter how hard I searched for their vehicles, I could not spot either truck. I saw a blue truck, a black truck, a gray truck, but yet I could not see anything more. It was like looking into a life-size edition of, *Where's Waldo?* full of similar duplicates, which would make my heart palpitate stronger and stronger every time I thought I had seen them.

I still had a tiny bit of doubt that the hurricane would really come for the southeast side of Texas because as I looked up at the atmosphere I realized it was prettier than ever with its bulbous, fair clouds floating in a sky illuminated with hints of rich cobalt. As we slowly drove, I began to feel the car decreasing in speed. The time-consuming movement was similar to the initiative sensation one has in a roller coaster, and then a malfunction interrupts the procedure of the breath-taking drop. This delay made me feel like the distance between us and our destination was increasing. There was a sudden close-down in our ride; the entire traffic flow had stopped, and everyone had brought his or her cars to a standstill. As I took the time to look around, I noticed the concerned, intolerant looks on other people's faces as they scratched their foreheads with one hand and slammed the steering wheel with the other, while drawing out their necks in hopes of catching a glimpse of what was going on up ahead. They were hoping miraculously to move their vehicles out of the confined space everyone was in. I knew they, too, were being torn apart from what they cherished most.

Without anticipation, night fell on us, and we were still stuck in a bundle of traffic. The only thing that consoled me was the thought of reaching our destination, or at least being distant from the expected site of

the storm landing. The feeling of being away from my family was still silently haunting me, as I had not seen them all day in addition to not knowing their exact location. During the drive at night, I looked up into the sky once more and I was in disbelief. Never in my life had I admired the sky with such picturesque images of the stars. These stars were strikingly bright and gorgeous, full of silver radiance with a sprinkle of glitter, which glistened from every angle. I felt as though I could easily rise from the car and reach up to grab one. I fell asleep once and woke up to find out we had arrived at a church shelter in Tyler, and I was reunited with my family. I looked around and felt something or someone else was missing in my life; Javier had gone immediately after we had arrived at the shelter, to catch up with his family. I began to cry uncontrollably because I felt as though slowly one-by-one the things and people I most loved were disintegrating from my proximity. I felt as though I was a bright yellow daisy, with my petal being plucked one at a time by a merciless being. Soon, my sister and husband had to leave the shelter too and once again I lost another part of me. I could not hold together much longer because I had lost all hope. I clutched my hands together tightly and continued to pray silently asking God to please allow me to keep the tiny bit of life I felt.

I would never ask to live through this type of experience again, as I did not enjoy the feeling of separation from life itself. I learned that sometimes one cannot help what the future holds in store, even if it means separating from the things that one believes actually build a person. After experiencing Hurricane Rita, I do believe the old saying, “be careful what you wish for,” as I do regret ever having wished for anything suspenseful or out of the ordinary. Category four, Hurricane Rita washed up a dark, powerful storm full of electrifying torrential feelings of separation in many ways into my life. Although I was pulled from my loved ones at different times, I felt as though many things still held me closer to them in heart and soul.

Hurricane Rita Essay-Second Place

Rita

Debbie Stehlik

First of all I would like to say that as of Wednesday, September 21st, my family and I, after several family discussions, had decided to ride out Rita. We were prepared with supplies, water and a generator. However, when Thursday morning came around, we found that Rita was a category five and the image was a monster that covered the whole Gulf. It was at this point that we had a very quick family decision to follow the mandatory evacuation. It only got worse from there. We decided to pack our lowboy trailer with some things we thought we might need like cookware, clothes, ice chests, filled gas cans, water, important papers and pictures. Then we stuffed the vehicles with two parents, five kids, seven cats, 3 dogs and us. Off we went on our adventure. For a little while we think, “Well, maybe this can be like a mini-vacation;” what were we thinking???? That lasted about six hours, the amount of time it took us to get to Sour Lake, to head out on the evacuation route. Once we were actually in Sour Lake we thought we would be able to move a little quicker than what we had heard about I-10 (wrong again). I think that guy behind me is going insane....he has a weird look in his eyes, kinda’ like he’s “jonesin” for a fix. He’s scary; let’s lock the doors. I should mention the 110 degree heat that melted every bit of ice that we did had and therefore left us with plenty of lukewarm water, which was used to pour over the heads of over heated and frustrated children and dogs. Somehow, we managed to maintain a sense of humor, even when the odor of the cats “potty-breaks” was pleasantly magnified by the heat. (Did you know that cats don’t like leashes? I did, that’s why they stayed in the car.) At about hour eight we began to hear rumbling from the backseats about being hungry... “lukewarm hotdogs coming right up”...that is if the dogs don’t guilt you out of your last bite, because you know it’s just not right to expect them to eat dog food on a

tremendous journey like this one. At hour 9, we roll into what looks like a never-ending line to nowhere...where does it end, get out of line to rest? Are you insane and lose our spot, come on it's only 99 degrees right now, want another hotdog? Delirium sets in must kill children and I could swear that little dog would look great with mustard on it. Shake it off, continue on, surely we're almost there. Where? I don't know just get some sleep, "we're moving again, mom." Hour 18, "why are all those people passing us; where are they going? Nowhere sweetheart, let's play the alphabet game with the ketchup bottle. We hear on the radio about a crazy man ramming people's cars and some shooting; maybe it was that guy on drugs. At least it's not 100 degrees anymore, it's only 89, but there's no moon, Max needs to pee *again*. Hour 20-darkness works its magic and most are asleep, maybe I can catch a nap.... "mom, we're moving again"....oh, o.k.. Wow...30 feet this time, we're making progress. People are stopped on the side of the road at indiscriminate places, church parking lots, side of the road and the radio is talking of clear lanes on I-10, but we have NOWHERE to go; I wish we would have gone to I-10. Twenty feet here, 30 feet there at this rate we'll make it to Livingston sometime next week. Seven a.m. (I don't know what hour anymore), traffic starts to break off into two directions, road is somewhat open we make it into Livingston at about 8 a.m. Oh, my God, there is trash and people everywhere; no gas, no ice, no food, just angry people everywhere. On every corner someone is asking for money for gas or food, waiting in line at the gas station with anything that will hold a gallon of gas, we hear about fights at the pumps, let's just keep going, we'll get some chips or something at the next open store. Hour 20 something...roads are clearer, maybe we'll make it to Shiner at a decent hour...weather is hot again only topping at 103 today. We found a gas station with fuel and diesel for Dad, but pumps are slow, and it takes us 45 minutes to fill both vehicles and our gas cans, but they have ice cream...yea!!!! Brenham, wow from here it should only be a couple of hours to get to Shiner...not quite I-10 is backed up again, and people are no friendlier. We make into Shiner about 9:30 p.m. Thirty-six

(or so) hours on the road and we survived without anyone dying, thanks to the Powers That Be. Kids...out, dogs...out, mom and dad...out, cats...corralled to the garage, (surely they'll get along with the other cats...NOT!!!) as Nancy and I pour our bodies out of the vehicles, Nancy and I get everyone settled, and we head out to the farm house, (stay at my ex's house-are you insane?!?!?) We spent the whole next day emptying the lowboy into the farm house, situating the kids, and planning our next step. Day three, or is this four? Anyway, we head to San Antonio and plan on seeing Dad and Mom off to Hebbronville. We've finally made it to our destination at my friend's house in Lake Hills; it's about 6 p.m., and we're ready for the next day of more long lines at FEMA, (by the way all the negative things we heard about them wasn't true; they were very helpful and in a remarkably good mood considering they had been dealing with Katrina "victims" for weeks now), Red Cross and so on, and on, and on. We spent the next two weeks finding services, signing up with Workforce, checking out schools and collecting cat and dog food supplies. We picked up the kids from their dad's the following Saturday and went into San Antonio to see the Alamo and the Riverwalk, the best day yet. Just to clear up some things, the thing that made the difference is that we maintained a sense of humor about the whole thing....what were we going to do? Complaining won't help or make it any better so we might as well laugh and learn something from it. Nancy and I couldn't sleep until we knew what happened to our home (in order to decide if we were moving into San Antonio) so we went home about 4 days after evacuation-we were Blessed with minimal damage, nothing that we couldn't fix on our own if we had to. We did make the decision to stay one more week until we had electricity and water. We came home Sunday the 9th to find everything fine. We had minor damage to a window, some shingles missing, and a few trees down, what a blessing. I credit it all to our positive attitudes. We are NOT victims of Rita we were simply displaced for a time, and we are grateful for the blessings of our lives and health.

