



Lamar State College-Port Arthur



*A Member of The Texas State University System*

# Expressions

Spring 2007

Volume XXI

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# Expressions 2007

## Student Winners

### *SHORT STORY*

#### **First Place**

Dancing for the Giants .....Michael C. Highfill

#### **Second Place**

Best Seller..... Frederick Very

#### **Third Place**

Sam's Funeral.....Julio A. Marcos

### *ESSAY*

#### **First Place**

The Imagination of Civilization..... Bobby Hopper

#### **Second Place**

So That Others May Live ..... Marcus Butler

#### **Third Place**

The Common Rat .....Jessica Johnson

#### **Honorable Mention**

Misconceptions of Islam ..... Shamim Maredia

What's In a Name? .....Patrick Fisher

### *POETRY*

#### **First Place**

Heartbeat ..... Keith L. Demps

#### **Second Place**

A Cat Came Through the Window .....Julio A. Marcos

#### **Third Place**

A Lyrical Verse ..... Bobby Hopper



## POETRY

### Honorable Mention

If I Was a Cowboy.....	Christopher Jolley
My Poetry.....	La'Darrian Wade
Missing Petals .....	William H. Davis, Jr.
The Color of Death.....	Charneth Ramdoo
Floating .....	Julio A. Marcos
What If .....	Brittany Dupree
I Can See!.....	Keith Williams

## LITERARY CRITIQUE

### First Place

The House of the Spirits.....	William H. Davis, Jr.
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### Second Place

Vittorio the Vampire.....	William H. Davis, Jr.
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### Third Place

Tom is Not the Hero He is Purported to Be .....	Frederick Very
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## SPECIAL CATEGORY-Funded and Sponsored by: Phi Theta Kappa

Gold, Gods and Glory: The Global Dynamics of Power

### First Place

Duck, Duck, Goose .....	Frederick Very
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## COVER ART

<b>First Place</b> .....	Matias E. Menchaca
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<b>Second Place</b> .....	Kenneth Hanson
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<b>Third Place</b> .....	Richard Robinson
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<b>Honorable Mention</b> .....	Sara Medina
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<b>Honorable Mention</b> .....	Lee Mai Pham
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*GENERAL ART*

**First Place**.....Danielle Clopton  
**Second Place**..... Kenneth Hanson  
**Third Place**  
    The Lines of Time .....Keith Williams  
**Honorable Mention** ..... Victor Wilson

*PHOTOGRAPHY*

**First Place** ..... Charneth Ramdoo  
**Second Place**..... Xavier Cabrera  
**Third Place**.....Michael C. Highfill  
**Honorable Mention** ..... Charneth Ramdoo

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Bobby Hopper	Frederick Very
Thomas Jackson	La'Darrian Wade
Jessica Johnson	Cassie Warner
Christopher Jolley	Paula Watts
Konsetta Kelly	Keith Williams
Tara Kennedy	Victor Wilson
Kelly Kvarme	Joseph Worthen



*Short  
Story*



*Photography-First Place*

Charneth Ramdoo

# *Short Story-First Place*

## Dancing for the Giants

Michael C. Highfill

Red as an old man's eye, sun finally sets. Silver moon-braid glitters within the fog of stars in night's sky, as I go forward. My time has come, and I am to be a woman... but before I can take up with Kevin, or henna my hair, or keep chickens of my own, I must do this dance.

I am done with being a little girl. I smile and ease my way shadow-soft through the stand of pecans, gnarled and old, that fence our little village. People watch me from behind tight-woven curtains or in their old brass mirrors fogged with breath, but I am alone for the first time in my life.

Rugged hills to the west are still warm from the sun's kiss and kind breath. My feet tickle among moss and ferns, as they catch tiny sticks with a prick to remind me of who and where I am. I arrive at the ridge and stand before the Man-High Gate. Here is where my people come when we grow large enough to be men and women, and here is where we finally go again when we are too large to be ourselves.

I slip through the standing stones with their glittering eyes, into the meadow beyond. "Look," I say aloud, laughing; "there is Grandfather Scott."

He lies buried, huge and proud, the great hook of his nose a thunderous echo of my own face's sharp curve. I run to him. His eyes gleam like so many stars, as I curtsy to him, stroking the long bridge of his nose, now taller than myself. I whirl into dance, exploding like a robin in a dust bath, throwing head, hair and arms out as offerings to the world. I will be a woman, see me dance.

After a while, the gleam in Grandfather Scott's eyes brightens to a shining beacon, casting my shadow on the hill and lighting the ridge so that from the village, it looks as if I have set a fire. I kiss his porous stony cheek where his head swells above the bulging earth, then run to dance for



Auntie Geraline. There is a whole night yet, and dozens of giants still awake enough to see.

Dawn comes, orange and pure, born on wings of a birdsong, as I lie gasping and sweating, coated with the chilly dew just outside the Man-High Gate. My clothes are long gone to the dance, but as Kevin approaches me, I smile. Knowing what he would find, he has brought me a blanket and shovel.

“Your mother sends this,” Kevin says, draping the blanket over me, “And your father, this.” He lays the shovel down gently next to me. “Shall we dig?”

Now that I am a woman, I must dig my pit, for someday when I am grown too large for the Man-High Gate, I will come at dusk to lower myself into the swallowing earth and watch through the ages for new children to come and dance in my light. But there are years between here and there, and Kevin to kiss and invite under my blanket, and the birds to sing their promise of morning.

In my life, dawn will never end.

# *Short Story-Second Place*

Best Seller  
Frederick Very

My brother started his narration in his most dramatic style; you know, the one that gets the whole nation to hang on his every word.

“In the beginning, exactly 13.7 billion years ago, there was nothing but a formless void that...”

But I had stopped writing. “Did you say 13.7 billion years ago?”

“Exactly, I’m inspired.”

“Well, I’m not going to question your inspiration, and I’m reasonably sure that no one else will (they had better not) but listen brother, you’re not going to recount 13.7 billion years of history are you?”

“Of course I am, because that’s how long it really took.”

“But 13.7 billion years?” I sat there shaking my head from side to side.

He looked right through me. “But I have it on the highest authority.”

I broke my finely crafted writing instrument and threw it to the ground to try to make a point. I failed miserably. My brother is really good at making points doing things like this because he is so dramatic, but I just look silly trying it. I’m not dramatic at all.

“Do you have the slightest idea how much it costs to put a manuscript together? Just for the materials even?”

“What?” (Inspired or not, his inspiration doesn’t seem to include simple little things like the cost of labor and materials.)

“Okay, let’s put it this way. You narrate a million years of history per box of materials here.” I pointed at our only box. “That comes out to over thirteen thousand boxes. Even if we buy it by the shipload it’ll still cost lots of money. You’ll have to talk long enough to recount everything that you know, and you know that after a while you’ll start to stutter and stammer, and I’ll have to write it all down until my hands fall off, even if we could afford a caravan of this stuff.” I pointed at our lone box. “Which we can’t,

and even if you could talk long enough and I could keep my arms from falling off from the exertion...who's going to copy it? You know that we have to guarantee at least ten thousand copies before we can publish, and without that, where will the royalties come from? Of course, if we cut it way down, we'll have a best seller on our hands.

He walked to the other side of the room, then he said to me, "So you think that we need to cut it down. Just how far down do you think that we need to cut it?"

"Way down if you expect to reach the general public."

"Like about seven billion years?" he asked. I shook my head no. "Seven million?" I kept shaking my head no. "How about seven thousand?"

"How about seven days?" I suggested. He gave me *the look* that I'd only seen once, and I instantly looked around the room and hoped that there wasn't anything both world shatteringly important and breakable within his reach. There wasn't, or we would have had another incident that we would have had to explain.

"How can I condense the creation of the known universe down to seven days?" He roared.

I pointed at the box. "This is all we have to work with." I found another finely crafted writing instrument. "What else can we do?"

"Yes, well, okay." He started using his dramatic voice. In the beginning..." He changed back to his regular everyday voice. "Does it have to be seven days, Aaron?"

I'm afraid I had to be quite firm about it. "Yes, Moses, seven days."

## *Short Story-Third Place*

### Sam's Funeral

Julio A. Marcos

The mourners are milling around the buffet table engrossed in small talk. Sam was buried an hour ago, and now it is time to celebrate his life. Only three men are talking together by the table.

"Well, that was a nice little service, I guess," John said.

"It was fine, different, for sure," said Paul standing to the right of John.

"You can say that again," George said from the other side of John.

John is twenty-seven with long brown hair. He has it pulled back into a ponytail. He is dressed in a black suit, with a white dress shirt and a wide black tie. He had known Sam for ten years.

Paul is twenty-five and has black hair down to his shoulders. He is dressed in a dark blue suit, with a white dress shirt and a thin red tie. He had known Sam for ten years also.

George is twenty-four and has long brown hair. He is dressed in a blue suit, with a white dress shirt and a black tie. He knew Sam for four years.

In front of them the table is set with a variety of foods. They are looking over the table.

"This is a hell've a spread, huh?" John asks his friends.

"Yeah, I almost hate to dig in," George says.

"You ever seen a spread like this before?" John asks.

"Yeah, between your ex-wife's legs!" Paul tells him.

"That's probably true. I know I never got to see it for a few years," John replies with a laugh.

"C'mon guys. This is supposed to be a solemn time," George says.

"You have got to be kidding!" John tells him.

"Hey man, I'm just saying that this is probably hard for Richard to take," George replied.

"Now I know you have to be kidding," John says as he messes up



George's hair.

"Naw, man. He is our friend," George tells him.

"Yes, and may Sam rest in peace. God bless his soul," Paul says as he makes the sign of the cross.

"But, right now I'm hungry, so I am going to eat," John says as he reaches for a white paper plate.

"Should we say a blessing or something?" George asks.

John and Paul look at each other.

"Something," they reply at the same time. They all break into a boisterous laugh.

John has a red paper napkin underneath his plate as he reaches for the food laid out in front of him. He picks up some red grapes and puts them on his plate. He turns his plate this way and that way and the grapes roll around his plate. He puts some cheddar cheese and swiss cheese blocks on his plate in front of the grapes to keep them from rolling around anymore.

"Man, I love these cheese squares," he says to the others.

"Me too, but they clog me up," George says.

"Hell, you're too young to be getting clogged up," John tells him.

"At least by cheese," Paul chimed in.

"You're a stupid, man," George says with a mouthful of a finger sandwich. "This stuff's good. What is it?"

"Probably Alpo," John says.

"I'm gonna have to buy some then. This is good stuff," George replies.

"Do you remember that time that you were bathing, Sam," Paul tells John. "And you almost flushed him down the commode when you stuck him in it?"

"Yea, Richard had a fit! Hell, Sam was just a little kid then. Man, Richard was ticked."

"He said you couldn't ever bathe Sam again," Paul continued.

"Like I wanted to," John says.

"Man, I wish I could've seen that," George says laughing with another mouthful of sandwich.

“Yea, that was good,” John says proudly.

“Hey, remember that time we were all smoking dope, and we blew the smoke into Sam’s face? His eyes were all red! He couldn’t walk a straight line if his life depended on it,” George says.

“Yea, he stumbled around stoned,” John says.

“He kept bumping into the walls and everything,” Paul added.

“You know, man, that was kinda wrong,” George says.

“Yea, but it was fun as hell,” Paul says.

They share the memory and laugh together.

“How about that time we sat on the tailgate of Richard’s truck, and Sam kept trying to jump up there,” John says.

“Man, he kept falling back,” George says.

“But he kept trying no matter what,” Paul says.

“Yea, I’m actually gonna miss him,” George says as he puts another sandwich into his mouth.

“Yea, he was all right,” Paul added.

“You know, Richard kinda went all out for this spread,” John says.

“He did a good job, man. I’m getting full,” George says.

“Kinda overkill, no pun intended, don’t you think?” Paul asks.

They look over the food on the table. A stack of red paper napkins and paper plates are at the corner of the table. Some plastic forks, spoons and knives are situated next to the napkins and plates. Next is a plastic tray full of grapes, both red and green, and squares of swiss and cheddar cheese. Also on this tray is some fresh raw broccoli and cauliflower, raw carrots, cucumbers, and cherry tomatoes. In the middle is a plastic tub of ranch dressing.

Next to this tray is a ceramic tray of sandwiches cut into small triangles. They are all made from white bread, with the edges cut off, with a type of brown meat spread, and some also have pimento cheese spread; they are stacked all over the tray about five pieces high each.

Next is three plastic bowls full of chips. One has Doritos tortilla chips. One has Frito corn chips, and the other has Lay’s potato chips. Containers

of bean dip, guacamole dip, and sour cream and onion dip are next to the bowl of chips.

