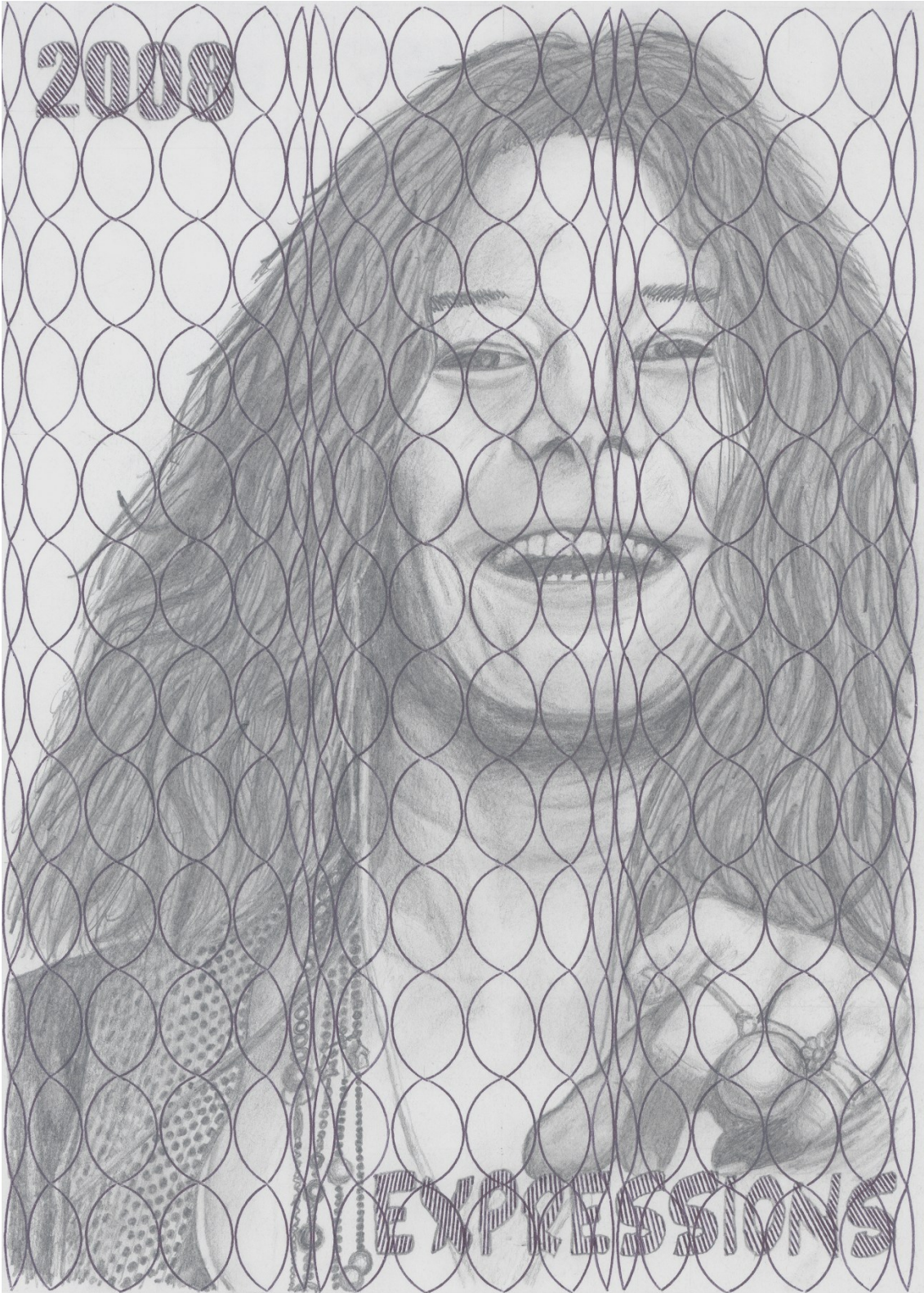


2000



EXPRESSIONS



A Member of The Texas State University System

Expressions

Spring 2008

Volume XXII

Expressions 2008

Student Winners

SHORT STORY

First Place

Group Therapy William H. Davis, Jr.