Hurricane Rita Essay-Third Place

Anticipation Along With Dread

Gwendolyn McFate

On the night of the twenty-first, my husband, my dog, Smokey and I along with my best friend and her family set out on the adventure of our lives. We all left my home around ten o'clock in the evening with four vehicles in tow. All of the vehicles were packed to the top with various supplies that included food, staples, and clothes. The events of our journey and the days that followed after the hurricane "Rita" hit are unforgettable.

As we made our way up Highway 69 in the middle of the night barely going over 40 miles an hour at times, we noticed many people stranded along the side of the road. Desperate to get to our destination, we plodded along stopping long enough just to give us and our dogs' time for potty breaks. Finally, we arrived at my small two-bedroom trailer in the country just outside of Nacogdoches. The trip lasted 5 hours and was 2 hours longer than the usual time for this trip. Tired and weary, the girls made their pallets on the floor and the adults got to their beds.

The next morning, we all drove into town to load up on various supplies that we either forgot or thought we might need. There was an air of anticipation along with dread. Shelves in the stores were emptying as fast as the stock boys could fill them. We loaded our vehicles and made sure they were filled with gas as we made our way back to the trailer. That Friday the wind began to stir as we watched the television to learn of any news of where the hurricane was going to hit.

The experience of staying in a trailer with 100mph wind is an experience no one should miss as the rain hit the roof and the wind ripped thru the vents on the roof making a deafening roar. As one can imagine, no one got much sleep that night. Even though we were almost one hundred and fifty miles plus from the coast, we lost electricity in the wee hours of Saturday morning. To add damage to the matter, we also lost all water

water plant ran off a generator powered by electricity. That afternoon my husband and my father went to town to look for a generator and were told by the people at McCoy's that twenty-four generators were expected to come in town around seven o'clock that night and first-comers would be the first to get a generator. My husband came back to the very hot trailer by then to tell us the news. My friend and I decided to go ahead and go to McCoy's and just stand in line if need be to get a generator. The people at McCoy's forgot to tell my husband that he could prepay for a generator and would be assured of getting one of the twenty-four generators to be delivered that evening. My friend and I hurriedly placed our credit cards on the counter and got the remaining two out of eight generators left. I told my husband on the cell phone of the news and both my friend and I were laughing our heads off saying to never trust a man to do a woman's job. We loaded the generators up in our truck and took them back to the trailer and hooked them up.

The next morning, we all went back to Lowe's to get a small window air-conditioner unit, so that the living room would at least be cool during the day and night. Needless to say, the temperature in the living room rose to eighty-eight degrees during the day and was cooler at times, seventy-two degrees. This is not a good temperature range for two women in the middle of menopause.

Again, we went back to town on Sunday getting fuel for our generators and our vehicles. There were long lines at all of the gas stations in Nacogdoches and tempers were flaring. The Governor of Texas had to call in the TDPS to monitor the gas stations and after that things went smoother at the gas pumps. Lucky for us, we had a diesel truck and there was no waiting in line for diesel fuel. Wal-Mart was being guarded by the TDPS due to people trying to break into the store. We had quite a stockpile of various food items, propane, and staples in our trailer.

Fortunately for me, my friend is my boss, and she was in constant contact with our parent company in Houston. The company was willing to place all of us with our families in a motel that was located next to the

office in Houston. We all had a conference call with our employees by cell phones and arrangements were made to come to Houston on Tuesday and begin work on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, we all made our way to Houston, driving the back roads in east Texas and finally catching up with the bumper-to-bumper traffic going back to Houston on IH-45. At last, we arrived at our rooms at the Candlewood Suites that had small kitchenettes along with separate rooms that included a couch, recliner, and two televisions, and most important of all, air-conditioning and water.

As we gathered at work the following day, telling our various stories, we all wondered how our homes fared during the storm. Finally, on the 7th of October, my husband and I were allowed back into Groves to assess the damage to our house. As we drove down the road to our house, tears swelled in my eyes as I saw the devastation around me. Lucky for me as we turned the corner to our house, we found only some roof damage, eaves to the back of our house were damaged and the trees that had fallen had missed our house. My friend and her family did not fare so well. They live in Sabine Pass and that whole town suffered extensive damage.

I am staying in Houston and having to commute to class each Tuesday and Thursday. Our office in Nederland was totally destroyed by a collapsed roof and water damage. As I look back on our journey out of town due to the Hurricane Rita, I am blessed that my family and my home are still together, and I am fortunate to have a company that took care of us in this crisis.

Hurricane Rita Essay-Honorable Mention

Opening the Door to Devastation

Kendriah Boudreaux

Hurricane Rita was not as horrible as I expected it to be. Rita ended up being an awesome experience. The hurricane made me realize just how blessed I am. Mother Nature is so unpredictable. The meteorologist had me planning to go in one direction, but in all actuality, I should have been planning another. I walked outside where I could see the interstate, and that is when I decided, I was going to weather the storm. I remember the storm like my alphabets. The day of the mandatory evacuation, when I decided to stay, the evening of the storm, when the butterflies started to kick in, the night of the storm, when I heard all of the scary sounds, and the morning after, the devastation. I thank God daily for keeping me and my children through Hurricane Rita.

The day of the mandatory evacuation, I decided to weather the storm. I refused to be stuck in traffic like sardines in a can. I refused to be on the interstate with my children and run out of gas or even have to fight for gas. I packed enough clothes for an extended vacation for my children and me. I went through the pantry like a scavenger mustering up anything nonperishable. I mustered up things like vienna sausages, corn, beans, chili, canned fruit, cookies, peanut butter and much more. My children went through their toy box gathering their most extravagant possessions. My daughter gathered her Dora dolls and her play jewelry. My son gathered his Play Station 2 and his Spiderman figurines. I loaded up my children and went up the street and around the corner to my aunt's house. The rest of the day I barbecued as if it was Juneteenth and fried so much chicken, I could have put Churches out of business. I filled up five-gallon buckets of clean water, for my ducks' baths when there would be no water. I ended up going to the store to stock up on extra supplies like water, medicine, flashlights, batteries, and a generator. I had to go by the bank

for some extra change. The time was winding down and the clouds started to roll in. I pondered the decision that I had made, but there was no turning back.

The evening of the storm, I started to get butterflies. My stomach felt like it was in knots. I paced back and forth up the street, trying to imagine the night ahead. I wondered if it would be like the movie, Twister, but only a hurricane instead. The meteorologist stayed tracking the storm, trying to get residents out of harm's way. The sky was dark like soot from an old tail pipe. The wind started to blow my hair like a fan on a hot summer day. The evening was like the movie, Halloween with Jason. It grew closer and closer to night. The time was near to get ready to weather the storm. I was thinking to myself, "Am I a fool, or what, for staying here."

The night of the storm, I gathered some munchies for my children and put them in a backpack, in case the water rose and we would have to camp out on the roof. I moved the mattress in the hallway along the wall, in case the roof fell in the mattress would be our shield of protection. The children and I huddled up, with the radio, the flashlight, and my cell phone, for communication purposes and updates of the storm. The children fell to sleep just in time. The wind started to blow, sounding like a freight train. The tree limbs breaking sounded like bones popping in an echo. The rain had the sound of hail. The sounds of that night, I will never forget, showing how awesome God is.