A ceramic bowl of barbequed mini-links is next. A small cardboard box of wooden toothpicks with little bits of paper wrapped around it to look like a miniature version of a toreador's sword lies next to it.

“Where’s Richard?” Paul asks.

“He was out back. He should be coming back in soon,” John says.

“Here he comes now,” George says.

Richard walks in and closes the back door behind him. He is in a black suit, with a white dress shirt and a wide black tie. He is twenty-eight years old with short black hair. His brown eyes are red and watery because he has been crying. He somberly walks over to the table where the others are gathered. He takes a deep breath.

“I appreciate you guys being here. It means a lot to me. And Sam would have appreciated it too, I’m sure,” he tells them.

“Well...um...have you thought...you know...about getting another...,” John starts before Richard cuts him off.

“No way, man! I can’t even think of getting another dog after Sam,” he tells them.

# Essay





*General Art-First Place*

Danielle Clopton

## Essay-First Place

### The Imagination of Civilization Bobby Hopper

The human mind's ability to visualize something that does not exist has been with us from the dawn of civilization. Cave paintings at Chauvet, France, show that people were using their imaginations more than 30,000 years ago. The drawing of two rhinoceros fighting may be simplistic, but it displays the trait that we all have in common with our ancestors. This ability would lead our ancestors out of the caves and into houses and cities. Imagination is the ability to answer the question: *What if?* The power of the imagination is the basis of civilization, and every advance made by it.

The word *imagination* has its roots in the Latin word *imago* (image), turned into a noun of action with a suffix; *imaginare* or *imaginem*, meaning to image something in one's mind. The first records of this word in English literature date back to the 12th century. The OED defines it as the act of forming a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses, many people have commented on it. "Our imagination is the only limit to what we can hope to have in the future." -Charles Kettering. "The Imagination is one of the highest prerogatives of man. By this faculty he unites, independently of the will, former images and ideas, and thus creates brilliant and novel results." -Charles Darwin. On a lighter note, "You cannot depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus." -Mark Twain.

Art is the product of imagination. Even though America focuses on the superficial, many nations place great importance on the art that their culture produces. They take art so seriously that when an oppressive regime comes into power it does everything it can to suppress any art that is unsupportive of it. The communist Russian government went to great lengths to eliminate any art that imagined the truth of the future under communism, or a future without communism altogether. They imprisoned, tortured and murdered people based on what these "dissidents" dared to imagine. The power of imagination is not so easily contained, however, and the imagined downfall



of communism in Russia eventually became reality. These same persecutions are happening in China today. One can only imagine what will happen in China someday.

Recent events in this country have hinged on imagination. The war in Iraq, for example, is one case of imagination determining foreign policy. President Bush and his advisors imagined that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. President Bush then imagined what would happen to American citizens if these imaginary weapons were given to real terrorists. On the basis of this imagery, he ordered the invasion of Iraq.

Advances in science and medicine always begin in the imagination, as science fiction, which later becomes so common that these things are hardly noticed. Television, cellular phones, computers, and everything else that people take for granted were once thought of as impossible, or at least highly unlikely, ever to work. All monetary systems are based on imagination. People accept pieces of paper as payment for their work because they imagine that these pieces of paper have a value greater than the sum of their parts. They are right, and this system works because other people imagine the same thing. Civilization itself is likewise a shared figment of the imagination. Riots in the Middle East over a few Danish cartoons and riots in Europe and this country over sporting events show what happens when people stop imagining that they are civilized. However, an overactive imagination can be dangerous as well. The people of Salem in 1692 imagined that witchcraft was real. They believed in their imaginations so fervently that they executed thirteen women and six men convicted, in a court of law, of practicing witchcraft. During these trials they all imagined that they were sane.

Imagination has brought people from the caves at Chauvet to everything that is taken for granted today, things that were considered unimaginable in the near past. People began using their imaginations long ago. They imagined that sounds could represent these things as well, and created a spoken language, and writing was born. They continued to imagine ways that their lives could be improved, and sought to turn their visions into reality.

## Essay-Second Place

### So That Others May Live

Marcus Butler

The men and women of the United States Coast Guard are known as lifesavers. There are over thirty thousand people in the Coast Guard, most of them push papers, order supplies, fix things that are broken, work buoys, and provide lots of other services that are needed to make the organization function properly. Most people join the Coast Guard with the fantasy of being a hero and saving peoples lives. However, most end up doing the easy job making the easy money where they go home every night and have the weekends off. Only a very small percent of those thirty thousand actually save lives. Saving lives is an addiction just as strong as any drug; once you get a taste of it, it's hard to walk away.

I also joined the Coast Guard with the fantasy of saving lives and being a hero. After boot camp I found myself on Kodiak Island, Alaska, in the middle of the Bering Sea in the middle of winter on a 378 foot Coast Guard Cutter. I was about to start my career on the most treacherous waters found on the globe. I will never forget my second day on the ship after we left Kodiak, and I reported to the bridge and looked down at the bow being buried by three story tall waves. "What have I got myself into?" I thought. Unbeknownst to me at the time, that would be nothing compared to the next ten years.

Our ship carried a rescue helicopter with a flight crew including two rescue swimmers. These were the men that everyone wanted to be, the guys who jumped out of a helicopter and were real heroes. Late one night after the helicopter had returned from a rescue mission, I sat on the stern of the Cutter and had a long talk with one of the rescue swimmers about saving and losing lives. He told me two things I will never forget. First, he told me, "There are two types of lifesavers; there's the person who does it for himself, he is medal hungry and does it only for the glory and then there's the person who just does it for his or her own self gratitude knowing that



someone is walking on this earth because of his or her selfless actions”

Next he told me, “If you really want to get into rescue work in the Coast Guard, you have to ask yourself one thing. Are you willing possibly to give up your life to save another, because the first time you find yourself in a situation where you might not come back, you must very quickly swallow your fright. Otherwise, you’re just not cut out for rescue work.” That November on Thanksgiving I had to face that decision for the first time. A 400 foot ship carrying crude oil had run aground in Dutch Harbor, Alaska. The crew of fourteen, one already dead from falling and breaking his neck when he hit bottom, had launched the ship’s lifeboat only to find out that the engine wouldn’t start. I was one of four Cutter Rescue Swimmers, who suited up and headed to the beach where the ship sat a hundred yards off the shore. The wind was blowing probably fifty miles an hour, and the waves on the backside of the ship were at least fifteen feet tall. The four swimmers, with our Chief who wouldn’t let us go out by ourselves, swam through eight foot swells over fifty yards to tie some lines off to the ships lifeboat so the rest of the crew on the beach could pull the rescue boat to shore with several four wheel drive trucks. As I swam through that freezing cold, crude oil-filled water; in the middle of the night, I knew for the first time what that rescue swimmer was talking about. After being in the water for over an hour, all five of us and the crew were taken to the hospital and sat in hypothermia tubs for the next several hours to warm our bodies slowly back to normal temperature. That first rescue came at a price, we saved thirteen people that day, but within the year our chief died from the amount of crude oil he ingested into his lungs from that night.

The rescue swimmers from that Cutter saved several lives the two years I was stationed there. I was hooked; I didn’t want to push paper or do any of those boring jobs. I wanted to drive rescue boats. So that same chief before he passed away, somehow pulled some strings and got me assigned to Lifeboat Station Golden Gate, so I could be trained to be a Coast Guard Coxswain. It is common knowledge in the maritime world that Coast Guard Coxswain’s are the best boat drivers on earth, and that is what I wanted to

be. I learned quickly on my first few trips out into the Pacific Ocean that being on a 44 foot rescue boat in three to four story seas was very different than being on a 378 foot Cutter in the same seas. I said to myself many times in those few years "Boy, I hope we make it back." The old Coast Guard saying used to be "You have to go out but you don't have to come back." With the advanced equipment these days it is rare that a Coast Guard Rescue boat doesn't make it back, but it still happens sometimes. For me, the chance to save a life far outweighed the risk, especially after the first time one returns to the dock with a victim where the family is standing on the pier, crying tears of happiness because they didn't lose their loved one; most people would do it over and over again despite the risk. There is no feeling on earth like the feeling a person can get knowing he saved a life and prevented a family from years of sadness and loss.

Nobody can save everyone all the time though. That is a hard thing to swallow sometimes. It's hard not to feel like a failure, but one has to remember that it isn't his fault and that he tried his best. I thought I would remember all the lives I'd helped save, but for some strange reason it is only the ones that were lost that are remembered. From the seventy-seven year old on his last fishing trip, who couldn't resuscitate with CPR after a heart attack, to the twelve year old boy who got swept off the rocks and bled to death in my arms on the way to the dock, I'll never forget any of them. It's hard not to dwell on the loss, but you have to if you want to continue trying to save more. We lost many lives while I was stationed at Lifeboat Station Golden Gate, but we saved countless more, and I had the time of my life.

Rescue work of any kind can be amazingly rewarding to one's life, but can take a toll on a personal life. Anyone in rescue work usually works many, many hours, and no one ever seems to get into trouble in the middle of the day. Most people assigned to a rescue boat station are at work over a hundred hours a week, which leaves little time to spend with family and enjoying life. Coast Guard wives lose many nights of sleep worrying about husbands out in the middle of the night in a storm on a rescue mission. It



takes a strong marriage and an amazing wife to make it through twenty years of Coast Guard service.

My next assignment found me in Texas, much less glamorous, but much less dangerous also. Even though my job wasn't as dangerous, it was still as time consuming. Two weeks a month I was at work over a hundred hours and the other two I was still there over fifty. I was older by now and had a baby on the way. I'd played with the idea of getting out of the service a few times, but now found myself with a dilemma. I loved my job, although I despised some of the people I worked for. My enlistment was almost over, and my time to transfer was fast approaching. I would be transferring soon to a new unit. My name was on the list of the assignment detailers as one of the better Coxswain's in the Coast Guard despite my authority problem. I didn't get in nearly as much trouble as I might have because I drove a boat in circles around most of the people who were supposed to be senior to me. All through different Coast Guard Coxswain training schools, I was told by the instructors that I was a waste of training time because I should be teaching at the school not a student there. The assignment detailer already told me he wished he hadn't sent me to Texas, and I needed to go back in the rough stuff where my driving skills were most needed.

When someone has spent a good part of adult life working a career that is sometimes spent risking his own life, that person can get a big wake up call when he helped create a life himself. When I found out I was going to have a baby, I decided I needed to get out of the Coast Guard. That wasn't the only reason, but I think it was the deal sealer. I didn't want to raise a child and only get to come home to him a few nights a week. The fear of not coming back that I'd swallowed for many years wasn't so easy to swallow knowing I'd be leaving a child behind. So I got out of the Coast Guard. Life is much less exciting now, but my baby boy is worth the loss of excitement. Life saving is an addiction, though; it's hard to walk away from, and hard to acknowledge that you'll never get that feeling again, the feeling that you might have just changed what fate had planned for some poor soul in trouble at sea.

## Essay-Third Place

### The Common Rat Jessica Johnson

Of all the mammals in the world, rodents have been the most successful at being able to adapt to any surrounding. Rodents belong to a species called *Rodentia*, a Latin term which means “to gnaw.” One particular rodent that comes from this group is the rat. Although rats and other rodents are able to survive virtually anywhere they want, it does not mean that they are necessarily wanted there. Rats have accompanied humans all over the world. Since the beginning of time and up until this present day, the description of the rat has evolved; its life cycle and diet has differed, and the fatal diseases it has been known to spread have increased.

Rats are substantially similar to mice, but are larger in size, measuring up to eight to ten inches in length. Rats are four legged animals with clawed feet. Their hind legs are generally longer and more powerful than their front legs. Glands on the bottom of their paws leave a wet trail wherever they go. These rodents are born with several excellent senses which are necessary for their survival. They have pointy noses with scent glands that help to sniff out food, cupped ears to help them hear if a predator is coming, and long slender bodies, which is an advantage to them because they are able to squeeze through small openings. Most people think that since rats have large eyes, their eye vision must be their main source to getting around, but, in fact, the rat actually has very poor eye sight, which is why the rat depends on its other body parts like its tail. Their long tail, which is lined with short, fine hairs, is an important essential to their survival; the tail is used for many different functions such as helping the rat keep its balance, controlling the rat’s body temperature, and communicating with other members of its pack. The skin located on the tail is very sensitive and can cause great discomfort even death to the rodent if held by its tail. Rats have a total of fourteen teeth in their entire mouth, the two front teeth being the



longest and strongest. Their two front teeth have an open root which means that the teeth will continuously grow several millimeters a week throughout the rats' life time.