Second Place

A Promise Julio A. Marcos

Third Place

Meeting in a Cafe Julio A. Marcos

Honorable Mention

Derutna's Demons Josh Schaver

ESSAY

First Place

"Go With The Best, When You Want Success!" .. Ashley Gott

Second Place

Next November, Please!..... Richard Hall

Third Place

Invitation Frederick Very

Honorable Mention

My Life at LSC-PA Diane Hare

First Day Thien Tran

Life at LSC-PA Mallory Prejean

POETRY

First Place

Who am I? Charneth Ramdoo

Second Place

Oh Wouldn't It Be Wonderful?..... Frederick Very

Third Place

Burdens Charneth Ramdoo

POETRY

Honorable Mention

High in the Sky Peter Trevino
Soon Someday Peter Trevino
Wrinkled Hands Rachel J. Scott
A Beautiful Rose..... Melody Lynn Hendrix
Son, I Told You..... Michelle Rene Lopez

LITERARY CRITIQUE

First Place

Best of the Best..... Frederick Very

Second Place

What They Saw Frederick Very

Third Place

Indicators and Idealism of Blake Richard Hall

Honorable Mention

Jane’s Inferno Anna Sites

SPECIAL CATEGORY—Funded and Sponsored by: Phi Theta Kappa

The Paradox of Affluence: Choices, Challenges, and
Consequences..... Derrick L. Griffin

COVER ART

First Place

The Other Side George Jones

Second Place

..... George Jones

Third Place

An Unidentified Lovely Lady..... John Enard

Honorable Mention

Robert Raucshenberg George Ramirez

Honorable Mention

Alligator Clyde Frazier

GENERAL ART

First Place

His Holiness the Dalai LamaCasey Smith

Second Place

Faith.....George Jones

Third Place

James Henry DukeGeorge Jones

Honorable Mention

Portrait Culberson Campbell

Honorable Mention

Frankenstein Marquis Grant

Honorable Mention

The Ghost Bird (Ivory-Billed Woodpecker) John Enard

PHOTOGRAPHY

First Place

Love Yourself..... Kira DeVillier

Second Place

Love Today Kira DeVillier

Third Place..... Kendall Johnson

Honorable Mention..... Kendall Johnson

Early Expressions 2008

Student Winners

DESCRIPTION of a CEMETREY

First Place

Nana's Tombstone Britney Cotton

Second Place

Eternal Slumber Clint Duncan

Third Place

Granite Sadness Ashley Murphy

Honorable Mention

Arlington Heather Hussey

Together Forever..... Trisha Romero

EERIE..... David Gillespie

BUCKET LIST

First Place

Heart Desires David Gillespie

Second Place

My Bucket List..... Britney Cotton

Third Place

Kick the Bucket Joshua Miller

Honorable Mention

Experiences Before I Kick the Bucket Cheryl James

One Step Ahead of Time and Death..... Heather Hussey

POETRY

First Place

A Song to Sing Kevin L. Davis

Second Place

That Woman Kimberly Green

POETRY

Third Place

Our World..... Mahmoud Ali

Honorable Mention

Shattered Nga Thi Truong

Seasons..... Cheryl James

Weather..... Luc Pham

Path Heather Hussey

Table of Contents

SHORT STORY

Davis, William H. Jr.....	3
Marcos, Julio A.....	7, 13
Schaver, Josh.....	17

ESSAY

Gott, Ashley.....	23
Hall, Richard.....	27
Hare, Diane.....	35
Prejean, Mallory.....	43
Tran, Thien.....	39
Very, Frederick.....	31

POETRY

Hendrix, Melody Lynn.....	57
Lopez, Michelle Renee.....	59
Ramdoe, Charneth.....	49, 53
Scott, Rachel J.....	56
Trevino, Peter.....	54, 55
Very, Frederick.....	51

LITERARY CRITIQUE

Hall, Richard.....	73
Sites, Anna.....	79
Very, Frederick.....	63, 67

SPECIAL CATEGORY-Funded and Sponsored by: Phi Theta Kappa

Griffin, Derrick L.....	87
-------------------------	----

COVER ART

Enard, John	22
Frazier, Clyde.....	62
Jones, George.	Cover, 2
Ramirez, George	48

GENERAL ART

Campbell, Culberson.....	30
Enard, John	50
Grant, Marquis.....	38
Jones, George	20, 26
Smith, Casey	12

PHOTOGRAPHY

DeVillier, Kira	6, 16
Johnson, Kendall.....	25, 42

DESCRIPTION of a CEMETERY-EARLY EXPRESSIONS

Cotton, Britney.....	93
Duncan, Clint	95
Gillespie, David	103
Hussey, Heather.....	99
Murphy, Ashley.....	97
Romero, Trisha.....	101