The following morning, I opened the door to devastation. The sun was shining and the wind had calmed back down to a whistle. The water in the street looked as if it was calm polluted beach. The water subsided in about an hour. I decided to take a ride. The trees were uprooted and laid in a perfect maze. The shingles from roofs were in the street like pavement. The streetlights were pointing in every direction, and there were several roofs off houses that were destroyed along with fences. The Wendy's, on Eleventh Street, looked like a frame. The Hollywood Theater had chairs in the parking lot-free movies, or what? The insurance building I could walk right in to from either direction. The club Mojo's hollering, "Rita over

here.” The businesses of Beaumont were in such horrible condition. There were several cars stranded because they had run out of gas or just could not make it any further. The cars that could not go any further would be able to be replaced by the damaged cars on the car lot, for little, or nothing. I made it through the storm, but now I was being held captive in the city. The good had to suffer for the bad. The city was on a seven o’clock curfew, because of the looting. I felt like I was in prison. I can honestly say that my children and I know what poverty feels like. I know how it feels to get ready to pour milk in cereal and it looks like oatmeal. The times when I wanted a hamburger or just to run to the store I could not. The U.S Marshals were at every exit, for questioning and checking vehicles. The State Troopers were ordered not to let anyone into the city. The city of Beaumont was destroyed. I would have never imagined living in a garbage dump. The city needed a lot of work in order to get things back to normal. I do not know how or when, but one day Beaumont would be up and running again.

The hurricane made me believe in the scripture, “if you have faith as much as a mustard seed” and that I did. The hurricane went from a category five to a two. Hurricane Rita changed the way I look at things all together. The storm was a time for me to bond with my children and show them no matter what happens, I will do what I can to be there for them and to protect them. I am blessed to be alive. I will always remember this experience. I ask myself if they called another mandatory evacuation would I stay. I do not think so because God gave me five senses. The next time, I will not be selfish to my children, and I would leave before the traffic gets like a school of fish. My children learned how to do without and that sometime we have to make sacrifices. I learned not to waste food. I learned a valuable lesson, and that is to always listen to the meteorologists when calling a mandatory evacuation. The storm was an awesome experience for me. I was one of the few that stayed to witness this horrible event. The next time I will be able to tell the story about the traffic on the highway because I am getting out of here. The seasons for hurricanes is still

here, and trust me, I have a bag packed ready to go, for me and my children. I am blessed to be alive and well to tell my traumatic experiences of the hurricane.



Pilot Boat

Dr. Charles Gongre-Staff

Hurricane Rita Essay-Honorable Mention

Rita Scars
Jason Campbell

The sun set on the Gulf Coast for the second time since Hurricane Rita and her calamity passed, and I found myself spending the day where she had once been. I returned home with my father to assess damages and do any makeshift repairs necessary. When I had agreed to make this journey with my dad, I knew it would not be a pleasant vacation, but instead a day filled with hard work and many inconveniences. That day and night I spent at home has left me with many memories of physical struggle and perhaps more importantly, a greater appreciation for everything God gives me and better understanding of who I am.

Drained both physically and mentally, I sat alone on my front porch watching the sun melt away behind half naked trees and broken homes. Never before had I seen the sun set so slowly and naturally in Nederland, Texas. Out in the woods for a camping trip this sight would be ordinary and expected. However, surrounded by thousands of deserted homes and barren roads, the sight sent an eerie feeling reaching every extremity of my body, as if I had sat in a church for mass with no congregation. Tranquilly, I watched the vibrant yellows and pinks fade to a hazy purple, and it then dawned upon me how much natural beauty and peacefulness is sacrificed every day to allow my normal life to carry on. However, at the same time, I wanted nothing more than to return to that lifestyle where the sunset was drowned out by city lights. The longer I sat staring at the sky, the more isolated from society I felt, the more real my situation of solitude became, and the farther my front porch seemed from home. Finally, I shook my head to end this trance of deep thought and made my way inside to get ready to sleep.

As I began to get ready for bed, I realized how often I take things in my everyday life for granted. I stepped inside the house, instinctively reached

around the door frame, brushed my hand briskly up along the wall, and grazed the light switch all in one swift motion. Nothing happened; it was as if the switch mocked me in defiance due to my lack of appreciation of all the times it worked so reliably and promptly, lighting our home and giving it a sense of security. Before the door had time to close behind me, it was evident what a silly thing I had done. Obviously there would be no electricity or any utility for that matter since the hurricane had recently passed through. I then cautiously made my way through the house to the bathroom to do a little washing before bed. I was rationed to one gallon of water for whatever hygienic cleaning needed that night. After contemplating I decided it best to brush my teeth and wash my face. There I stood in the bathroom with the bathtub to my left, in front a sink, and in my hands a gallon of water being poured ever so carefully and efficiently to cleanse as much as possible. How odd it was to stand in that room which normally carries an infinite amount of water to use and waste at my disposal, and this time I did not have enough water to fully clean myself. Not even the layer of dirt and sawdust that had accumulated above my socks around the ankles was given any attention. My preparations for bed were completed as I laid a blanket down on the floor to sleep because I did not want to contaminate my bed with dirtiness.

Darkness surrounded me on all sides as I lay uncomfortably on the floor trying to fall asleep. The heat and humidity were almost unbearable, causing me to sweat and feel as if I were in a steam room shedding pounds by the minute. The color of the room was both the same with my eyes open as it was closed, so I laid there lost on the floor in my own home. In order not to think about how intolerable this night had become, I began to reminisce of the past and pulled memories from the deepest corners of my mind. I evaluated my life and all the things I wish could be taken back and those I would not trade for the world. Also, I thought of the future trying to foresee what challenges lay before me and how I would one day reach my goals and aspirations in life. As all these thoughts raced through my mind, I slipped in and out of consciousness all night and received the worst rest

I have ever encountered.

Soaked in sweat, I awoke the next morning to find that a cool breeze blew outside and a sunrise brought hope and thankfulness. When I left my house that day, normalcy seemed so very far away, but when it did come, I was all the more grateful for everything it had to offer. Hurricane Rita has scarred my memory as she did with everyone affected by her, and I am a stronger, better person for it.

Hurricane Rita Essay-Honorable Mention

After the Storm

Kendra Greene

My belief that the storm was over became a foreign thought once I entered the city of Port Arthur. In my wildest dreams, including the nightmares I had while we were evacuated, I never imagined the devastation which had overcome the city that is my home. A person could never actually conceive that this would happen. However, the sight in front of me made this a frightening reality. The badly mangled trees, destroyed buildings, and strange lack of movement in the city made me fear that the worst of Hurricane Rita was yet to come.

If the street signs were not still standing I would not have recognized my own neighborhood. The neighborhood was once full of tall, lush trees, which had been standing at their posts for at least one hundred years. The first thing I noticed coming into the neighborhood was the absence of these wonders of nature. Instead of standing tall and shading our homes, they now created a strange natural skylight in some roofs. This sight was not a welcome one. From a distance I could tell that our home had not attained the amount of damage as some others. As we ventured further into the neighborhood, I then noticed a strange new ground covering of the streets. Once filled with children playing in the afternoon sun, our street now looked like an Iraqi war zone, covered in twisted metal, rusted nails, downed trees and power lines, and other unrecognizable pieces of debris. This then caused us to have to park down the street and take the treacherous journey by foot to our humble abode.

A strange smell then filled the air as I notice some neighbors carrying their refrigerators out of their homes. I could not quite put my finger on the scent, but it was quite nauseating and unsettling. It seemed to be a perfume of spoiled milk and dead animals. The quiet breeze every few seconds made it somewhat bearable, but the worst was yet to come. I kicked tree limbs

out of the way and batted mosquitoes as I made my way up to my front porch. The message Rita had left in my own refrigerator almost knocked me to my knees as I opened the door to see what damage had been left behind. I knew that it would be a very long day. I fought through the urge to vomit and entered the house. It took only seconds before I began to perspire in the ninety degree weather, worsened by the lack of air conditioning. The entire house seemed to be sweating as I made my way down the hall to my room to assess the damages. Luckily, I had none besides the rancid perfume of spoiled food on some of my clothing. Other than that, the entire house looked exactly as it did on September 21, when we locked the door and made our trek to safety. This was a relief, but the feeling was soon snatched away as I realized the true task at hand, cleaning out the refrigerator.