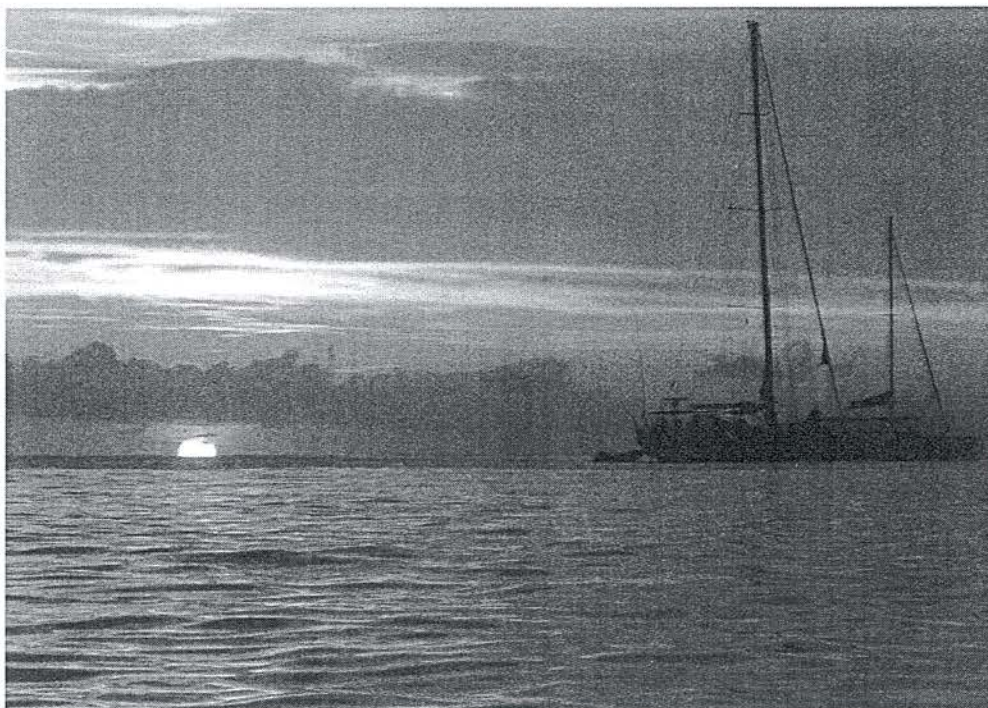
Rats' average life span is two years, but over the course of those two years, female rats will produce more than ten litters. Rats run in packs hence the nickname "rat pack," which can generally include up to 60 individuals. The females will mate with several different males in the pack to become impregnated. Unlike most mammals, whose pregnancies can last up to a full year, the gestation period for a female rat is 22 to 24 days. Before the expectant mother is ready to give birth to her young, she scurries to build a proper nest for her babies. An average litter consists of six to twelve young, but in rare cases 22 younglings have been observed. Once the doe gives birth to her litter, she can become impregnated again in 36 hours. When the babies are born, they normally weigh less than an ounce and are born hairless, pink-skinned, blind, and deaf. Within ten days the fur will start to grow, and by the fifteenth day they will be fully haired, and their eyes will open. After 22 days, the once baby rodents are fully matured and will leave the nest. On average, the adult male weighs approximately one pound and will be sexually mature in three months. The adult female rat weighs about a half a pound and will be able to start producing young five to twelve weeks after being born. Rats typically eat the meat of other animals and any other scrap they can find, but they also can feed off plants. The rodents will carry the food they find back to their nest to be devoured. These small nuisances are highly destructive to crops, and farmers' livestock such as chickens, ducks, geese, and will even gnaw at baby lambs and piglets, killing the animals indirectly through contagion. Rats also survive by eating mice and even fish on occasions.

Ships traveling and trading between from Europe and Asia and are largely to blame for the increasing distribution of these pests. Because the rats would come and go on different ships and nest in several different villages, they can now be found around the world and at every seaport. The two most communal rodents found in the harbors are the brown and the black rats.

The brown rat is also known as the Norway rat and is a serious pest to man. This particular rat is not as deadly as the black rat, but it still carries its own amount of diseases such as Salmonella and a bacterial disease known as Tularemia, but it rarely distributes the plague. The black rat or “ship rat” carries many deadly diseases known to man like the notorious Bubonic plague, typhus, rabies, and trichinosis. This small creature has changed the human race more than almost any individual in the history of the world. During the fourteenth century and up until the seventeenth century, the Bubonic plague was responsible for taking the lives of 25 million Europeans. Many people of this era had no idea as to how the illness was being transmitted to humans, and it would be a decade before two scientists would discover the transaction. Shibasaburo Kitasato and Alexander Yersin found that the plague was passed on to other organisms by a microscopic bacterium called *Yersinia pestis*, which is carried by fleas and lice. The bacteria was not transferred by the bite itself, but by feces left on the skin of the human. Once a flea or louse had sucked the blood of the rodent that carried the disease, it would then find another organism to feast on, such as a man. Fleas often have a bowel movement whenever they first taste new blood. The irritation of the bite causes one to scratch, therefore transferring the feces into the opened wound. When a citizen was contaminated with the virus, noticeable symptoms would arise. One or more buboes would begin to develop on the skin where lymph nodes are located and the area would start to swell and cause the victim excruciating pain. The name bubonic originated from the buboes symptoms one would have if infected with the disease.

Although rats have been viewed in a negative way by mankind, they do have some good in them. Scientists have been using rats in laboratories to test different medicines and psychological affects. The albino rat (which is a relative of the brown rat) is the most common rat used for the experiments. Rats are also being viewed as household pets, not pests. Studies show caged rats are much cleaner than wild rats and are less likely to spread any diseases. Rats have caused a great disturbance to mankind, but

with the help of modern medicine and better understanding of this species, people are now able to live safely with this hairy creature.



## *Photography-Second Place*

Xavier Cabrera



# Essay-Honorable Mentioned

## Misconceptions of Islam

(This is a text of a speech)

Shamim Maredia

“Let’s kill and destroy all Muslims!” raged a woman on TV in the wake of September 11. I listened to her exclaim those words of hatred and rage on television. How would you feel listening to someone slander your religion without any thorough understanding of its essence? How would you feel to be victimized for no apparent reason other than that out of futile vengeance and blind hatred? I know exactly what it feels like and for that very reason, I am here to clear the misconception of my religion: Islam. Mind you, I am not here to convert anyone nor am I here to force you to respect my religion. My purpose, however, is to show you the true face of Islam and to appeal to you to spare some tolerance for Muslims.

‘Islam’ means “peaceful submission to the will of God,” and a ‘Muslim’ is one who “submits.” The Qu’ran is the holy book of Muslims like the Bible is to Christians or the To’rah is to Jews. Similar to Christians and Jews, Muslims are obliged to live peacefully as the “spiritual heirs of Abraham.” Repentance and mercy are the most important lessons taught and emphasized by Islam. Contrary to popular myths, Islam is “rooted in peace, harmony, family responsibility, interfaith respect, humility, and equal justice for all human kind under one God. It is universal multicultural and multiracial religion that proclaims brotherhood and equality of all people regardless of all races, religions, and nationalities.”

Despite the good moral values Islam preaches, there are people who, uneducated about Islam as they are, hold on to the misconceptions and misunderstandings that can cause harbored hatred or even spur violence against innocent people. Five major myths have sprouted out of ignorance, lack of knowledge, and awfully biased media publicity. The most common misconception is that “All Muslims are of Arab origin.” The truth is that Muslims in the United States should be considered American just as people of the Christian or Jewish faiths residing in the United States are considered



American. It is wrong to isolate the identities of these Muslims to being middle-eastern. The second misconception is that “Islamic advocates ‘subjugation of females’”: This statement is completely false. Islamic law explicitly states that “women can keep their maiden names after marriage and that their personal income cannot be spent by their husbands, the husband must also share duties around the house or provide housekeepers for his wife.” Another common fallacy is that “Muslims are terrorists, extremists, and fanatics.” The attacks from Bin Laden forced everyone to stop abruptly and look at the “false, ugly, and vicious images he gave the world about Islam.” What he did was truly unforgivable and unforgettable. His actions embodied the malicious and malevolent low depths of human kind, not the teachings of a religion. The obsession of the media and excessive publicity of Bin Laden has convinced people that Muslims are made up of terrorists and psycho Islamic fanatics. Another mistaken notion is that Islam is very anti-Semitic. This statement is a myth in its entirety. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict led people to believe that Muslims over the world are hostile towards Jews. A double standard comes into play when fanaticism from other religions is identified by nationality but a crime committed by a Muslim is invariably reported “as an element in an Islamic threat to America.” Moses is acknowledged as one of the prophets in the Holy Qu’ran. How can Muslims discriminate against the people who were lead by Prophet Moses himself? The last but not least misconception is that “Jihad is a series of attacks on non-Muslims.” In reality, the first objective of Jihad is “struggling within oneself for a life of virtue.” The second is “fighting against injustice.” Both objectives are listed in Islamic teachings as well as the doctrines of other religions as supreme goals of human endeavor. The third objective is to defend Islam when it comes under an attack. This objective does not advocate launching attacks on innocent people such as suicide bombings. Islam is not a representative of terrorism or fanaticism.

So why does Islam get such a bad reputation? If Islam doesn’t advocate any violence or demeaning of human rights, then why is it looked upon as an evil cult? When political regimes use religion as a way to establish a

strong authority over their people, religion is automatically associated with the causes of people's conditions. Women in predominantly Islamic countries aren't allowed to have education, nor are they allowed to have any freedom. Islam doesn't advocate that and Turkey symbolizes the freedom Islam gives its female followers. Authoritative figures in Turkey forced women to cover themselves up and refused them the right to education not because they consulted the Qu'ran, but because they *personally* believed women to be inferior. When that regime fell and was taken over by a new one, women were granted rights and freedoms that were equal to men. They are now just as independent as their male counterparts. Today Turkey, a Muslim country, is an alliance of NATO. There are still people in today's times who justify murder and destruction in the name of religion. This is not excusable by any means. For example, the Taliban regime call themselves "Islamic," but their violation of Islamic teachings is horrendous. Abuse of human rights, women's rights, and their failure to stop heroin traffic are a slap in the face to Islamic teachings.

Unfortunately, many people are misinformed about Islam, which in turn breeds intolerance. It is easy to be intolerant of a religion that isn't understood well enough. Today, standing in front of you, being the ambassador of Islam, I urge you to open your minds and hearts to all religions. There will be no peace among religions until we build more bridges of understanding. Let us not stereotype or generalize an entire religion on the basis of individual action like that of Bin Laden. So let me leave you with one thought provoking question: Just because you got one rotten apple, would you chop down the whole apple tree?

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# EXPRESSIONS...



2007

*Cover Art-Second Place*

Kenneth Hanson

## Essay-Honorable Mentioned

### What's in a Name?

Patrick Fisher

When I was born, my parents named me Patrick Wayne Fisher. This upset my dad's mother because I was the first male child born to her only son, and she felt I should be named after him. This would have made me the third person in our family with that name, and my grandmother was big on tradition. My grandfather has it, my dad has it, but I don't because my dad looked into my grandmother's eyes and said, "I have nothing against my newborn son and will not put such a name on him." This upset my grandmother greatly, and she wouldn't talk to my father for several months after I was born. The name she wanted hang on me was Otis Chester Fisher, III. Yes, I know; what a horrible name. The only good that would have come out of it was I could have had the nickname Trey. So instead of living the life of an Otis, I became Patrick instead. My father's best friend most of his life growing up was a fellow by the name of Patrick Weller. They both played high school football and both joined up for the army and went to boot camp together. After that, they went to Vietnam and served two tours. The only difference was that my dad came home, but Patrick didn't. My father doesn't talk about it very much, and that is the entire story I've been able to get out of him in thirty years. I was named Patrick, as you probably guessed. My middle name came from an entirely different source, John Wayne. My father and mother are both huge John Wayne fans. They love all his movies and have seen them all about a hundred times. So they took his last name and gave it to me as my middle name. This had the side benefit of making my name close to the "Duke's" own son's name, Patrick Wayne. I don't know if they did this on purpose, or if it just worked out this way, but it's been a running joke in my family for years. Now let's look at the last name of Fisher.