BUCKET LIST-EARLY EXPRESSIONS

Cotton, Britney.....	109
Gillespie, David.....	107
Hussey, Heather.....	115
James, Cheryl.....	113
Miller, Joshua.....	111

POETRY-EARLY EXPRESSIONS

Ali, Mahoud	121
Davis, Kevin L.	119
Green, Kimberly.	120
Hussey, Heather.	125
James, Cheryl.....	123
Pham, Luc	124
Truong, Nga Thi.....	122

FACULTY & STAFF

Adams, Jimmie.....	150, 152, 153
Byrd, Sally	155
Gaspard, Damon James	129, 131, 133
Guidry, Cindy	148
Jones, Don “D.J.”.	149, 151, 154
Judice, Michelle	134, 138, 140
Megnet, Grace.....	160, 161
Polk, Janet G.	128, 141, 147
Ross, D.L.....	130, 132, 139
Rudd, Mysti.....	137, 143, 157
Wright, Sue Lanier.....	135

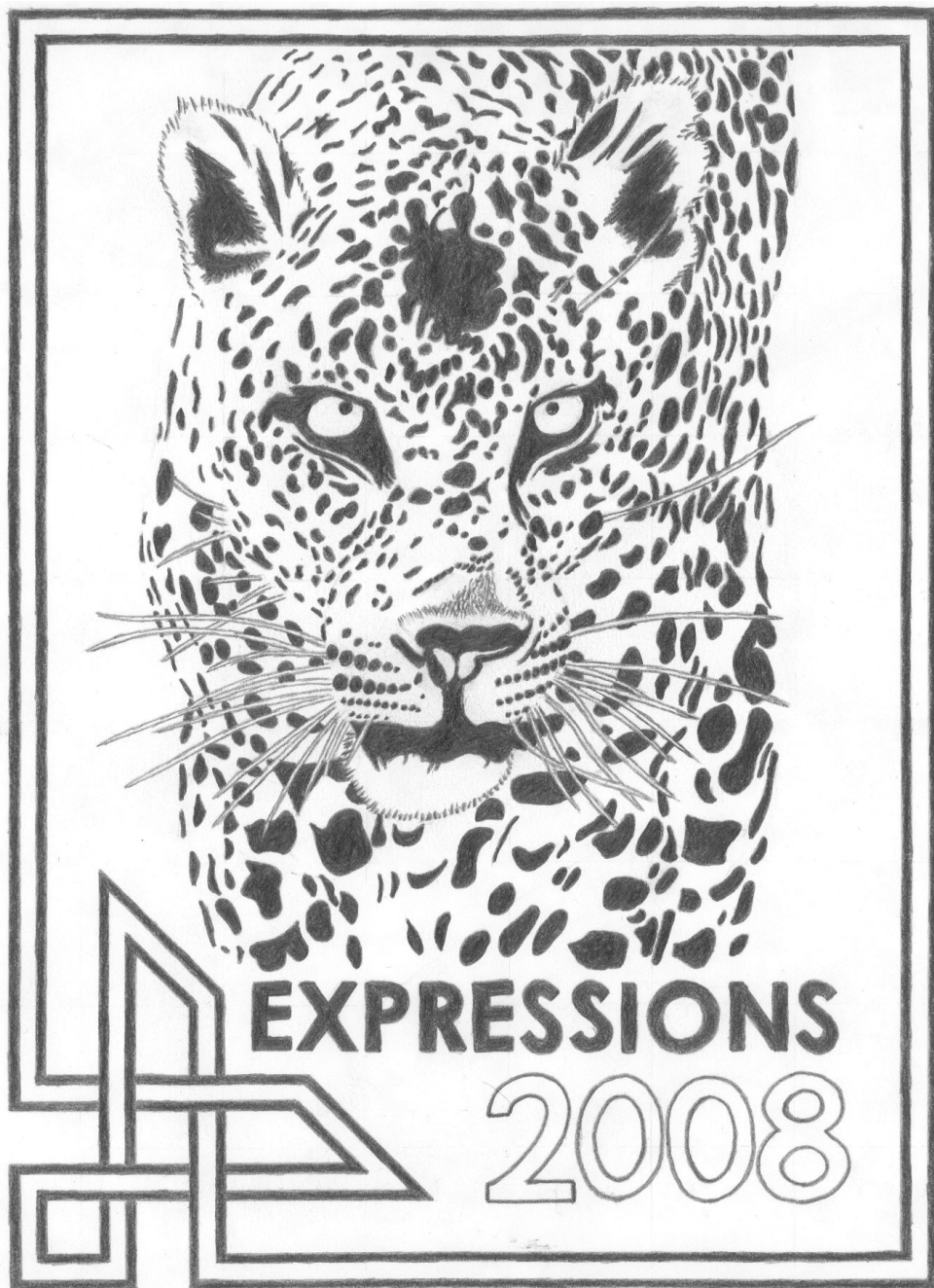
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Short Story