As I inched my way closer to the kitchen, I had a feeling that I would not be able to make it. I quickly went back to my room to attain something that would hamper the scent. Then, armed with a full can of Lysol and a t-shirt covering my face, I entered the danger zone. However, I was not a visitor for long. The unholy sight of meat oozing out of the freezer door made my stomach cry out for help, but I tried to keep my composure and help my mother clean away the smell of death. Once I saw the opened refrigerator, filled with mold and other bodies of matter of which I could never describe, I quickly turned around and made my way outside. The sinking feeling in my chest only made the rising contents of my stomach more apparent. I was not going to make it.

I stood outside only to find that this was a brand new battle ground, almost as bad as the one inside. I was beginning to get used to the sight of downed trees and debris, but the enormous plague of mosquitoes which had made Port Arthur home while we were away was something that I could not get used to. It was going to be me or the beasts, and I had to win. I grabbed my bottle of Off and began to feverishly apply it, for I had now been given the task of walking through the calf-high jungle of grass, created by three weeks without cutting, to take photos of the outside of our home. This was somewhat of a simple task, or so I thought. As I made my way around the

the house I began to notice that the grass towards the back of the house would have a snake afraid to slither through it, afraid of what it might find. I had already “punked” my way out of one task, and I could not do it again. So I made my way through and quickly took several photos. As soon as I clicked the last one, I sprinted back to the front of the house, and back to the safety of my concrete oasis. By this time, my family was through cleaning the refrigerator, and was ready to leave the sweltering sweat box we call home. After gathering a few more belongings, I was also ready to go. I wanted to come home, but this had not been what I wanted to come home to. We decided that we would return when we were assured that the power was back on and that the mosquitoes were taken care of. A nice addition would have been of the smell, which was not bearable, would have dissipated, but we knew that would take time.

As we once again made the treacherous journey back through the debris and to the car, I began to realize something. After all that I had seen on television about the extensive amount of damage and the unbearable living conditions, I was afraid to come back home. I did not know what I would find or if I would even have anything left. Now I could see the important things. I realized that God had spared us all with our lives, and that one day soon Port Arthur would once again be a place that we could all call home. After viewing the true devastation in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, I realized that we were all blessed, no matter how much damage we had to our homes and businesses. We were fortunate enough to be able to say that we still had our community, family, and friends to come home to. Buildings and homes could be rebuilt, trees could be planted to flourish once again, power lines could be fixed, but lives could not be replaced. Rita had eminently left her mark on my life and the lives of everyone in Southeast Texas, but she made us all stronger. The fear and apprehension with which I had entered the city holding tightly, were now gone. The storm was definitely over.



LSC-PA Waterfront
Dr. Charles Gongre-Staff

Hurricane
Rita
Poetry



Silsbee Tree Farm
Post Hurricane Rita
Janet G. Polk-Staff

Hurricane Rita Poetry-First Place

End of Another Day April Arredondo

I look around and see
Dead trees,
Grass overgrown,
Homes with rust and holes in the roofs,
Caving in on one side.

Mini-marts not safe to stop at,
Car washes full but no one scrubbing or spraying,
Instead slanging to our youth.

Windows cracked in forgotten buildings
of a formerly flourishing downtown.
Red and blue jagged graffiti decorating
tops of bridges, washaterias, and discount liquor stores.

A homeless man trudging past a busy street
pushing his belongings
in an old K-Mart shopping cart.

His beard coarse,
black with white specks
almost reaching his knees,
eyes fixed on all he has
a solemn look smothers his face.

I see him often,
different places.
No place to look but the sky.

Hurricane Rita Poetry-Second Place

“The Wind Blows Harder Through the Night”

Walter Durham

The wind blows harder through the night
with the wind comes the rain
hold tight for the misery and pain
as the wind blows harder through the night.

Like a devil powered by the rain
we prepare for the devastation
for it is beyond our very imaginations
here it comes, the wind, the rain.

For we see the anger
and then see the light
on this the coldest darkest night
and now one can feel its anger.

The wind blows harder through the night
who knew this, this hurricane
would be the source of all this pain
as the wind blows harder through the night.

Hurricane Rita Poetry-Second Place

If I Were a Hummingbird

Anastacia Gordon

To and fro they go, the hummingbirds,
from the trees to the feeder hanging
off the porch, swaying in the lazy breeze
that cares not for the recent devastation;
and feeding happily, neither do they.

These hummingbirds are many colors:
blue, green, red and white, the busy
wings I can barely see. They chirp at each
other and as they buzz by they chirp at me.
It's hot and sticky, but merrily they play.

The hurricane has passed and now it is time
to do what it is that hummingbirds do. They
do not take advantage of the kindness of
other hummingbirds, and do not take aid
that they do not need; but flutter to and fro.

They drink and chirp and zip here that there,
as if the disaster had never occurred. It was
just another storm, you see, that came and went.
They cannot understand the suffering of you
and me, and I feel just a tiny bit of envy.

I wish I were a hummingbird; then I too would not care, and I would not have to listen to the claims of racial hatred and the other silly things that other people say. I would simply drink and zip here and there.

And if I were a hummingbird, I would not have to see people using money that they do not need. Nor would I have to watch my country cater to such idiocy. As a hummingbird I would not care, but flutter to and fro.

Hurricane Rita Poetry-Honorable Men- tion

The Queen of the Season Tshitenge Mutamba

She was there
when nobody was there
she was making terrifying noises,
but nobody could hear her.

Every man wanted to give her a kiss,
but nobody knows if she would strike with a fist.
She came dressed as an African Queen
ready to give all her gold and diamond.
But we could think she was mean to give her gold.
Is what we didn't know.

When she came, she hung her robe on a Baobab tree
in an empty city.
But it fell from all her wealth.
The man who found it,
became the King from fortune within it.

Under the mud in the empty city,
a letter was found and on the note she said:
"She will return to find a friend that had left home."
If men will know the time of your next visit,
you and your face will not be welcomed
but only your wealth.

Hurricane Rita Poetry-Honorable Mention

On a Warm Dark Night Gwendolyn McFate

On a warm dark night
before the clock struck eight
with family in tow
we did not want to go.

Many thoughts were on our minds
as we left those behind
were we going to be left out in the cold
and would our homes be full of mold?

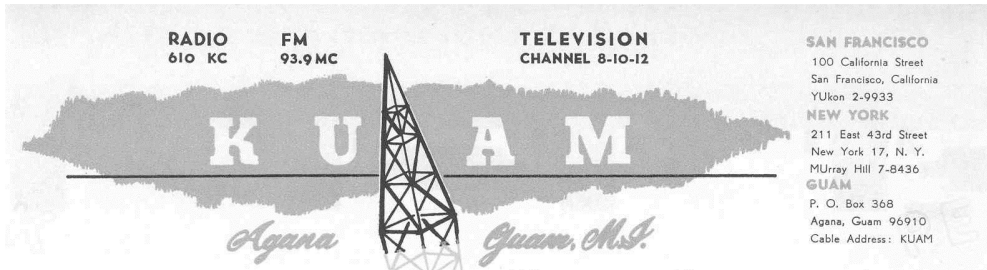
Was this going to be another Katrina
or would there be any FEMA?
The thought of the upcoming disaster
made us just go faster.

Praying that we would not run out of gas
or that we would not run out of cash.
At least we were all together
dreading the impending weather.