Fisher is a German name; we had roots in the German aristocracies until

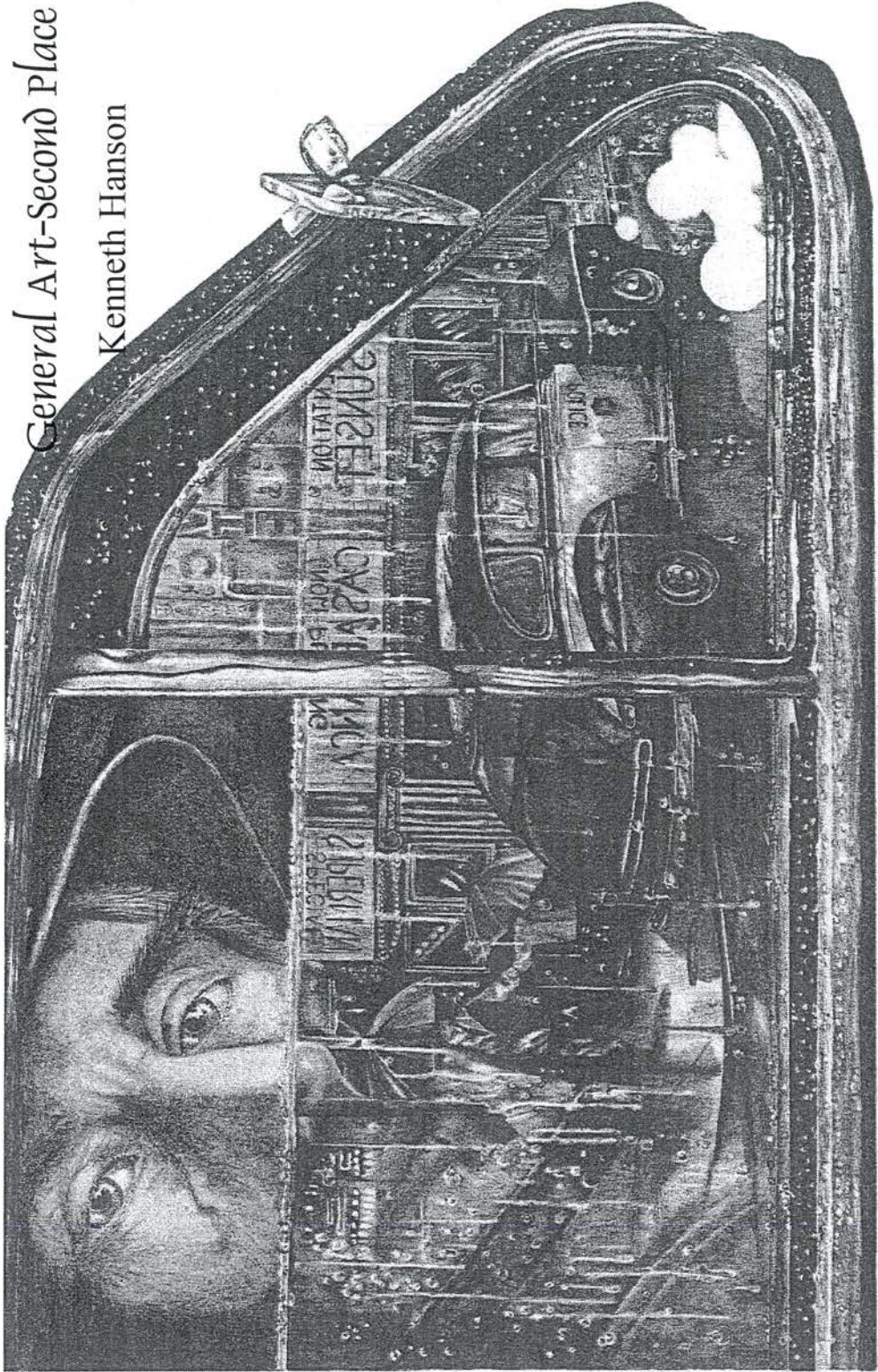


we poached off the King's land and started a revolt in which we fled one step in front of the hangman. That is kind of how my family history goes; we always do something that keeps us on the move one step in front of the law or a husband. My name comes from a dead guy, a dead movie star, and a bunch of deadbeats, nice don't you think? I have never liked my name; it just seems so cumbersome. In a world full Mikes, Bobs, Johns, and Brads it just seems old and uninteresting. I have tried shortening it to Rick, but then it seems that I have become someone else, and I have no idea who that person is or what he wants. I have had nicknames given to me over the years, and they stick for awhile, giving me something new to work with. They never last very long, though, because I start to realize that I'm not myself anymore; I'm someone else's idea of what I should or could be. That's when it hit me, a name is more than a name; it is an identity. It is a collection of everything that has ever happened and will ever happen to us and our family. I have hated my name for years without understanding it. I have run from it in the hope of finding something better or at least less boring. My name means friendship, the friendship that lasts forever, even after death. My name means entertainment, good old acting, cowboy movies, and the idea that everything will work out in the end even if the beginning was not the best. My name means history-the history of a family's rises and falls, their greatest accomplishments, and their biggest failures. My name means all this and more. My name means and is me. Hello, my name is Patrick Wayne Fisher. Nice to meet you.

# Poetry

*General Art-Second Place*

Kenneth Hanson



# Poetry-First Place

## Heartbeat Keith L. Demps

My heart has a song,  
that I would like you to hear.  
The melody becomes louder,  
whenever you are near.

The chorus is like candy,  
so delicious and so sweet.  
When my heart gets in the groove,  
it just can't miss a beat.

If you catch yourself humming,  
a song with love lines.  
That is my heart asking,  
yours to dance with mine.



## Poetry-Second Place

### A Cat Came Through the Window Julio A. Marcos

A cat came through the window last night  
And she brought with her something fresh

She had long, blonde, fluffy fur  
And when I held her  
She purred

She walked in like a queen  
And I wondered  
Where she's been

And in a flash, she was gone  
I sit here now  
And I'm alone

But she hasn't really left  
'Cause she lingers  
In my heart

A cat came through the window last night  
And she brought with her something fresh

# Poetry-Third Place

## A Lyrical Verse Bobby Hopper

A poem of love, a lyrical verse,  
It seems is nothing but a curse.

Declare your love for ever after,  
It will die, as will your laughter.

Good things end and nothing's free,  
Pay with your pain, a wrenching fee.

Time does not heal but it goes on,  
Each day ahead a lonely dawn.

## Poetry-Honorable Mention

### If I Was a Cowboy Christopher Jolley

Across the west I would ride.  
Two six guns upon my side.  
I'd fight the outlaws, they would die.

I'd drink whiskey by the gallons.  
I'd play the mouth harp astride my stallion.  
I'd keep the west safe from rascallions.

Luck and honor I'd call upon.  
Telling tales about how I've won.  
Around the camp fire my name would be sung.

I'd be a living legend in a white hat.  
All the lasses around me would giggle and laugh.  
That is how it would be if I was a cowboy  
    In the past.

## Poetry-Honorable Mention

My Poetry  
La'Darrian Wade

My written expressions are in prose,  
or so I was told.

For to be poetry I must be truly eager,  
to take introspective writings and confine them to a meter.

My written expressions never rhyme,  
or at least with every line.

For to be poetry I must understand first,  
that my current style of writing is considered blank verse.

My written expressions are too emotionally weaved,  
or so it is believed.

But isn't that the point?!

It's an artistic ability to create words  
from the state that is within me.  
and that is the definition that I shall call my poetry.



## Poetry-Honorable Mention

### Missing Petals William H. Davis, Jr.

Such a beautiful rose,  
The one that grows in the corner of the garden.  
It grows by itself, away from the others.  
Its crooked stem is testimony to past injuries...  
the work of clumsy, unskilled hands  
that wanted only to possess this flower's awesome beauty.  
But it still grows.

Some of its leaves have been dried by time,  
Several petals are missing,  
no doubt dislodged by an unkind gust of wind.  
Yet it is the most beautiful thing in all the garden.

Surely the other flowers envy this one rose.  
Ah, her thorns grow nicely!  
My foolish fingers bleed, my face wet with tears...  
shall I never pluck this beautiful rose,  
to have it for my very own?

## Poetry-Honorable Mention

### The Color of Death Charneth Ramdoo

Death is the blackness of the moonless night sky,  
The stars are the souls he has taken.  
My grandfather shines up there with the millions—  
He shines his light on me.

Death is the blackness of the clothing worn by the mourners  
It is their shallow cries and worthless tears.  
Death smiles at them because his job is already done—  
The living has now become a star in his galaxy.

Death is the blackness of nothing.  
There is no life after death—  
Everything known has ceased.  
Death takes them to the pastures of wilted grass and everlasting silence.

Death is the black shadow that roams the earth,  
Looking for his next victim—  
His victims sometimes look for him.  
They see death as a door of escape.

Death wears the title of a hero,  
He rescues those souls in misery.  
Death is a double edged sword—  
One end slices with fear  
And the other, sharp with hope.

## Poetry-Honorable Mention

### Floating Julio A. Marcos

Floating in a vast sea of darkness  
Aimlessly adrift  
No place to lay anchor  
No sign of land  
I've sent many signals  
Flares, Fires, Flags  
But still no answer  
No sign at all.

Do you turn a blind eye?  
Are you there?  
Did you erase me?  
Like I wasn't there?  
A tidal wave approaches  
And it swallows me up  
I'm an eddy spun  
Going further down.

I'm drowning in this pool  
Of salty water  
I give up the sail  
The attached lines  
The depth surrounds me  
Pulling me down  
And as I sink  
I pull you with me.



## Poetry-Honorable Mention

What If...  
Brittany Dupree

What If...

What if I was gone tomorrow and  
never got to tell you how I really feel?

Would you care?

What if I go and never get the chance  
to tell you how much I love you?

Would you wonder?

What if I spent so much time hating  
you I never got to love you at all?

What If...?  
You never know!

## Poetry-Honorable Mention

I can See!  
Keith Williams

I can see your beauty  
That lies deep within  
I can see your pain  
Before it even begins  
I can see your smile  
When it lights up the room  
I can see your tears  
When happiness turns to gloom  
I can see that twinkle  
That only you have in your eyes  
I can see when I hurt you  
That twinkle slowly dies.

*Literary  
Critique*



*Photography-Third Place*  
Michael C. Highfill



# Literary Critique-First Place

## The House of the Spirits

William H. Davis, Jr.

I once read that Joseph Stalin had remarked that women were “herrings with ideas.” I considered that a degrading, misogynistic, unfair characterization...until I read Isabel Allende’s The House of the Spirits. The critics do not judge her work as harshly as do I.

Allende uses her writing to promote her socialist views, as is her right. Her uncle, Salvador Allende was president of Chile until the Marxist government was toppled in 1973. Miss Allende believes her uncle was betrayed by right wing extremists, which may be the case. However, it isn’t her leftist drivel that sours me. She loses her credible suspensions of disbelief in the first few pages. Early on it becomes obvious that Allende is a failure at describing the conditions of extreme poverty that she herself has never known. She uses the devices of excrement and defecation to express the plight of the poor. This attempt comes off as offensive and becomes monotonous after several mentioning’s in the first chapter or two.

Critic Christopher Lehman-Haupt makes reference to Allende’s ideology when he states, “He doesn’t need a novel to lecture him about political repression.” (29) Critic Sharon K. Hall mentions that, “Allende shares her uncle’s socialist views.” (27)

But after spending her adolescences in Bolivia, Europe, and the Middle East, are we to believe she can develop a genuine understanding for the poor or the political climate of the country?

Critic Jonathan Yardly notes, “For all the elements of fantasy and magic, Allende’s characters are as real a group of people as one could hope to meet.” This makes me wonder where Mr. Yardly is from. How many serial rapists, clairvoyants, or women with naturally green hair has he known? I did not find a single character in Allende’s entire book that was

real in any sense of the word. (30)

It is strange that not a single critic mentions Allende's constant use of excrement as subject matter. She uses this device (substance) to the point of leaving the reader feeling soiled. In a striking example of the power of suggestion, critic Ambrose Gordon describes a scene when Alba, a young woman who is one of the story's narrators; "placed in a tiny cell called the dog house' where she, *lies in her own excrement* and misery..." As baffling as it may seem, the book does not describe such a scene. After pointing out to the reader that one could only survive in the dog house for a few days, and that the subject has decided not to eat, one wonders where Mr. Gordon's excrement comes from. It is obvious he has been so conditioned to expect more excrement, that he sees the prisoner wallowing in all sorts of fecal matter. And why not? The book is full of excrement. It is truly ironic that the one instance where Miss Allende could legitimately use excrement, she doesn't. No doubt Mr. Gordon, like someone tip-toeing through a pasture full of fresh, hot, steaming cow patties, (bovine excrement) expected some more of Allende's shit, that he just pictured poor Alba wallowing in it. (16) This isn't just disgusting. It is sad.