Cover Art-Second Place

George Jones

Short Story-First Place

Group Therapy William H. Davis, Jr.

Well, here I sit in group therapy doing a writing exercise. When I asked what I was supposed to write about, I was told, “whatever is on your mind...” Is he kidding? He can’t be serious. I’m a neurotic, bi-polar manic. I suffer from delusions of grandeur... I’m paranoid...surely he jests. Or perhaps he is doing a detailed study on psychosis. Or perhaps this is a trick...clever ploy to see what I write. Ask me just to write what’s on my mind thinking I will write something other than what is on my mind that can be analyzed, but the subtle truth is he really does want what is on my mind. Ah ha! I now have this figured out. It’s a detailed study to see if, in fact, all writers are psychotic. They say all forms of genius are rooted in some form of psychosis. By those standards this could be some sort of entrance exam. I look around and these other people look no more stable than I. Look at them all. Scribbling away or sitting there scratching their heads. I doubt any of them have figured out what is going on here. They just keep writing away, not realizing their thoughts will be picked apart. Come to think of it, they may be onto something. Introduce this test to all who think they need this. They would assign a certain status according to the level of psychosis one demonstrates. Actually cultivate neurotic behavior and channel it into an art. Yes, that’s it. Make psychotic writing into an art form...Oh wait, I have already done that That’s what got me here.

Oh, what’s that...? Write a poem? What the hell is he talking about, write a poem? I’m already writing something. Oh, I see, yes, he figured out what I am doing. Clever bastard, trying to throw me off balance. I’ll not fall for this. Let’s see... Need something to pass as a poem. Anything

will do. People will accept any kind of rubbish as poetry. Like time, poetry is a man-made concept... Let's see...

Blank Mind...

I just used up all I had.

So here I sit, nothing left to say.

Can't be the end...They say you can always dig deeper.

Deeper, deeper, deeper...

Deeper Still... Isn't that how graves are dug?

There you have it, a work of art. I'll give this malarkey some fancy title. "Dig Not A Hole" Ah yes, the great work by So 'n So, "Dig Not a Hole," a deeply spiritual account of a man's descent into the innermost recesses of his soul. And, the critics will go crazy over it. Then, when they proclaim it a great work, I will expose them for the fools that they are. That's not a great work you imbecile; it was me killing time in some stupid therapy class. Ha, ha, what do you have to say to that, Mr. art critic? Caught in your own trap! Dig not a hole without filling it back up, lest you fall in it! Oh, hold on...Dig? Dig, dig, dig... Dig deeper...My God! "Dig Not a Hole" is a work of art. I've been tricked into creating a "something!" Who knows what obscure bits of prattle will become tomorrow's archive treasures? Hell, look at our great Constitution. It was written by a group of renegade winos, and pot heads (Actually opium-heads.) on the run from other countries. Just consider our founding fathers for a moment. Washington was a bleeding Freemason, for God's sake. And how about that old fart, Ben Franklin? What an old lecher he was! And what about the Gettysburg Address? Lincoln's own words were "that will never scower..." Scower? Scower my ass, what the hell is that supposed to mean? If that's not psychotic, what is? Genius or psychotic? But when you look closely at many of our greatest historical figures, they were just as crazy. Ol' Churchill coined the phrase "Black dogs of depression". And Machiavelli? Ever read any of his crap? Prince Machiavelli? More like Prince Loon-O!