Faculty
and
Staff



Big Tree Down...
Delores Constantine-Staff



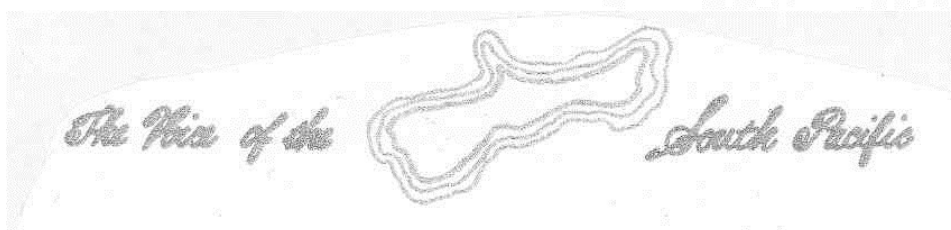
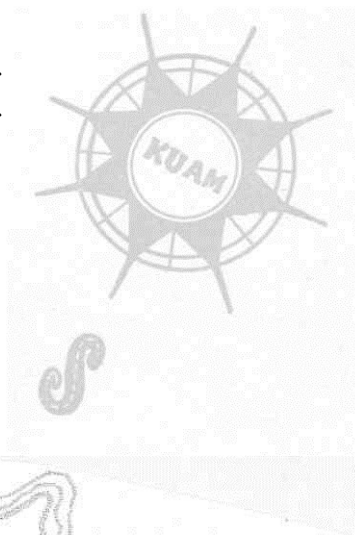
SEA STORIES

Robert Peeler-Faculty

Sailors usually tell sea stories during deployment, especially if they had a good time at their previous liberty port. They are always looking for ways to entertain themselves in port and when underway, and I was no exception.

During my active duty time in the US Navy, I was stationed aboard a destroyer escort home ported on the Mariana Island of Guam. We were there about three months each year during November, December, and January, and were underway the other nine months off the Vietnam coast with a week off at a liberty port each month. The liberty ports included the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Japan.

When we arrived on Guam, we were listening to KUAM radio in Agana, Guam, a territory of the United States and the home of Anderson Air Force Base and home port of many Navy ships of the Seventh Fleet. I noticed one day that the DJ was an Airman from Anderson Air Force Base working nights and weekends, so I called to inquire about some part time work. When I called, the manager, Bill Neilson, and told him about my FCC license and years of experience as DJ



and engineer for several radio stations in Texas, he offered me a weekend shift.

It was like returning to civilian life for a few hours each week. I even worked a week while someone took a vacation. Our ET (Electronics Technician) Chief told me I could just depart at noon every day for the afternoon shift at the radio station. Since I already had almost 60 days of unused paid leave accumulated, I took leave for a week anyway and stayed with Hal Graves, a statesider from New York who taught school and worked as a TV newsman at KUAM TV. The TV and radio station were in the same building, and we all knew each other. KUAM Radio and TV were the only commercial broadcast stations in the western Pacific and had a captive audience that included the Seventh Fleet, Anderson Air Force Base, the Coast Guard, and all civilians.

We played the latest rock and roll music by The Beach Boys, Los Bravos, Question Mark and the Mysterians, Roy Head, Frank Sinatra, and many others. There was a popular song by Jimmy Dean, "PT 109," that I liked to play and sometimes introduced it as "DE 329", my ship number, and sometimes I tossed in my ship's name also. A little publicity never hurt anyone, especially our Captain. PT 109 was the boat that JFK served on when he was in the navy.

This was one sea story that I did not have to relate to anyone on my ship since all of them listened to the station. They thought it was great and gave me requests to play on the radio. My social life improved considerably about that time because we received many calls for requests and got to know many of the callers.

The night before my ship departed the island, the newsman, Hal Graves and I did a Huntley-Brinkley type newscast on TV where each one read every other story and we ended it with, "goodnight Chet", "goodnight David." It happened that the station manager was away on vacation and would probably never know we changed the format. He had already written a nice letter for me confirming my good job as a "combo-man," which is short for combination broadcast engineer and disc-jockey. I had already signed off the radio station that night after telling my listeners that we would, "sail with the tide" in the morning.

This probably does not sound like a very exciting sea story, but a sailor's life of endless days and nights underway can become monotonous even in a war zone. I know that I certainly enjoyed being a civilian again for a while with all the advantages of working in broadcast radio.



Hot Licks
Don Ross-Faculty

Come Home

Damon James Gaspard-Staff

I need you in my arms to hold you,
the only comfort I get at night...
Maybe I could be (more) understanding
and maybe I don't choose my words right...
So many things can go unspoken,
but no one ever has the time...

I've waited so very long,
to bring you back where you belong,
...come home

Til' now I've always been fine on my own,
I act like I don't care but Girl I miss you...
And I'm so tired of being alone...
I need you (girl) to come home...

I called your number and started wondering
if you were home would you even care...?
Maybe you're feeling just as lonely,
or maybe you have someone new there...
I want to tell you how I love you,
I want to be with you no matter where...

And this feeling is so very strong,
to make up for everything gone wrong,
...come home

Somehow, I've made it this far on my own...
I'm tired of pretending I don't miss you...
Til' now I've never been alone...
I need you (girl) to come home...

After the Storm

Dr. Albert Thigpen-Faculty

The wind whips and howls as if fighting for its life.
Buildings sway and rock to a rhythm not of this world.
The lightning flashes, causing the thunder to give voice to the storm.
The darkness is total, complete, absolute.

Trees cry as they yield to the storm's fury.
Abruptly, they are ripped from the soil which gave them life,
and tossed about like matchsticks, landing here and there.
Suddenly, the buildings which gave shelter, need shelter themselves.
Windows gone, roofs open to reveal the tormented sky.
The waves once calm lash the shore as if disciplining a errant child.
All that is manmade falls to the will of nature.

It is a new day.
The air is still.
The sun brightly lights the world.
A world so changed in just one night.
The effects of man's civilization lie strewn about the landscape.
Nature and mankind collided... nature appears victorious.

Hope rises from the dust,
Springing forth amidst the debris.
We look boldly into the brightness of tomorrow,
Certain we can, we will continue on...
After the storm.

Memories of Rita Michelle Judice-Faculty

Every season diversions, sometimes even stalls,
Filled the cars, food and water, hastened to board,
Destruction rampant, leveled windows and walls,
Lives disrupted, destroyed, distinguished, not bored.

A high price paid for living near the water,
The dolphin saved in the pool, returned, again swims.
FEMA, the great equalizer, pray to the Father,
Axes and chainsaws dismember fallen limbs.

Revised syllabi and assignments, graduation is late.
Coping, cleanup, condemnation, forge on,
Perspective gained, priorities alter after the tears,
Generators humming, curfew dusk until dawn.
Those anxious for help must wait
Katrina claims seniority, Rita falls on deaf ears.



I'm Ready!
Don Ross-Faculty

It Was Raining

Damon James Gaspard-Staff

It was raining when you left that Sunday morning,
I found your letter telling me good-bye...
I don't know what all went wrong, I need
to bring you back to me, I have try... O' I have to try...

I take a drive in a city filled with silence,
the only thing I hear is your name...
I try to put you out of my mind, I carry a smile
but it's not enough to hide the undying pain...

So I hear you say "baby, baby, come to me...
Remember how it used to be...
Remember how you felt for me...
Baby come back to me..."

I've tried to find someone to replace you,
I don't know why or what I'm searching for...
Now I hear you're looking for me crying for the
way we used to be.; the way it was before...

I'm just trying to put the pieces back together,
trying to find a new way to live...
You're telling me all I want to hear, I want you
back but there are things you can't, you can't forgive...

but I hear you say "baby, baby come to me...
Remember how it used to be...
Remember how you promised me...
You would always be there for me..."

"It was raining when you left that Sunday morning,
I remember your letter saying good-bye..."



The Thinker
Don Ross-Faculty

Make You Feel

Damon James Gaspard-Staff

Tonight makes a year...
when love began right here...

Let us go slow and make it last...
the morning comes so fast...

I keep calling out for you...
but you don't, you don't choose to listen;
I am all cried out, I'm through...
To my heart I choose to, choose to listen;

I loved you, what we had was real...
then it all changed...
Am I the blame...?
Tell me what I can do to make you feel...

I held you, I held love...
and everything I think of...

Every start has its end...
but our paths will cross again...

I keep reaching out for you...
but you don't, you don't choose to see me;
I have tried but now I am through...
I am no one, no one if you don't see me...

I loved you, what we shared was real...
Now that we are apart...
Let go of my heart...
I don't know anymore how to make you feel...

Tonight makes a year...
when love began right here...



True Love
Don Ross-Faculty

Tonight

Damon James Gaspard-Staff

It's not your birthday,
It's not Christmas time,
It's not the way I'm feeling,
when you look in my eyes...