One gets the feeling that at some point Miss Allende was forced to spend a day or two without running water. Perhaps the experience so traumatized her that it became a symbol of her worst fear. But as distressing and unentertaining as her excessive use of excrement is, her misandry is the most prominent feature of her work. Allende's reputation as a progressive feminist crosses the line of reason by the personal traits she gives her male characters. While all her female figures are insightful, morally upright, long suffering individuals, the male counterparts are sadistic rapists, effeminate, cowardly perverts, psychotic child molesters, or weak-minded buffoons. Are we to believe there are no honorable or sane Latin American men? This is a signature of Allende's work that leaves a smudge on her record as an honest writer. I am led to wonder what trauma could have caused her misandric tendencies?

One thing most critics agree on is her story's remarkable similarity

to Garcia Marquez's, One Hundred Years of Solitude. Ambrose Gordon remarks that Allende's Rosa the beautiful, "who greatly resembles Marquez's 'Remendios the beautiful,'" but takes no exception to this point. Allende's "Rosa" seems almost a plagiarized subject in view of Marquez's "Remendios the beautiful" (16). It seems strange to me that the woman who imagined the aforementioned oddities couldn't develop her own original character.

Another of Allende's failures is believability in different scenes. In one scene a fellow is fast enough to dodge a bullet, but not an axe. In another, Allende has several crates of rifles, submachine guns, ammunition and grenades fitting into a single suitcase. In yet another scene we have a mother who is also a clairvoyant failing to explain to her daughter about her menstruation cycle until the girl has been having her period for over a year. And, of course, the unforgettable Barrabas, the mutant horse-sized dog that impales smaller female dogs on his enormous penis to the point of death. Allende seems to have put very little thought into the logistics of these scenes.

There are other unexplained anomalies in Miss Allende's writing. One is a complete absence of any mention of the chewing of the native cocoa leaf or the use of cocoa paste. The one distinguishing practice connecting all of South America's poor is completely ignored. Perhaps Allende is afraid that the mention will reflect on the genre the critics refer to as "magical realism." Perhaps it is a sign of repressive national guilt because her home country of Peru (and South America) produces one-hundred percent of the world's cocaine. Whatever the reason, it leaves an obvious gap in the story in view of the fact she mentions other drug use.

A good bit of The House of the Spirits comprises dozens of odd, improbable, often impossible, completely disconnected scenes that have absolutely nothing to do with the story. These intrusions range from silly to extremely repulsive. Miss Allende reveals a deep seated psycho-sexual illness rare in serious literature. We can only pity the poor woman for this. If she hates the political right because of her uncle Salvador's death, avoids



such commonalities as the cocoa leaf because of repressed guilt, is fixated on excrement (for God only knows what reason), we can only guess at what incident caused her misandry and perverted sexual imagination. Her scene of bestial copulation belong in a B-rated, Andy Warhol horror flick and her early scene of sweet, young little Clara telling Father Restrepo that, “if that story about hell is a lie, we’re all fucked,” seems like something Linda Blair should say as she blasphemes God and spews vomit. And her description of a man becoming sexually aroused by seeing bread dough...perhaps Sigmund Freud can explain it. I have no guess.

Critic Alex Coleman remarks that “one would have to be a most recalcitrant reader not to be swept up by it” (31).

So label me recalcitrant Mr. Coleman; I do not agree with you...or any of your colleagues. I read Miss Allende’s ill-begotten literary first born out of compulsion. I feel somehow less clean for having done so.

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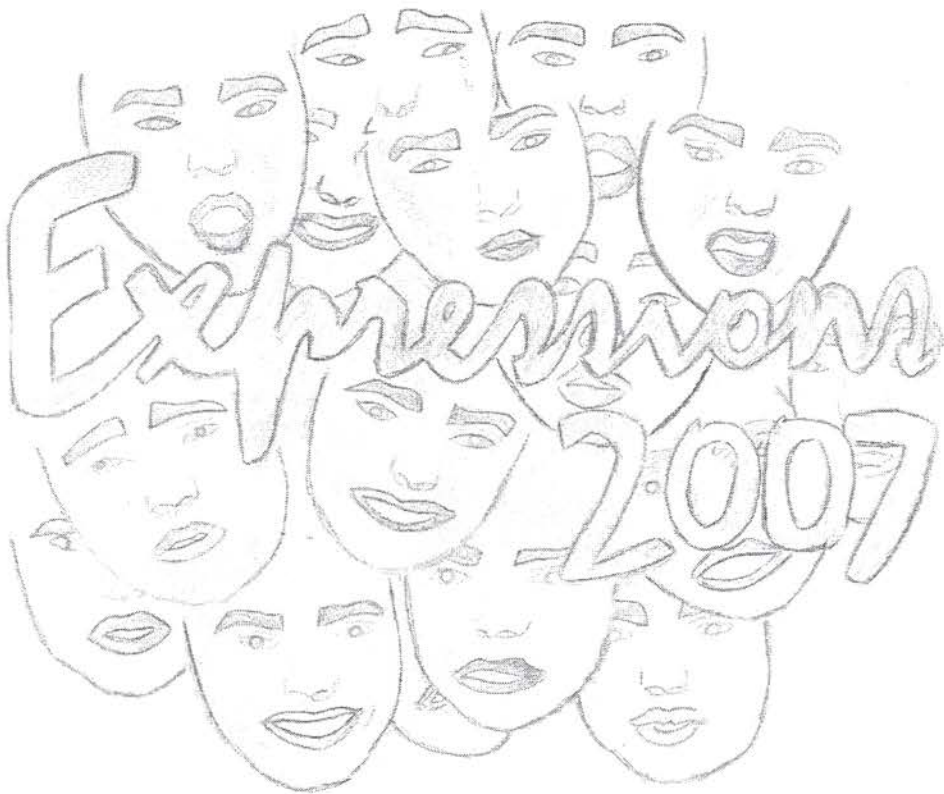
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*Cover Art-Honorable Mention*

Sara Medina



*Cover Art-Third Place*

Richard Robinson

## Literary Critique-Second Place

### Vittorio the Vampire William H. Davis, Jr.

With Vittorio the Vampire, Ann Rice has forever smashed the traditional mold for vampire stories. Her fervent imagination unites with her extensive knowledge of Renaissance history to produce a tale as rich in human drama as it is graphic in human slaughter.

Rice merges these two aspects in a remarkable first person account of Vittorio de Raniari and demonstrates her ability to blur the fine line separating fact and fiction.

Early in the first chapter Vittorio quotes from Sheridan Le Fanu's The Familiar to underscore the doubts humans have in a physical world, and sets the stage for a melding of the material and spiritual realms.

The son of a feudal lord in Tuscany, Vittorio de Raniari writes to give an account of his life and how he became a vampire. The telling is fraught with sentimentality and gives a very human light to the narrator.

In an eerie comparison between vampires and mortals, Vittorio states, "beauty carries us to our doom..." (7). The comparison drawn is amazing in that man's lustfulness is reflected in the vampire's immortality and thirst for human blood. The introduction of Ursula, a beautiful young vampiress who saves Vittorio's life brings an element of the sensuous to an otherwise gruesome scene.

The butchering of the de Raniari family by an army of vampire warriors is terribly graphic. Rice exhibits a boldness in her killing of Christians by so loathsome a lot. Yet a thread of romance is knitted into this scene and remains unbroken throughout the story. Rice shows herself to be a hopeless romantic.

But there is a powerful underlying moral message in the dialogue. The interaction between Vittorio and the guardian angels is a truly amazing exchange and shows that Ann Rice's imagination knows few bounds. It is



sometimes difficult to discern who is writing the story, Ann Rice or Vittorio de Raniari.

Quoting from St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and the King James Bible, she drives home points that otherwise might be missed. She quotes Plotinus from a work by St. Augustine, “that the very fact of man’s corporal mortality is due to the compassion of God...” (201). This makes a point from a Christian

Perspective that Vittorio makes many times: his immortality is a curse.

Apuleius is also quoted, “larva are malignant demons created out of men...” (202). Here Rice’s detailed knowledge of spiritual and philosophical Renaissance literature gives her insight into many of the beliefs that existed at that time. The line between fact and fiction becomes so blurred as to almost qualify as historical fiction. Using literature of the time, Rice turns these archaic beliefs into a story line so based in fact that it virtually becomes a lesson in history.

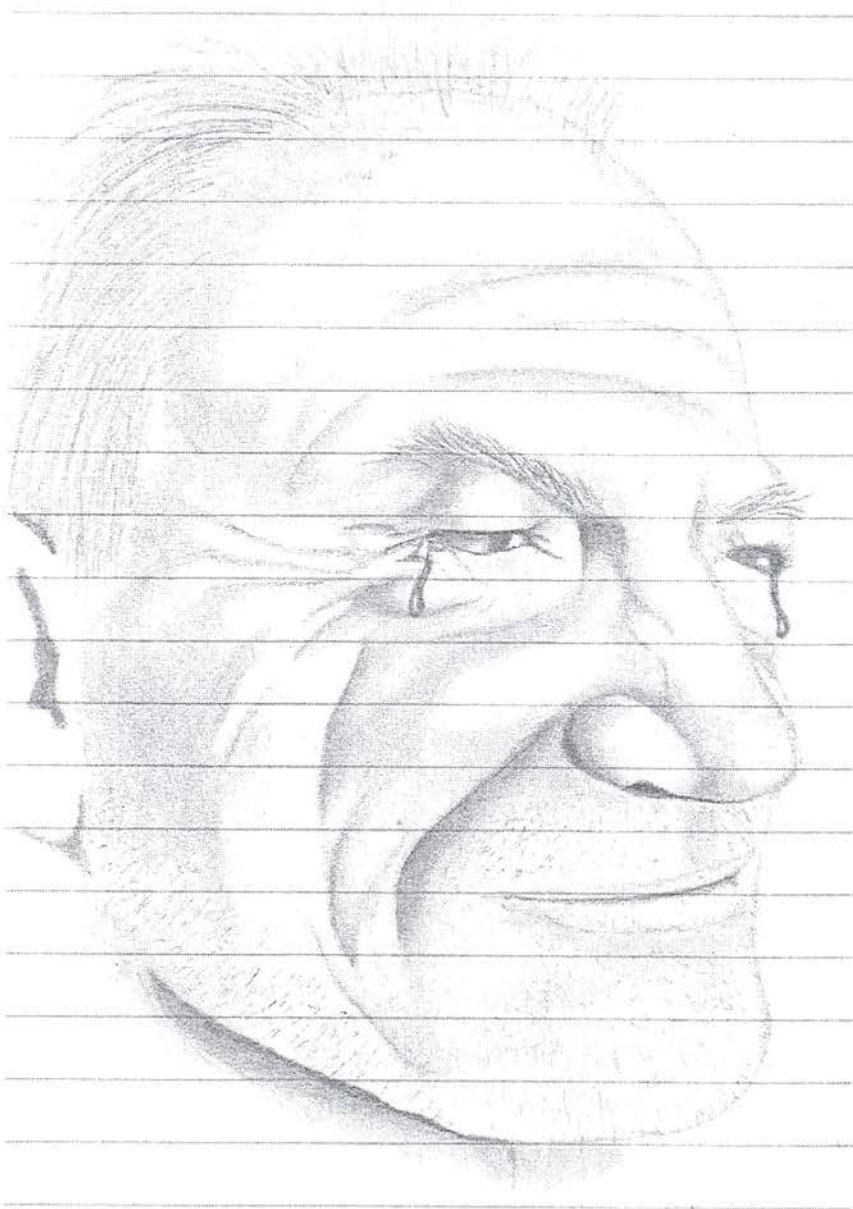
This is poignantly displayed in an ironic twist as Vittorio tries to convince the population that his clan was wiped out by demons. Just as unexplained massacres were attributed to demons in days of old, the people claim warring political factions killed his family. This reverse psychology approach conveys Vittorio’s frustration superbly.

With the help of guardian angels, Vittorio is able to take revenge on the demons who killed his family. One by one, in painfully graphic detail, Vittorio beheads the sleeping vampires. The last one he unveils is Ursula. He is unable to finish the killing. Mastema, the archangel who enabled him to take revenge, tells him he must. An astonishing discourse ensues as Vittorio begs “in the name of love” that he be allowed to spare Ursula. In a scene that touches the soul he asked: “Mastema, can she be saved?” (236). The depth of this question is not hard to grasp, for its meaning is clear. How far can man fall before he is irredeemable? This question is answered in part a short time later. As result of Vittorio’s failure to slay Ursula, she



seduces him and makes him undead like herself. Though he gains his love, he loses his humanity, demonstrating that man's privilege to choose comes at a cost. This fundamental law is again confirmed as Vittorio and Ursula terrorize and feed on the inhabitants of Santo Maddalana. The townspeople had made a deal with the devil. They gave their infirm children to the vampires and were in turn, left in peace. But an underlying truth is proven; those who make deals with the devil will pay with their lives and their souls.