Oh, what's that? Time up? Stop writing? Yeah, right. Now you want to silence me. Not quite the same when someone figures you out, huh? No thank you sir, I'll not be silenced. What? Disturbing the class? This group? Ha, ha! It is to laugh. The only one I'm disturbing is you. You can't stand it because I have figured you out. Thought I wouldn't catch on to your little scam, did you? Well, now you know better. Oh yeah, that's right, make a phone call. Don't dare to argue such a weak position in front of the class. Who are you calling, the C. I. A.? What are you going to tell them, I'm a subversive for talking bad about Ben Franklin? You stuffed shirts are all the same. Sit high on your pompous asses hiding behind your spectacles, then when somebody catches you in one of your games, you change the subject or ask them to write a poem. Then, when your subject refuses to give quarter, you fake a phone call. I'll bet no one is even on the other end of the line. Yeah, keep looking crazy at me while you move your lips. What a fake old bastard you are. Got to give it to him, he's faking a good phone call. Some may even fall for it. Now he has the rest of the class looking at me. I'll pay no attention. But first...(I just thumbed my nose at that old billy goat!) Now, where was I? Oh yes, Nietzsche. The guy that thought he could run God out of town. Died in a nut house. Well duh, why do you think they call him God? What a loser!

Ah, some new students. Must be, they are wearing white. Wherever they are from, they grow them big. Well, they seem to be working their way over here. What? Can't you see I'm writing? What, that old poof? Pay no attention to him. Just between you and me, I don't think he is all there. Do what? Escort you? What? You don't know your way around. How did you find this class room? Excuse me fellow, but if you don't give me a little room, I'm going to have a panic attack on you and your friends. Oh, is that so, you want to try? Oh yeah? That's right, spread out. How about a what? How about I shove a thumb in your eye socket, fatso? Relax?... Relax my ass, get away from me and I will...I'm warning you.

(Thump!) How'd you like that? Hey, get that thing away from me Bozo. I tell you, I don't do needles. Ouch! Let go, you big buffoon. What wazh that shtuf...? You shnuke baslards,... Tink I;m gonna puke...Oooh...Slurned th slights out...ZZZZZZ...



Photography-First Place

Love Yourself

Kira DeVillier

Short Story-Second Place

A Promise Julio A. Marcos

Their skin was scorched and blistered from the sun beating down on them. The saltwater around the small wooden raft only mirrored the effects of the sunlight. The turquoise sea, white clouds, and the blue sky were the only sights.

The lapping of the water against the raft had a soothing effect on them. They were able to sleep off and on despite their pain, hunger and thirst. They had run out of water yesterday, and the food supply was used up also.

They had been adrift two days more than expected. They had counted on the ocean current to bring them to Florida, but they had miscalculated the drift. They weren't sure exactly where they were. They were tired of rowing and were at the mercy of the current.

"Pepe, how much longer you think?"

"I don't know, Ramon. No se," Pepe answered.

"I feel like tomorrow is our day. Manaña."

"Could be."

"What are you going to do first?"

"Have a cup of café."

"Yea. Me, I'm gonna have me a cold cerveza. And then catch up with the family."

"A hot one will be fine also."

"They must be worried about us. We should have arrived already," Ramon said as he looked out over the ocean.

Ramon studied the old man's face. It was red and leathery from all the years of fishing and being in the sun. He had that old salt's look in his eyes. Pepe's white beard made him look like Ernest Hemingway.

Ramon worshipped Pepe. It was Pepe who raised him after his father fled the island. Pepe showed him how to swim, fish and be a boater. Pepe had promised Ramon's father that one day he would bring his son to him. And he meant to keep that promise.

Pepe was reclined in the raft letting his mind wander to anywhere but where they were. His head was against the side of the raft with his eyes closed.

"Looks like we might of made a wrong turn somewhere." Pepe said.

"I got us on the water didn't I? Remember one thing, chiquito, I taught you to swim and I can teach you to sink."

Ramon just smiled.

Pepe looked up at the horizon. The sun was starting to go down. He pushed himself up with effort to his elbows.

"Well, mijo. Let's get to some rowing so we can go to sleep later. You're going to need energy for that cerveza tomorrow."

They rowed for about two hours. The smell of salt and the darkness surrounded them. The stars in the sky were the only lights that could be seen. The lapping of the waves was the only movement around.

Pepe was sound asleep across from Ramon. Ramon lay looking up at the night sky. He wondered if the sky would look different in the States. He was feeling the effects of having rowed again. His body was sore, his stomach hurt, and his heart ached. He couldn't wait to see his family again after all these years.

As he lay there he heard a sound that had been calming him. It was a low humming sound intermingled with whistles. It seemed for the last couple of days a pod of whales swam with them at nighttime, maybe

them in the right way, he hoped. He closed his eyes and let the darkness engulf him. He began to dream of lying on the beach.