What it is, is the time I feel is right...
to say you sure look good tonight...

When you walk in the room,
I don't know what to say,
as soon as I see you, you
take my breath away...

So smile for the camera,
It's picture time,
a moment frozen,
to show that you're mine...

Everyone sees you, they see you by my side...
thinking you sure look good tonight...

I wish I could tell you,
what's on my mind,
so I will do it my way,
with words and rhyme...

I love you dearly but sometimes it won't come out right...
So before you lie down and before you turn out the light...
I want to say you look good tonight...
You sure look good to me tonight...



Before and After Hurricane Rita
Delores Constantine-Staff



Doodles

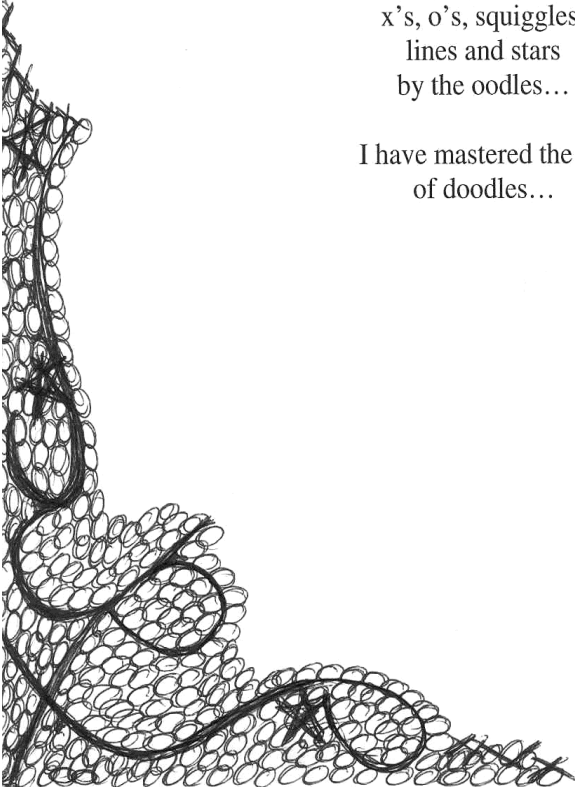
Janet G. Polk-Staff

I sit and think
I will write a poem...

Cheek in hand
I wander to the land
of ho-hum...

A page full of
x's, o's, squiggles,
lines and stars
by the oodles...

I have mastered the art
of doodles...



Thirteen Ways of Looking at Writing

In the manner of
“Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” by Wallace Stevens
—the Creative Writing Class of Spring 2006
Submitted by Mysti Rudd-Faculty

I

An expression of word spoken aloud
on paper. Hidden thoughts brought
to life, once voiceless they now have
a voice. I am that voice.

II

Your fears, your thoughts, your
dreams:
what you want to become, what you
dare not do;
who you are...who you will never be.

III

A firefly trapped in your throat—
all you have to do to let it out
Is open your mouth.

IV

A snapshot; hoping to be seen;
a window,
sharing a choice vista of soul.

V

Writing is therapy;
Writing gives you relief; you write
your problems down and they
disappear. Write it—it will help.

VI

To understand, to learn; to give/to take
to hurt, reveal, and heal.

VII

Writing is like sex, with a friend:
Actions planned and choreographed
for an intense climax; or like southern

cooked gumbo: there's no one recipe
for a great meal.

VIII

Warping the world, dissecting my
soul, wringing the lifeblood out of my
tortured heart into a puddle on the
page.

IX

Words flying past the green light
as the singers of hip-hop harmonize
their joy at the birth of another star.

X

Spit in the sand smeared by blistered,
whelped, and twisted fingers,
regardless of your God,
is still writing.

XI

Over twenty different words; which
To choose to make sense?
The words whirled in the winds.
It was a big sound.

XII

Drop by drip, the word and
the sound, writing makes the waterfall
eroding the bed of our
Unconsciousness.

XIII

I have yet to feel the places I've been
when rambling on
the road of writing...



Hurricane Rita-August 24, 2005
Beaumont, Texas



September 2005-Nederland, Texas
Janet G. Polk-Staff

Broken Dreams

Sally Byrd-Faculty

A daughter! Someone to share with-What joy!
Not that you wouldn't share with a boy,
But a mother's heart knows who will stay and who will go.

Daughter, wait—listen—stay and hear
He's wrong for you, wrong to you, dear,
A mother's heart knows-he's not the one—he will go.

Daughter. A daughter. What woeful joy.
You've given up so much for this prodigal boy
Your freedom, your future, your wonder of youth.

Daughter, your daughter, what a gift!
Someone for us to love and share with
May your mother's heart never grieve when she goes.



The pool that *was*...the trees that *were*...



life for the Polk's after Hurricane Rita-Nederland, Texas
Janet Polk-Staff

Would You Know Me?

Sally Byrd-Faculty

Into thy hands I commend my soul
Fragmented pieces hinting at the whole.
Faces of people whose lives touched mine
Some have been rotters, others kind.

Stories that will touch both sides of life
Some tell tales of debilitating strife.
Other tales I hope will bring a grin
As you meet my crazy relatives and friends.

Perhaps through walls of knowledge will appear
A Royal Throne, an office mate, a peer.
Perhaps a dream gone wrong will be reborn
To live anew one crisp spring morn.

Perhaps the dreamer's poignant thoughts let free
Will light within the tender heart of thee.

Composition Student

Written in the manner of "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid

Mysti Rudd-Faculty

This is how you write a five paragraph essay; this is how you write a theme for me; know your purpose, consider your audience; this is how you spell *cannot*—not the two words you insist on breaking it into; this is how you spell *all right*, not the way you push the *all* into the *right* like you were stuffing your books into your backpack before the bell even rings; this is how you label your paper; this is how you insert headers and footers; this is how you revise your paper; this is how you use quotations marks; this is to remind you to never, never, never insert a comma outside of the end quotes; date your writing; count the number of words; if you haven't already done so, this is where you insert a thesis statement.

This is how you begin a new paragraph; avoid summarizing or giving the plot away; climb the ladder of abstraction in your writing, rising above description and commentary on your way to discussion and analysis; this is how to perch atop the ladder of risky writing. This is how to fall back into the safety net of someone else's ideas; this is how to cite a source (2186); this is how to use a dash—but only if you cannot justify using parenthesis (because what you have to say is not as extraneous as the information I give you here).

This is how to terrify your teacher: write with guts and pain and courage, *but I thought you told me to follow Hemingway—"to write hard and clear about what hurts"*? This is how you tear your scabs open and drain the pus onto the paper; this is how you stick a straw into your heart and sip out the blood to spit at those you hate and love. This is how you tell the teacher what she wants to hear; this is how to give her the finger without lifting your writing hand off the page; this is how you "salt and pepper with details" just to get an "A"; this is where she tells you to zoom, to show vs. tell, even though you don't have a clue what she's talking about; *but I thought I was free to "write the worst junk in America"*? And you are—

just don't expect it to earn you an "A." This is how you plagiarize (don't forget to remove the web address); this is how you make excuses; this is how you cover up procrastination; this is how you pray for an "A" though your conscience whispers that you've earned a "C"; this is how you apply duct tape to the voice of your conscience; this is how you lie to yourself . . . and to your parents . . . and to the teacher . . . and to the institution; this is how you hire someone to row you across the river of education; this is how you swim across a river without getting wet; this is how to come to class while remaining asleep, disengaged, stomach gurgling, nearly dead, depressed—or distracted by A.D.D, A.D.H.D., O.C.D., O.D.D., or S.A.D. This is how learning makes you sneeze. This is how to send off for a mail-order degree.