Vittorio ends with an impassioned appeal to the reader that they learn from his weakness and misjudgment...



*General Art-Third Place*

*The Lines of Time*  
Keith Williams

## Literary Critique-Third Place

### Tom is Not the Hero He is Purported to Be Frederick Very

Tom in the Tennessee Williams play Glass Menagerie is not the hero that he is made out to be. The device that the author uses to bring the audience to Tom's point of view is to have Tom step out of his role and be the narrator. Audiences have a natural tendency to let the narrator decide for them who to feel sorry for. The play is a memory play when Tom is remembering past events; this along with the fact that Tom is also the narrator gives him great power in his one-sided portrayal of past events. Tom, it seems, is remembering the events in such a way that his mother and his sister are somehow at fault rather than himself. We are presented with a very one-sided view of what really happened in that apartment. None of the other characters get to do this.

The action begins with a pretentious and inflated speech delivered in front of a blank wall by Eddie Dowling, (Tom) who is several times in the course of the play to step out of his role to act as a usually unnecessary "narrator." (Krutch 357)

Krutch sees that Tom's narrations are "usually unnecessary" in the play, but Tom's narrations, as can be seen by reading the play without the narrations, are all very necessary. This is the device the author used to make the audience feel sorry for Tom instead of disdaining him. It was a clever psychology on the author's part. Tom successfully justifies his actions by using this ploy.

Although Tom will never forget Lora and the candles she blew out, he is part of the larger world that must find a common salvation in action. "For nowadays the world is lit by lightning." (Gassner 49)

Tom poetically says, "For nowadays the world is lit by lightning," when he really means that he has left his family in the dark with no electricity. He consoles the audience with the falsehood that they now have lightning to light up their life with. This might very well be true as they might by then

be out on the streets and only have lightning to light their way at night because they are homeless now. The story ends there in the written play, but on the stage, it is slightly different in a very revealing way.

Then the lights go out, and the narrator steps again to the front of the stage. That, he announces, is the end of all the author has to tell. The imagination of the audience must supply itself the rest of the story. (Krutch 357)

Extrapolating what happened to Amanda and Lora after Tom left them in the dark because he refused to pay the electric bill is not very difficult. After all, if he wouldn't even pay for the electric, what makes anyone so sure that he paid the rent before he left? The author left his character in charge of everything: the accuracy of the memories, the narration of the story and also when to end it. Tom would, of course, end it before he got to the bad part where Amanda and Lora had to go through hard times or death. This must have been the author's idea, to put the villainous character in charge of what to tell, how much to tell, and when to end it using both his memories and his narration of his side of the story. Some of the worst villains in history could be presented looking not so bad, or even with the audience feeling sorry for them under those circumstances.

Ester Jackson sees not just Tom as being an anti-hero, but that men in general are anti-heroes.

It insists, as does Williams, that all men are anti-heroic; that these figures, no more than others, are guilty of the human condition. In this context, Williams' catalogue of transgressors in search of salvation is the true symbolism, his anti-hero, the very present image of men. (Jackson 61)

Jackson's statement justifies Tom's actions by saying that all men are like Tom. It doesn't follow, however, that since Tom and his father are bad and that since they both ran out on their families, that all men are bad.

Krutch doesn't see the problem as Tom being a villain, or that Tom is bad only because all men are bad. He says that the author's problem is bad writing.

But there is no use failing to mention that his weaknesses are as patent as his gifts, or that very good writing and very bad writing have seldom been as conspicuous in the script of one play...He is one of those writers who had best heed the advice: whenever you have written a line you especially like, strike it out. (Krutch 357)



It is clear from the events of the play that Tom is a sorry excuse for a human being because he abandoned both his mother and crippled sister in the middle of the Great Depression. He was the only one with a job when work was not to be had. His actions at the end of the story show that he is hiding something and that just might be a bad ending. The author handed us a giveaway clue at the end.

I would have stopped, but was pursued by something. It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise. Perhaps it was only a piece of transparent glass. Perhaps it was a familiar bit of music. Perhaps I am walking along a street at night, in some strange city, before I have found companions...Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. (Williams 1999-2000)

Was this Lora's ghost? Did Lora die as a result of exposure to the cold winters in St. Louis? What is Tom hiding? Whatever happened, the blame falls squarely on Tom's shoulders.

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# *Special Category*

*Funded and Sponsored by:  
Phi Theta Kappa  
National Honor Society*



*General Art-Honorable Mention*

Victor Wilson



## *Special Category*

### Gold, Gods and Glory: The Global Dynamics of Power

#### Duck, Duck, Goose Frederick Very

Of course you remember the Homeland Security report leak about six months ago. Seems that the report was declassified, but not approved for dispersal, but not disapproved either. It also seems that some smart Johnnie at the Homeland office decided to leak the report to the Internet. They put the 148 page report on a new web-site called duckduckgoose.com. It was pulled three days later, but thousands of people had already downloaded it by that time, and during the next few weeks Homeland agents showed up everywhere and wiped hard drives by the thousands. Still, some laptops survived the search, so the 148 page document still survives, and I still have a copy.

The whole thing involves a plea from Homeland to help figure out a certain problem, that is before a higher up in the chain of command killed the plea. Their best scientists couldn't figure out the problem and they wanted help.

It seems that two ducks and a goose are consuming lead and bismuth and producing gold and platinum eggs. I know, on the face of it, it seems silly. Like the fairy tale of the goose that laid golden eggs, but look at what the Homeland people are saying in their report named Duck, Duck, Goose.

The whole egg wasn't platinum, just the yoke. It was found that the birds were consuming lead and iron pellets from the farmers workbench where the farmer reloaded his shotgun shells. Somehow, the birds were taking Lead 207 and producing Platinum 195, they were also taking iron 55 and turning it into Copper 63. The former reaction produces enough heat energy to cook our goose in less than a second. The latter reaction requires vast amounts of energy to happen at all: in fact, the same amount of power

produced by the former reaction. The birds appear to be involved in a fission/fusion reaction where the results come out to be exactly even. This equaling effect is very fortuitous for the ducks and the goose, not to mention everyone who lives up to about ten miles from the farm. If the reaction got just a little out of balance, boom. (Homeland 43)

Just how much energy does each ounce of lead produce in transforming into a bit less than an ounce of platinum?

The goose had produced a one ounce marble sized chunk of platinum. Production of just that one ounce should have released the heat energy of over 7,000 barrels of oil. The goose should have been cooked, but she wasn't. There must be some other place that the energy was going. That's when Tucker suggested looking at the vast amounts of iron disappearing in the goose. Hannon, who was in charge of researching the ducks came to the same conclusions independently. (Homeland 27)

The amazing thing is that they even managed to change the reaction.

One of the ducks was transferred to a very remote location at the Nevada test site, to test out a theory concerning the reaction. We didn't want to put all our eggs in one basket, so to speak. The ducks diet was changed from lead intake to bismuth intake. The duck didn't blow up. Instead the next egg was gold as was predicted. Gold 197 to be exact. Bismuth 209 to Gold 197. Again exactly 12 change in weight. Maybe the goose that laid the gold eggs in myth was a true story. In any case, the duck was still producing three helium atoms per gold atom produced, and three helium atoms also weigh 12. (Four each) Clearly this was proof positive that this was the reaction it would be. (Homeland 98)

The main that this report was put together was to find help from the general public. A sub department of Homeland Security called Duck, Duck, Goose was brought into existence to gather information from the public and offer to pay 10 percent of all income generated from the idea to the winner. The big push was to be able to make power plants using this technology.

They want to be able to reduce lead and bismuth into gold and platinum and to get the heat energy to produce power. Oil would be dead as a power source, if the secret could become unlocked as to what was acting as a

catalyst in the safe nuclear reaction that was going on in these birds.

The object in getting this report released to the general public is to fish for ideas. A winning idea would make the winner the richest person in the world bar-none. All this on the 10 percent royalties from the power generation alone since power is a multi-trillion dollar a year industry all by itself. The

global dynamics of power production is awesome. The person submitting the winning idea should do it for God and country. They should do it for the gold and the glory. They shouldn't forget about the platinum either.

(Homeland 147)

Homeland Security claims that this report was a hoax. However, they sure wiped a lot of hard drives for a hoax, but here is the kicker. On the Homeland Security's own web-site, a disclaimer was posted:

We have no knowledge of the Duck, Duck, Goose report and contend that it was a hoax. It's not real, but if any of you can figure out just how these mythical birds could really do this, and how to use that information to produce a safe power plant, we will see to it that you get 10 percent royalties. Send your ideas to: Homeland Security, Project Duck, Duck, Goose, Washington, D.C. (Homeland Posting)

This posting on their web-site was also pulled after another three days. That's okay, the secret's out.

So if you can figure out what is going on inside these three birds, for God's sake contact them. Do it for God and country. Do it for Gold and the glory. And don't forget about all that platinum either!

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7 July 2006.



# 2007 EXPRESSIONS



*Cover Art-Honorable Mention*

Lee Mai Pham



*Faculty*  
*and*  
*Staff*



Chinatown  
Los Angeles, California

Andrea Munoz-Staff

# Guardian of Freedom

Dr. Albert T. Thigpen-Faculty

Committed to liberty, freedom for all.  
Standing as a shield for the people from all enemies.  
Grounded in democracy and the equality of all mankind.  
Seeking, nor desiring, popularity and spotlight.  
Measuring up against nature to save, and serve, those in need.  
Armed against evil, foreign or domestic.  
My mind, my body, my life...  
Forfeit to protect the least among us.  
Fighting for a belief, the dream that founded a nation.  
With quiet dignity, and immeasurable pride.,  
I wear the uniform of a proud democracy.  
I am the guardian of freedom.



LAX  
Los Angeles, California

Andrea Munoz-Staff



# Whispers

Dr. Albert T. Thigpen-Faculty

The sun gleams brightly against a sea blue sky.

The wind dashes from tree to tree,  
and across the grass.

The warm breeze lifts my mind upward, onward, forward.

I look into her eyes and see twinkle of tomorrow.

Her crystal laughter breaks my dreamy thoughts.

Her playful touch opens my eyes in the “now” world.

She turns and flows into sky, the sand, and the water.

Everywhere, not where, just there—all at once.

I reach out and grab the wind.

My hand empty, but her presence full and free.

I spin around to catch her, but she laughingly floats away.

I run, thinking I am caught in a dream.

Jumping into the clouds, falling to the earth,

Feeling, lost and confused.

Why am not in control? Why is my hand empty still?

Why does my mind seem to soar with the wind, yet

Feel lost in the trees.

As I lay in my desperation, the pain of the unknown,

I hear crystal laughter, and voices well known.

You too can run above.

You must learn what's in the sun, wind, and trees.

Love is there for you.

But just like these whispers,

It must be free - - - to be sure.

# Meaningless Meandering

Sally Byrd-Faculty

He called my poem a "meaningless meandering"  
And I guess that is what it may seem  
If too quickly read  
Without an attempt to look deep-  
The meaning to find  
The message to ponder.

When the soul is exposed,  
Its essence is released.  
If there is no wisdom  
No offer of peace found and its price;  
No joy in life, no lesson to be lived;  
No hope of heaven; no fear of hell;  
No loved experienced; no love lost;  
No journey toward the promised land;  
No laugh deep in the gut  
That makes the world seem lovelier --  
If not conquerable, at least tolerable,  
Worrisome it is.

For poetry is the voice of the soul that speaks  
Of Life observed, lived, laughed at, cried about;  
Of Life as a deepening relationship with my God;  
Of Life as a chance to touch others and do good and  
To leave the world a little kinder,  
happier for my soul having meandered by.

# One Life To Live

Damon J. Gaspard-Staff

I'm awoken by the sound...  
of Christmas raindrops falling down...  
It brings me back to the times we shared... Your thoughtfulness & the way  
you cared...

Nothing can take my love,  
No, no, no one can take my love...

It's the simple times I miss...  
Your smile & laughter & the way you kiss... I feel you near me when I'm  
alone... and in your heart is where I call home...

Nothing can bring me love,  
No, no, no one can bring me love...

Cause it takes...  
Just a little embrace...  
Just a few mistakes...  
The love we shared cannot be replaced...  
A bond no one can break...  
With the love that we make...

'We only have one life to live...'

I made a promise I will keep...  
In a world of change my love will always be... I lie beside you & watch  
you sleep... and whisper 'you are the best of me...'

No one take my love,  
No, no, no one can bring me love...

'Til it takes...  
Just a little embrace...  
Just a few mistakes...  
The life we live cannot be replaced...  
A gift no one can take...  
With the bond we create...

'Cause we only have one life to live...'