He dreamed he was at a swimming match for his high school. This was the island wide championship for high schools. The winner of this race, the 100 meters, was going to be looked at for a possible spot on the Olympic swim team. Ramon was favored to win.

He had made a name for himself in swimming competitions. He was the swiftest swimmer that had competed in a long time. He could hold his breath longer than most people. He had almost a hundred medals that he had won in races. All but a handful were gold medals. He owed it all to his mentor, Pepe.

He was positioned on the platform with his knees bent ready for the signal to plunge into the water. The referee raised the gun and shot into the air. Ramon dove off the platform like a torpedo shot from a submarine. He barely made a splash or wake.

He swam as effortlessly as he always did. He was like a merman born to be in the water. He was leading the pack of swimmers by six feet. The other swimmers struggled to no avail to catch Ramon. He reached the finish line first.

The crowd erupted in applause and roared their approval. Pepe was hopping up and down with tears streaming down his face. He was proud of Ramon for all that he has accomplished in his racing career, but he knew what lay ahead, what they both had agreed upon.

A different noise woke Ramon. He looked up in the morning sky and looked for the sound. His movements roused Pepe.

“What’s wrong, Ramon?”

“Look! Helicopter!” Ramon said pointing.

“Damn, it’s the Coast Guard.”

Pepe got up to his knees and looked out of the ocean surrounding them. He didn't see a boat in any direction. He pointed in front of him.

"Look! What do you see?"

Ramon shaded his eyes from the morning sun.

"Buildings! It's buildings, viejo! We've made it!"

"Almost, mijo. Paddle and paddle hard. A boat won't be far behind."

They grabbed their oars and paddled. They paddled hard and steady. Despite their age difference they kept an unwavering rhythm. The buildings in the distance had grown a little. They were getting closer.

There were people on the beach jumping up and down. They waved towels, shirts, anything they could. They yelled words of encouragement to Pepe and Ramon.

They paddled with more determination because their trip was almost over. They have almost reached the promised land, the land of opportunity, the land of freedom. They were one hundred yards from the beach.

Pepe looked around and saw a boat over the horizon bearing down on them. He knew it was now or never.

"Ramon, jump. Swim for it!"

"What?"

"Go! You can swim faster than us rowing."

"I'm not leaving you, Viejo."

"Go! This is your only chance. They will come to the raft first. You will make it."

"No! We both will. Paddle faster!"

"Go, conjo!"

"You promised Papi we would make it."

"I promised him I would get you here. I'm tired. I'm through."

"I'm staying."

"If you don't go I'm gonna hit you with this paddle. Go, mijo! Go."

Ramon stared at Pepe knowing this might be the last time he would probably see him. He hugged the old man tightly.

“I love you, viejo.”