This is how you end your paper without writing "in conclusion." This is how to resist any instructions given. This is how to uncover your creativity—to dig under the "X" as indicated on the home-made map of your muse; this is how to invite your imagination back into the classroom; this is how to be human; this is how to think, to breathe, to feel; this is how to laugh while disagreeing; this is how to shape your body into "the candle" yoga pose, followed by "the cobra"; this is how to bench-press compassion while you are in the classroom; this is how to speak up even though every cell of your body huddles for cover; this is how to not give up on yourself or another; this is how to remember each other's names; this is how to listen to each other's stories; this is how to remember your dreams: drink a cup of chamomile tea before you retire, then place a notebook and retractable pencil under your pillow; set your alarm for 2:43 a.m. and record any images while half asleep. This is how to dare to dream; this is how to share those dreams come, write with me.



Jack has found his *groove*...

Janet G. Polk-Staff

**From Blizzards to Hurricanes:
What a Native Minnesotan Teacher Learns
from her
Southeast Texan Students**

Mysti Rudd-Faculty

Ah, the procreative power of the written word. As soon as my American Lit. class began to read Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* last fall, the hurricane that ultimately killed Janie's lover seemingly swirled off the page, heading towards the piney woods of southeast Texas. "What a coincidence!" a group of students pointed out to me, as the bell rang that Wednesday, marking the suspension of classes until the next Monday. (Or so we thought . . .)

As a native Minnesotan, I had not had much experience with hurricanes. I knew about blizzards and ice storms and had watched more than one tornado form, but most of these conditions were predicted by my farmer father who watched the sky as if our lives and livelihood depended on it (which they did, of course). He could distinguish between cumulonimbus and stratocumulus and knew before the weatherman what storm would be blowing in and from what direction. "Just lick your finger and hold it above your head," he once told me, "that way you can figure out the direction of the wind." But I was five and could never quite tell which side of my finger dried first. "That's okay," he reassured; "when in doubt, blame it on South Dakota," and with that he tilted his head to the right. I followed his lead and spent much of my childhood watching the western sky until night arrived, trying to capture the unique combination of clouds and color at the exact moment of sunset with our Kodak Instamatic. When the pictures came back from Oftedahl drug, my mom looked at me as if I were crazy, as she asked her recurring question: "Why aren't there any people in these pictures?" And I never knew how to answer her.

Because of the accuracies of my father's weather predictions, my parents, six siblings, and I were seldom caught in the fields when storms

hit; instead, we watched the sky from the safety of our rotting wooden farm house porch until my father ordered us to seek protection in our vintage Wizard-of-Oz storm cellar, where we could not see the clouds, but, like Dorothy, we certainly heard the wind. “You’ve got to have respect for nature,” my father had told me a thousand times, along with terrifying stories of farmers who got lost returning from the barn to the farmhouse in a white out—a blizzard that renders you unable to see anything, including your own footprints—and, come to think of it, he always lingered on the description of the gory corpses—the farmers who were found icy crisp the next day, frozen with their arms reaching for some imagined home. I now wonder if these stories were true—or if he borrowed them from Jack London, but at the time, they served their purpose: I learned that when it came to gambling with nature, I should never even enter the room.

All grown up and living in Texas, you’d think I would have remembered my father’s training. But I had yet to study first hand the anatomy of a hurricane. During the five years I’d lived along the Gulf Coast, we’d had many threats, but no landings, so I took my cue from the locals: when the forecasters stopped whispering and began shouting “hurricane,” seasoned southeast Texans stocked up on batteries and drinking water, “hurricane” lanterns and propane or charcoal. Some boarded up their windows with plywood and headed to a lake house or a hunting camp, but most stayed put and held a fiesta in the backyard, consuming more alcohol than they normally would because they didn’t have to go to work the next day . . . or the next day . . . or the next. To facilitate safe evacuation of a city, a county, a section of a state, the order must be given several days ahead of time, when the skies are still blue, when the sun seems like it will never cease to smile favorably upon you. Though I examined the sky on Wednesday afternoon, September 21, I could not spy an impending disaster; I could not sense the clash about to occur between air currents. Unlike Hurston’s heroine Janie, I wasn’t able to witness the natural clue of snakes migrating away from the coast. But when the locals took notice of the order of city officials to evacuate, hyperaware

of what happened to the citizens of New Orleans who didn't heed warnings and ended up drowning from Hurricane Katrina just weeks earlier, I sat up straight, packed up the car, and followed suit. We were supposed to leave the area in intervals, residents of Beaumont scheduled to depart beginning Thursday at 10 a.m. We followed the orders blindly, resulting in an average speed of one mile per hour (no kidding!) in a traffic jam worse than the worst one I had ever imagined, as evacuees from Houston were also directed to take I-10 through Beaumont. After six miserable hours (three of which I had a splitting headache and was convinced I was developing toxic shock syndrome), my two sons, and I decided to head back home. We needed a restroom, a gas station with gas (was this too much to ask?), a basket of food, and maybe even a sedative or two.

To decide to wait out a hurricane is a wager that one can make only with one's own life. Since my two sons were under my care, I knew I would have to try again to make our escape, for I had no right to risk their lives. No sooner had I walked into the house than the phone rang, followed by two more calls in the next ten minutes. My sons' father, my sister, and my brother separately but cohesively concurred: "You must get those kids out of there!" My response was typical of me when I am under extreme pressure: I made chocolate chip cookies. Only this time, I kept cooking. I made a pot of posole and a double recipe of shrimp Creole, minus the simmering. I transferred everything to Tupperware™, then packed soup and beans and cheese and crackers and water and toilet paper in an old picnic basket. The news scroll at the bottom of the television screen read: "Hurricane Rita expected to land between Beaumont and Port Arthur." "Let's go!" I said, and we made our second attempt to travel to safety, heading for our friends' house on Lake Sam Rayburn.

Traffic was faster this time (averaging twenty miles per hour), probably because all lanes had opened up, as long as someone was brave enough to start driving north in the southbound lanes. I followed the brave ones, enjoying the thrill of driving the "wrong way."

Though we traveled at night, the road was lit up by the taillights of the cars in front and the stars above. There was a beauty to this exodus that had been invisible to me during the day. Yet all I had to do was look at the cars marooned on the side of the road with feet sticking out of the windows to feel a sense of guilt for passing them by: were they out of gas? out of food? overheated or exhausted? Was it immoral not to stop and help? Was it only natural to select to protect one's own life and kin—an expression of one's survival instinct? I had recently seen the remake of "War of the Worlds," where Tom Cruise et al fled from the path of aliens any way that they could: by stealing a car, by borrowing a boat, by hiding in the dark. I couldn't help but notice that terror is terror, desperation is desperation, no matter if the offending agent is an alien or a force of nature or an enemy combatant.

We ended up making it to our destination that night. So what if the hurricane ended up following us to Jasper; so what if the house two doors down was severed by a falling pine and a neighbor's SUV on the other side of the street was smashed by yet another falling tree. So what if my older son snuck out of the lake house in the middle of the storm, begging the wind to blow him over while my younger son got into the box of wine our host had left in the garage refrigerator. So what if I developed a double ear-infection so I thought I couldn't hear the wind, when actually the silent eye of the hurricane was passing over me. So what if the electricity went out for two weeks, while Rayburn country experienced record breaking heat. So what if a swim in the lake only kept the sweat off for fifteen minutes. We survived, didn't we? Wasn't that the point?

We were not invited to return to Beaumont until weeks after the storm hit. "The roads are impassable due to fallen trees and power lines," city officials decreed. "Besides—without electricity there is no gas to be had or food to be bought." I hadn't realized how dependent we all were on electricity; in fact, I had considered myself a sort of pseudo-scout prior to this, someone who enjoys camping, the great outdoors, roughing it—someone who wouldn't mind, every now and then, showering just once a

week. Five days after the hurricane hit, we wormed our way back inside the city limits. Our cats were okay; our trees were not, the largest ones blocking the front and back doors as well as the driveway. Without the dehumidifying process of air conditioning, our house was quickly becoming a swamp, indicated by the lines of black mold along the grout between the white kitchen tiles, connecting the smelly refrigerator to the cupboard under the sink. The smothering way our bodies stuck to our clothes made us realize that this was no longer home. And we were not alone . . .