## Working on the Car

D. L. Ross-Faculty



# Fantasy Football

D. L. Ross-Faculty

Once upon a time there was a football team. The coach called for a meeting to discuss the upcoming season. At the meeting, the head coach and his assistants handed out a playbook, along with helmets, practice uniforms, and other equipment. His playbook had lucid and thorough instructions, along with well-drawn diagrams for twenty-four plays. He told the players that in five days they would have their first practice, and that they needed to study and to learn the first ten plays. He then asked them, "How many of you want to have a championship season?" In unison, they all yelled exuberantly, "Me!"

Five days later, the coach walked onto the field where his players were waiting. He noticed that five of the forty-two players didn't have their helmets with them. Several others didn't have their mouth guards. A few others didn't have their shoulder pads. He told the first string offensive team to line up to run a few plays. He then told them to run Fifty-Four Blast. Some of them looked at him as though he was speaking Martian. He yelled, "Hurry up; let's get going!" So they lined up, and the quarterback started the count. Then the center hiked the ball to the quarterback, but the quarterback just held the ball, and started to look around, not sure what to do. The other players did the same, except for the left tackle, who was wondering why no one else knew what to do.

The coach, who was in dismay, looked at the players and asked them why they didn't know what to do. "Well, you see," said the fullback, "we couldn't understand your plays. You didn't explain them to us. You have to explain them to us." "Yea," piped in the right guard, "we don't understand your plays. You haven't taught them to us, and this playbook isn't all that clear, either."

"Well," replied the coach, "it says on page three here, that for Fifty-four Blast, the quarterback turns to his right, lets the fullback run past him, and

then hands off the ball to the running back who follows the fullback through the four hole. The fullback blocks for the running back.” The diagram shows how it all works.”

The few team members who had studied and learned the plays were starting to get kind of bored, wishing the others would have studied the plays so they could get moving. The head coach continued: “You know, you may have to read over these plays several times in order to learn them. You can’t just glance over them—or maybe not look at them at all—if you expect to learn them.”

A few players didn’t even hear the coach say this, because they were so busy complaining to each other about how unreasonable and unfair the coach was being with them. They had also been telling each other that they should be first-stringers. But when the coach asked one of them to tell him how Forty-Five Zoom Right should be run, the player who had not been paying attention, asked, “Could you repeat the question?” So the coach asked another player to answer the question, but that player didn’t have an answer, either. Nor did any of the others who had been complaining about not being on the first-string team.

The coach was starting to wonder how many of the players really wanted to have a winning season. All of a sudden the water boy, who had been filling up cups of water at a folding table close by, yelled over to the coach. “Hey coach! I can tell you how Forty-five Zoom Right should be run.” The coach, taken by surprise, yelled back. “How do you know that?”

“I love football, Coach! I asked one of the guys if I could look over his playbook, and I memorized some of the plays, just for fun.” The coach stared back at the boy, incredulously. “I wanted to try out for football, but everyone always tells me I’m too small.”

The coach hollered back to the boy, “Stay after practice for a few minutes. I’d like to see what you can do.” Several of the players started complaining about how some people are just kiss-ups, and how coaches always have their favorites.

# Heaven

Damon J. Gaspard-Staff

When I close my eyes I only think of you...  
All you & I have learned & all we both been through...  
The world is yours & mine, its beauty shared as one...  
Our innocence is lost so I keep holding on...

Every hour of every single day,  
I thank God for your heart...  
But most of all I thank him for our strength,  
because it is why we are who we are...

Heaven? If this is Heaven can you help me...?  
I looked in her eyes now she's all I see...  
If this is Heaven can you tell me...?  
'cause I need a reason to believe...

I reach to touch her face, like lyrics to a song...  
I know her love is there & my love is hers to own...  
I feel you here with me, I see you everywhere...  
The only thing I want to know is how much you care...

Every hour I'm searching for a way,  
to thank you for being in my life...  
I love you for bringing beauty in my world,  
and with this ring I want you as my wife...

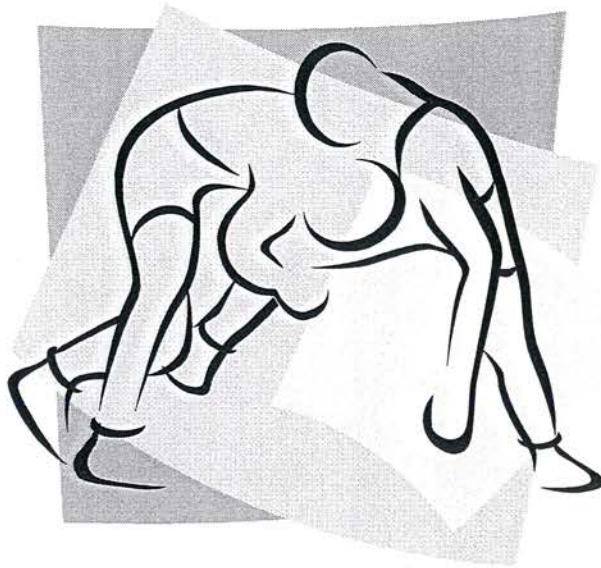
Heaven? If this is Heaven can you help me...?  
I see in her eyes eternity...  
If this is Heaven can you tell me...?  
I need one more reason to believe...

When I look into your eyes,  
everything I see is clear...  
I have everything whenever  
I have you here...

# Birds Do It

Sue L. Wright-Former LSCPA Faculty

Dozens of euphemisms have been conceived  
for that most intimate of contacts  
between the male and female  
of every living species  
in an attempt to lend a touch of  
dignity to an act somewhat  
reminiscent of ancient  
Roman wrestlers  
grappling and groaning  
for the amusement of  
some half-mad  
Emperor.





# For now, this is home...

Janet G. Polk-Staff

I'm racing towards town headed east, hoping that the local State Trooper is nowhere in site. I am absolutely frantic that I won't make it to the bank in time to make the daily deposit. Tears begin to well and my thoughts are screaming at me, "How did I get here? Why did I let this happen to me; to us? I need to calm down; focus on John, John, my 18 month old son, is sitting in the seat next to me. He is enjoying the ride and oblivious to the battle that is raging inside of me.

I made it in time; "One less thing for me to worry about, *today*," I thought as backed out of the parking lot of the bank. John spies a trooper and gleefully announces, "Rear-rear, Momma, rear-rear! It's sweet how he imitates a squad car siren, and it gives me a moment of joy. I was thankful that the trooper was in town and had not been on the highway earlier.

It is October and we have been in West Texas for a year now; the sun is setting in the west with magnificent hues of reds, oranges, and purples. Wispy dark clouds rocket across the palate of colors. The car is being buffeted by the relentless wind as I travel the road back to the store, our country store. What a joke, again my thoughts come back to what I have asked myself a million times in the last year, "How did I get here? Why did I let this happen to me; to us?" "*Enjoy the sunset, Janet, enjoy the sunset*". "Damn!" "Oh, darn," as I corrected myself, taking a sideways glance at my son, he gives me a giant grin back. "I love you, John," I croon.

My heart jumps; my knuckles white from clutching the steering wheel, "When will I ever learn?" I mumble as I catch something out of the corner of my eye darting pell-mell out of the empty field coming across the road. It is cornhusk chaff but I always think it's going to be a rabbit or a pheasant heading towards certain death and undoubtedly causing certain damage to the car. My husband says I must keep the car straight on the road and forget

trying to avoid a collision with whatever, or I run the risk of going off into the ever present bar ditch, which is always deep and filled with water this time of year. Now that would be a total mess if I landed in one of those by trying to miss flying cornhusks! For me, this is worse than the congested freeways of San Diego.

In just a couple of minutes the sunset has changed to brilliant red-orange that fills the western sky; a single tree and farmhouse off in the distance are silhouetted against it, quite a Norman Rockwell or Kodak moment. In seconds we are transported, as if Scotty from Star Trek had beamed us, to the Pacific shore. There John and I are standing on the beach watching the sunset over the dark sea. The sand squishes between my toes, the top layer of sand cooling to the night air while the layer down under is still warm from the days sunning. A light salt-tinged breeze flutters through my hair and over my face. I am transfixed as I softly state, "*Home*, we are home, John." But wait, the image is incomplete! David is missing, my love, my husband, John's father, *my best friend*, with a quick blink I am back.

I turn the car into the store parking lot. As I turn it off, I glance at the shabby white building with green trim around the doors and windows. I see David at the register with a customer. I sling John onto my right hip, my purse and diaper bag over my left shoulder; the car door closes after I bump it with my hip. I reach the front door as our customer is leaving. As we greet each other, John squirms to be let down and races wobbly and tippy-toe, as toddlers do, towards his daddy. David scoops him up and gives him a big bear hug and kiss; he opens up his other arm and I slip in to receive like-wise, while huddled together, David looked down saying, "Missed you two. Did you have a good trip?"

"Yes," I responded. For now my questions have been answered; we are here because *my best friend* is here. For now, this is home, and for now, San Diego will have to wait.

# Thirteen Ways of Looking at Poetry

Mysti Rudd's English 1302 Class-Fall 2006

## I

A way to express yourself, or  
to pacify the creatures clawing at you.

## II

An outlet to most though some disagree,  
but I can say when I write, I feel free.

## III

A vision; while others gaze through a  
looking-glass, it's another way to pay  
attention in class.

## IV

Poetry is not my thing; I do it because I  
have to. Though it is a way of life to  
some-a way to deal with problems-  
poetry is a path to boredom for me.

## V

A useless form of writing...very boring  
and un-fun but it is also FREEDOM-  
allowing you to express yourself in a  
way that nobody has to understand.

## VI

A combination of random thoughts that  
make no sense but sometimes still  
becomes popular.

## VII

A rhyme without reason, or a song for  
all seasons. Beauty made simple,  
perhaps.

## VIII

A mosquito bite: who can predict when  
the saliva of words will flow into a vein  
in the poet's brain?

## IX

Poetry is a variable in a mathematical  
equation, keeping 4/4 time while  
waiting to be solved.

## X

A glass of scotch: it goes down smooth,  
but leaves you with a burning torso.

## XI

### ANGER

released without hurting anyone, unless  
you count paper cuts.

## XII

A way to make yourself known;  
STAND OUT and  
EXPRESS YOURSELF; poetry  
moves the soul.

## XIII

Poetry is the highway running through  
the poet's mind; we are the cars that  
drive along this path of words.

May we remember to roll down the  
windows every thousand miles and  
breathe in the words we need to survive.





Balboa Park  
San Diego, California

Andrea Munoz-Staff



# Making Essay Gumbo

*-from the Classroom of Michelle Justice*

“Writing an essay is like making a gumbo,” I say to my incoming freshman composition classes. “An essay is not something that only the brilliant and gifted can do. Every one of you has thoughts and those thoughts have the potential to become an essay. There is no miracle that takes place in composition; it takes practice just like becoming a good cook.” This is how I introduce them to the fifteen-week course that is supposed to teach them how to construct a basic five-paragraph essay that has a strong thesis and well-built topic sentences followed by sturdy supporting sentences, all the while using standard grammar, punctuation and mechanics. This is so basic, or so I thought the first time I was hired to teach Composition I; thankfully, I had taught Developmental English in the past. That experience served me well.

Teaching Developmental English made me dig deep within myself and learn how to reach those who had forgotten the “rules” as well as those who had never learned them. I started using the gumbo analogy then. Almost everyone in Southeast Texas knows how to make a gumbo, both men and women. The first time I told a class that they started nodding and smiling. “Ah ha,” I thought, “I have reached them on a level they understand.” I put the textbook down and went from there. Teaching is all about performance and presentation, just like cooking. The class called out the gumbo ingredients, and then we wrote them down in



the order the ingredients are added. “We need onions, celery, peppers, garlic, and seasonings,” they enthusiastically chimed in. Next, we let it simmer a while before adding the shrimp.” That was when I realized that not all teaching methods came from a book or were modeled by my professors. I had to improvise; something I was not taught in a pedagogy class.

“Making a gumbo is a process,” I tell them, and they agree. The cook follows a certain sequence adding the essential ingredients in a specific order and then spicing it up after the basics are in—voila. The roux must be made before the seafood or meat is added. An essay is similar. The main idea must be decided upon before the details can be given. There is the planning stage. “What type of essay gumbo are we going to cook?” Narrative? Descriptive? Process Analysis or Comparison-contrast? Argumentation-Persuasion? What do we have to have as our essentials? A thesis, topic sentences, supporting sentences properly placed in the introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion, with good grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and a title of course.