Less than a month after the hurricane, classes resumed at my campus. Many of the students never returned from the places they evacuated to. Some by choice; some because there was no place to live. The hurricane created a housing shortage in Port Arthur, and electrical service would not be reinstated for many students for weeks to come, for some, even months. Yet, in my introduction to literature class, we continued with our syllabus, plodding on to the next story I had assigned way back before the hurricane: “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien. I have taught this story more times than I have fingers. I often invite my students to share their responses to the assigned stories on a class blog, and as I posted the prompt for this story, I expanded it to include their relevant recent experiences:

Either by reading Tim O’Brien’s “The Things They Carried,” or drawing on your own experience as a hurricane evacuee, what would you take to war . . . or to Louisiana . . . or to the ditch along the side of the highway (wherever you ended up weathering the hurricane)? Or, better yet, what do you wish you would have taken? I, for one, wish I would have taken three more cats and two less kids (just kidding, kind of). And I can’t believe I didn’t bring my guitar. But I did bring my journal, and a box of students’ journals to grade, and books checked out of the library to read for my dissertation. How about you?

For the first time in four years of giving this assignment, I finally got answers that rang true, and it made me wonder, “Does a student’s life have to be in danger, his or her survival needs jeopardized, before he or she can even approximate understanding what it means to be in war?”

I was amazed at the range of my students' responses. One woman literally loaded all of her clothes into her car, and took everything from her bedroom except her furniture. Another student, an avid reader, forgot to bring extra clothes at all, but he did bring three boxes of books. Jimmy brought notebooks of his creative writing; Lee brought souvenirs that loved ones had given her. Sarah brought two things she had never worn: a Ralph Lauren evening dress (marked down from \$250 to \$20) and an outlandish floppy hat that she had given herself for her twenty-first birthday. Tom brought his birth certificate and tax receipts, but the most important thing he threw in his truck was his surfboard as he headed to Pensacola, Florida. Alan packed home videos, photo albums, and his Bible; Tan brought extra gas, four cats, and one dog; Peter had to leave both his rats at home; Jared wished he would have brought his Nintendo, Gamecube, and DVD's and that he would have had time to pick up his check from Wal-mart before leaving; many brought their favorite pillows and blankets, while only Christopher brought a baseball signed by both Jeff Bagwell and Craig Biggio.

But the students shared more than their lists with one another. They shared their frustrations and fears, too. Many complained of overcrowded living conditions both in shelters and from relatives moving in with one another due to damaged housing. After being stuck in a two bedroom trailer with fifteen family members for two weeks, one disgruntled student displayed his dark humor, "I wish I'd have brought a rope to hang myself" . . . "or a ball gag for that bitter hag" (his aunt). Another student, Maria, shares her uneasiness in the shelter:

I had never been in a shelter before . . . nor surrounded by so many people. I wanted to cry at times because I was not used to this. The first night there was horrible and I will never forget that night. I couldn't sleep because people were snoring, it was cold, and people were talking. And I am one of the those people that if I hear any noise I just can't sleep. To make things worse, I didn't have a pillow or a big blanket.

All I brought with me was a small blanket that only covers half of my body . . .

Maria's story reminds me of a photo I had been shown by a soldier who just returned from Iraq. "What's this?" I had asked him, pointing to a camouflaged mass in the corner of his quarters. "Oh—that's my bunk. I covered it with tarp to create some sort of privacy." Privacy, it seems to me, is something we give up both in war and in natural disasters. I wonder how many people fleeing from the hurricane along with me chose to pee in their cars that day rather than go in front of everyone alongside the caravan on the highway. Coming from generations of Norwegian repressiveness, I myself considered choosing death over embarrassment, as we initially turned around because I absolutely refused to attend to matters of feminine hygiene while in the car with my sons in the back seat. I began to understand those whom Jerry Seinfeld describes as being more afraid of public speaking than of dying. We will go to great lengths to avoid embarrassment—as we assume the dead are incapable of it.

As impossible as it is to pack up privacy and take it with you, it is also difficult to recreate the comfort and security that a true home provides for us. Sarah-the-bargain-shopper speaks for many as she describes this anxiety:

As we sat in the hotel room, watching the eye of the hurricane cross Port Arthur, my stomach turned. Wondering if my house was being blown away at that very moment, wondering if I would have a house to go back to at all. It's not that all the things I left behind had special meaning, but the thought of losing all the small things you take for granted—your bed, your food, your shelter, all the little things you need every day—it's a terrible thought to have. All the stuff I brought [with me] was crap. Because if my house would have been destroyed, what good would a silk evening gown and a felt hat do me?

It is impossible to pack for a journey that is unfathomable to you. If you don't know where you are going or how long you will be there, do you take summer clothes or winter ones? Many of my students expressed a sense of shame, feeling foolish or stupid in retrospect for the things they carried with them as they evacuated for the hurricane.

And this brings us back to Lt. Jimmy Cross from O'Brien's story, who spurned his attachments to objects such as Martha's letters and pictures, vowing that he would never think of her again (reminiscent of the "Don't think of the color red" dilemma). But how does one prepare to assume responsibility for the lives of others? Do they teach you this in medical school? Parenting classes? Military training? And what happens when you can't control the situation around you—when something happens to someone for whom you feel responsible? Do you beat yourself up the rest of your life? If not, how do you let yourself off the hook? Do you stop feeling anything, destroying some of your humanity?

I recently finished reading *The Last True Story I'll Ever Tell: A Soldier's Account of the War in Iraq*, which echoes the sentiments of the soldier blogger whose series of stories has been published in *Esquire*. Jaded, disgruntled, bored, manipulated, and dissociated, he sought stimulation to jolt him out of his numbness and then return him like the soft landing of a toy soldier with a plastic parachute, trying to smuggle his way back to "normalness." But I wonder if there is a way back—after being in a war—or living through a hurricane—to the way things were. If so, I wish someone would show it to me. Until then, I continue to take the pulse of my classes, to listen to my students' words. Do you know what single word they used most often to describe last semester? Well, it's as far from normal as a person can be: C-R-A-Z-Y. And once you feel out of sorts, it's hard to find the "road to Wellville"—that state of mind where we just feel like ourselves again.

Sarah sums this up the quite well in her final blog post of that strange, interrupted semester:

Everything has been off since the hurricane. Life has gone on, but it is still surreal to me. Businesses are still closed. Debris still clutters the streets. Stop signs are still replacing stoplights, creating a chaos because [of the] “I’m going first” [mentality]. It all stresses me out. Everything closes earlier. Everybody is hiring because there just aren’t enough people to fill the positions. The end-is-closer-than-you-think kind of stuff has been stressing me out. It sent me into a depression for a little while . . .

What will it take for us to feel “normal” again? And how do we prepare ourselves, not only physically but psychologically, for the coming of the next hurricane season? Like Sarah, should we consider moving to New Mexico (“nothing ever happens there,” she blogs), or to Canada (“with a septic tank, a generator, solar panels, cows, and some self-sufficient chickens”)? How do we restore the peace of mind that Hurricane Rita took with her as she whipped through our homes and our yards, our schools and our shops, our hopes and our psyches at a speed of up to 140 miles per hour on that fateful Friday, September 23, 2005? I have no answers to these questions. But I do believe that the sharing of our stories is a step towards the healing of ourselves, our families, and our community.

Expressions 2006

Faculty Advisor-Editor

Sally Byrd

Poetry and Prose

Sue Wright
Former Instructor of LSC-PA
Instructor
Austin Community College

Art

Rudy Reyes
Instructor of Art
Lamar State College-Port Arthur

Photography

Dr. Charles Gongre
Dean of Academic & Continuing Education Programs
Lamar State College-Port Arthur

Publisher

Janet G. Polk
Print Shop
Lamar State College-Port Arthur

Technical Support

Bobby Summers
Coordinator of Public Information
Lamar State College-Port Arthur

Technical Support

Kylie Juarez
Administrative Assistant
Lamar State College-Port Arthur

Statement of Editorial Policy

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

The purpose of EXPRESSIONS 2006 is to publish the best entries for consideration. We are proud of the entries published in this issue and appreciate the support of all students, faculty and staff 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.

Sally Byrd, Editor

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