Together we “cook” an essay gumbo. The first time many of my students are so worried that they stress and fret and freeze. “It is not going to be perfect the first time, just like the first time you made gumbo,” I reassure them. Apparently, my job is so much more than me possessing the knowledge; if I can’t share that knowledge, it doesn’t do them any good. “But the next time you will add a little more ‘spice’ to it so the details will be livelier. The time after that the thesis will be stronger, and the time after that the grammar and punctuation will have improved.” The quality of their “ingredients” determines how good the writing is. Bad or too few shrimp equates to bad gumbo just as bad or insufficient word choice or sentence placement means poor writing. “One thing leads to another in essay writing just as in cooking,” I explain. “If a sentence isn’t good, the paragraph isn’t good; if the paragraph isn’t sound, the essay isn’t sound.” Having an analogy like gumbo cooking makes it more understandable, not so abstract.

service it provides is giving students who have never been successful a feeling of competency and mastery over a task they have postponed, and even feared. Second, it gives us an ice-breaker into something unknown using something familiar. Though many of our students are well-versed in the art of essay writing, just as many need to be shown that simply because they haven't been successful in the past doesn't mean they can't be now. The gumbo analogy isn't ground-breaking, but it successfully works for me, and as long as I continue to receive the looks of relief I get from students, I will use it. After all, writing an essay and cooking a gumbo are both expressive ways of sharing ourselves.



### Recipe for Essay Gumbo

<i>2 cups desire and determination</i>	<i>Numerous sturdy supporting sentences</i>
<i>1 notable introduction</i>	<i>Handful of transitions</i>
<i>3 impressive body paragraphs</i>	<i>Adverbs and adjectives liberally sprinkled</i>
<i>1 memorable conclusion</i>	<i>Thoughtful reflection and revision</i>
<i>1 strong, well-developed thesis</i>	<i>Big doses of courage and effort</i>
<i>3 concise topic sentences</i>	<i>1 interesting title</i>



First, develop a plan (outline/map), also known as pre-writing. A writer must know exactly what type of essay is being written and what the three topics/issues are. Next, decide what matters will be in each body paragraph so that when writing focus is not lost. Devise a robust thesis that states the essay's point. Formulate the topic sentences so that each paragraph's topic is clearly directed. Construct interesting supporting sentences that give details and examples. Be sure to use transition to move from one idea to another, especially when changing paragraphs. Re-read the initial draft making sure the thoughts flow smoothly. Run spell check, but do NOT rely on it. Proofread to catch grammar errors. Make sure MLA guidelines are followed. Name the essay; this is your "baby" and it must have a name.



Read the essay slowly out loud to catch errors or have someone else read it. Put essay down, leave it alone for a while, return and re-read. Realize that writing, like cooking, takes practice and everyone develops his/her own individual techniques. Hand essay in and be receptive to suggestions given on returned/graded paper.



## Stupid Hurts

D. L. Ross-Faculty



# I Am From Cerro Gordo

Mysti Rudd-Faculty

I am from fields so black and rich  
they form the oreo crust  
of the cheesecake of  
my childhood.

I am from hard work-lifting  
rocks, pulling weeds, hoisting hay bales-  
butt stuck on a tractor for twelve straight hours,  
plowing corn stalks under before they  
disappear in the first November blizzard.

I am from Lac Qui Parle County-  
“lake that speaks”-trickling  
to my back yard via a re-trenched  
drainage ditch, as majestic to me  
as a wildlife refuge. My home was the home  
of families of mallards, pheasants, white-tailed  
deer, even the rare and solitary  
great blue heron.

I am from the call of the morning dove at dusk:  
“Ooee, ooh, ooh, ooh; Ooee, ooh, ooh, ooh,” as  
well as the bell of the meadow lark at lunch:  
“Come and get some buttermilk; come and get some  
buttermilk.”

I am from Cerro Gordo Township-  
“the place on the hill”-the only variation  
in the land formation for a six-mile radius  
in the flat plains of the Red River Valley  
of the Minnesota of my memory.

I am from the house of seven gables, a dilapidated  
Victorian too small for nine people, too un-  
insulated to keep the water pipes from freezing,  
with only one bathroom and a line of squabbling kids  
waiting for their turn to grasp a bit of privacy  
behind the only locking door in the house:  
a single hook and clasp key.

I am from oil-burning stoves-  
one upstairs and two down-  
where every January morning  
my siblings and I fight for the center  
spot on a rug in front  
of the open oil burner doors,  
gathering enough stored heat  
to venture outdoors and down the  
driveway where we prayed for the 6:45 bus  
to take us to school-and whisk us away  
from the thirty-degrees-below-zero  
chill of the Canadian Norther.

I am from lutefisk, lefse,  
ropelse and rume grout;  
I am from potatoes for supper  
every single night, no questions  
asked, no choices given; thankful

For the variation of  
“baked, boiled, riced, or grated.”

I am from “Amazing Grace” hummed  
by my mother as she plays the upright  
piano while my father mixes Seagram-Sevens  
discretely in the cellar.

I am from pain-  
and poverty  
and alcoholism  
and venereal disease.

But I am also from  
strength  
and perseverance  
and laughter  
and cleverness.

I am from the hole  
in my mother’s self-esteem,  
I am the butcher paper wrapped around  
the falseness of  
my father’s boasts.

I am my father’s daughter, my mother’s nemesis.  
I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and  
the end, as well as the marshmallow middle.  
I am nothing...  
and I am everything.  
and I am the shadow in between  
the dance of hesitance draped over desire.

I am a rebel, an activist, a challenger  
of the status quo, who chose to leave Minnesota  
twenty-three years ago.

I am a wanna-be warrior on the trail  
of an origami tiger.

I am my own harshest critic like many with Norwegian ancestry,  
I am my only friend and also my worst enemy.

Still, I keep wading into the waters of the seven seas of humanity  
as I seek the wellspring of words that will never cease...







## NON-LOVE AFFAIR

Sue L. Wright– Former LSCPA  
Faculty

You think I love you because I wear a  
watch upon my wrist  
and one around my neck.

You think I love you because I keep  
two calendars upon my kitchen wall

and one above my bed.

You think I love you when I speak your name  
at least a dozen times a day.

You think I pay homage to you with each peeling  
of the marble mantel clock.

You think I walk with you in measured cadence  
to the soft Westminster chimes

Ah, but these reminders of your existence is not  
Love, but merely ways to keep abreast of you.

I've watched you as you plucked the roses  
From a young girl's cheek.

I've seen you toss a young man's dreams  
Against the rocks of impossibility.

I've felt you turn the balmy summer days  
Into sudden icy winter storms.

But now, the mask is off, and we finally  
See each other face to face.

Time, I know you for what you are thief,  
rogue, charlatan, and no man's friend.

# All's Well that Ends Well

Sally Byrd-Faculty

Unmatching parts—symmetrically opposed,  
Not balanced—like an onion with a rose.

An end designed and fitted well to sit  
And make with comfy chairs a cozy fit.

The means with which some feel rests all allure  
Is *not* beneath her sweater, that's for sure.

The waist attempts to placate ancient foes  
But large to small so quickly underflows  
That parts will worry on to spar again.

You can view it any way you wish, my friend,  
But those poor means can't justify that end.

# The Unsinkable Soul

Sheila Kaye Guillot-Faculty

How do you measure a person's worth? You can't, it's impossible. Inez, Mom, Granny, (whatever name you called her) meant so much to so many. She played countless roles in her lifetime while here on Earth.

The role she continually played throughout her life was caretaker. She always wanted to take care of others, no matter the cost to herself. She willingly sacrificed so that she could provide for others. A person who faces any challenge with hope, humor, and heart is considered to be an "unsinkable soul." The unsinkable soul is also considered to be someone who has stick-to-it-ness and perseverance. In addition, this soul would have to possess a lot of spunk, spice, and sass. Well, this definition beyond a doubt fits Granny—she truly had an "unsinkable soul."

For those who never met her, they missed something special—and for those who did, they were blessed because they spent part of their life in the presence of an angel.

**Motherhood:** Her boys—Jimmy, Jessie, and Robert meant the world to her. Theodore Roosevelt once said "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." That's exactly what she did. She took in laundry, ironing, fixing hair, working at the church—whatever it took to support her three sons. She also took in abused and neglected children. Her heart was large enough to show love and understanding to many foster children.

**Storytelling:** Granny could sit and spin many "yarns." She could put a humorous twist to all of her stories. She would laugh so hard and so long about some of the stories she told that she would nearly wet herself. With all the struggles in her life, she could, later in life, sit back and tell the story with laughter and smiles.

**Fun-loving:** She enjoyed joining organizations. She especially loved her Red Hat Society. Getting dressed up in purple clothes with red accessories was a blast! The gaudier, the better. This group fit her

personality perfectly! The group would dress up, go out to eat, and tell stories and jokes. What a perfect fit!

**Cooking:** Everyone loved Granny's cooking. She was very talented. She could take an empty pantry and create a four course meal. Her talent as a cook extended into the workplace where she spent innumerable hours cooking for hundreds of people. You always knew you would eat well when you were at Granny's.

**Quilting:** Her quilts were works of art. She tried to make quilts for every member of the family. Her ability to "stitch up" a quilt was passed down from her mother. She, her sister Pauline, and their mother could create some stunning quilts—you weren't sure if you should put them on your bed or hang them on the wall.

Granny possessed a "don't quit" attitude. She faced many sorrows and struggles in her lifetime—she lost her baby girl at birth, her first husband in 1966, her eldest son in 1986, and her second husband in 1992. All of these sorrows seemed to make her stronger. She would struggle through her sorrow, pick herself up, and continue on with humor and spunk. Nothing could keep her down. There is a poem called "Don't Quit" written by Clinton Howell that sums up her "don't quit" attitude.

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,  
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,  
When the funds are low, and the debts are high,  
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh.  
When care is pressing you down a bit,  
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Life is strange with its twist and turns  
As every one of us sometimes learns,  
Any many a failure turns about,  
When he might have won had he stuck it out;  
Don't give up though the pace seems slow,  
You may succeed with another blow.



Success is failure turned inside out,  
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,  
And you never can tell how close you are,  
It may be near when it seems so far,  
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit,  
It's when things seem worst,  
That you must not quit.

**Giving:** She was a giver, but rarely a taker. When one grandson was seriously hurt in a car accident, she went to Texas to take care of the other grandkids. When her son was diagnosed with brain cancer, she again went to Texas to help out her son and his family. During the last few years of her life, she spent a great deal of her time, and health, taking care of and visiting her sister Pauline and brother Jim, in the nursing home. When someone needed her—she was there for them. No matter who, no matter where, no matter what! You could count on her.

She gave of herself until she could give no more. It's amazing how God works at times. She would go to the nursing home several times a week to visit her siblings; but when she was diagnosed with brain cancer, she didn't immediately think of what would happen to herself; but what would happen to her brother and sister. So, God in his infinite wisdom, took both of them home! Now all she had to worry about was herself! But she didn't! Instead she worried about what was going to happen to her family and friends.

She accepted the fact that she had brain cancer; but, she was determined to make it through this challenge. She persevered. Another poem that fit her was written by Anne Stortz and is titled "Perseverance."

When all the world is looming dark  
And things seem not so clear,  
When shadows seem to hover 'round  
Lord, may I persevere.  
When it seems everything's been tried  
And there's no way to go,

Just let me keep remembering  
Sometimes the journey's slow.  
I may just need to stop and rest  
Along the path I trod,  
A time to try to understand  
And have my talk with God.  
As I gain new strength to carry on  
Without a doubt or fear,  
Somehow I know things will be right,  
And so, I persevere.

So “How can a person’s worth be measured?”; it can’t be—because a person’s worth is priceless to those who knew and loved them. A person who faces any challenge with hope, humor, and heart is considered to be an “unsinkable soul.” That you were Granny, that you were.

There is a verse in the Bible that sums up Granny’s earthly journey. It is 2 Timothy 4:7.

I have fought the good fight,  
I have finished the race,  
I have kept the faith.



Thank you Granny for all that you were—  
we love you and miss you.

Love,  
Your granddaughter Sheila  
with family input

# The Light Is In My Eyes

Damon J. Gaspard-Staff

The light is in my eyes,  
too blind to see...  
what you mean to me...

Just once, I would like to win...  
I've held your smile inside my hands,  
but let the dream slip away again...

It seems like the world's turned upside  
down and it's come between me and you...  
I live my life lost but now I'm found  
and I've found it inside of you...

The light is in my eyes,  
too blind to find a way...  
Love, it's so hard to say...

It seems like the world wants to see me  
down, I hear them say 'he's no good for you...'  
but now my eyes are wide open and the lights died down;  
my journey awaits to begin with you...

The light is in my eyes,  
too blind to see...  
you're everything to me...

# Expressions 2007

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## Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial staff of EXPRESSIONS 2007 would like to thank all of the students who submitted work for consideration to EXPRESSIONS 2007 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 2007 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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