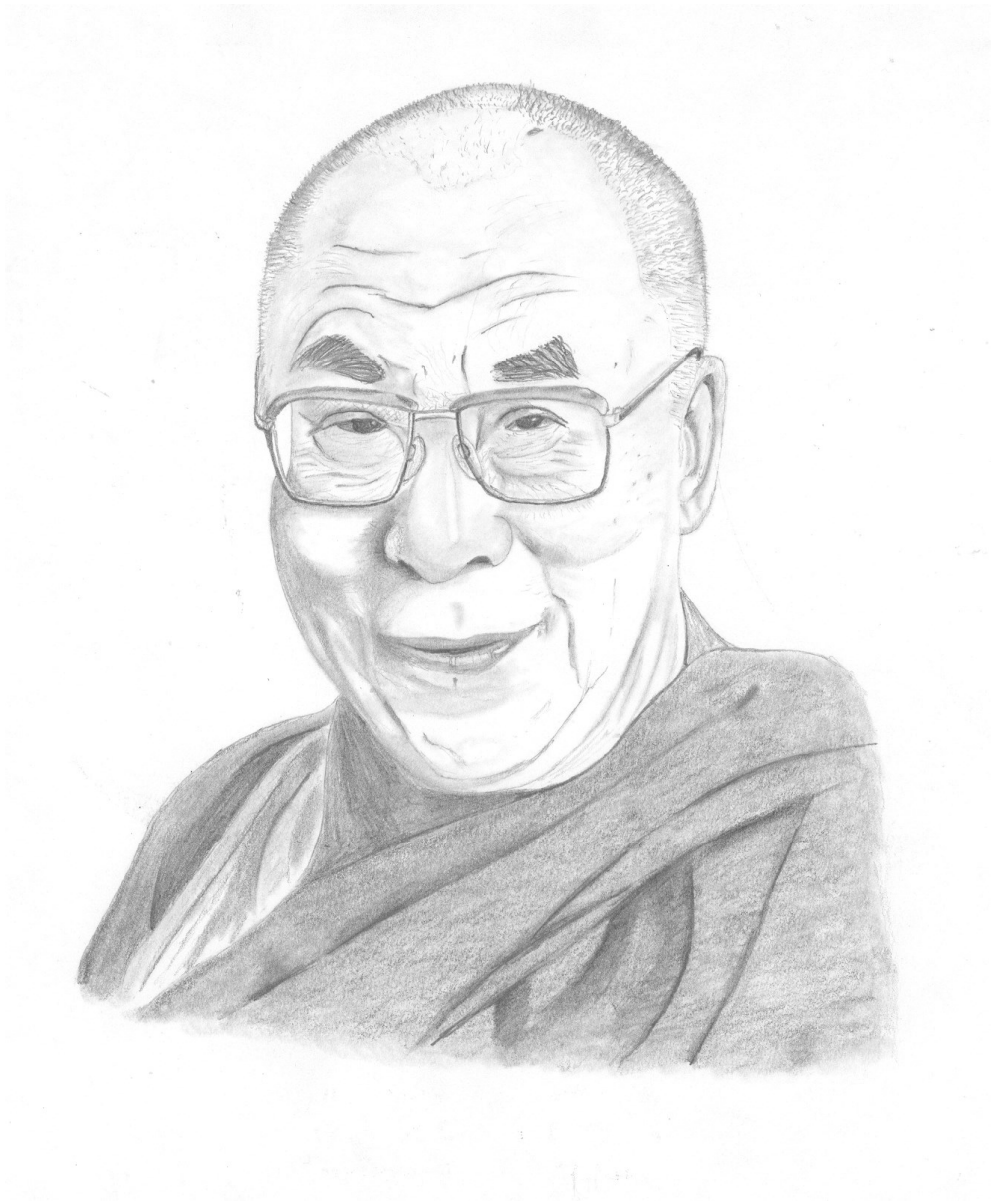
With that he turned and jumped into the sea. He swam with the determination of winning another race, the most important race of his life. He was the merman, one with the sea and sleek like a dolphin.

His muscles ached, and he wanted to stop and rest. But he knew if he stopped that it is the end of his quest. He didn't want to look back because it would slow him down. He kept on.

On the beach more people gathered. Word spreads quickly when some Cubans are trying to reach land. A few had come out into the water to lend support. He got to where the others had waded into the ocean.

The people helped him up and supported him as they drug him to the beach. The beachcombers were yelling and dancing in the sand.

Ramon had made it to U.S. soil. He turned to look for Pepe. The Coast Guard cutter was by the raft, but no sign of Pepe. Ramon glanced to the deck and saw Pepe jumping up and down with his arms raised in the air, tears streaming down his cheeks.



General Art-First Place

His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Casey Smith

Short Story-Third Place

Meeting in a Cafe

Julio A. Marcos

The clock on the wall shows that it is already fifteen minutes after nine o'clock. The sweet aroma of the fresh pastries mixed with the smell of different kinds of coffee fill the air. There aren't many people in here this time of the morning. Most people who have a job are probably already toiling away at the assigned tasks. But here I sit waiting.

Waiting again and for how much longer? What is time when all you have is time? How long has it been now? Does it really even matter?

There are ten tables in the café, and only four have anyone sitting at them. Two have two people sitting together and the other two tables each have one. I wonder if they are here for the same reason. I am sitting at the table that faces the entrance door so I can see everyone who walks into the café.

The door slides open and the cold air rushes in. It has been in the ten's with a wind chill in the negatives for a few days now. I glance up and see him come through the door.

He looks the same as I remembered him, a bit more gray up on top. But his features have not changed much. Maybe it is my imagination that I am seeing. It has been at least twenty-five years since the last time I saw him.

He looks around like he cannot see me. Funny, I think, nothing new there. I wave to get his attention and suddenly feel stupid. How can you forget even if it has been twenty-five years? He glances at me and slowly walks over to the table when I am sitting at. He pulls his denim coat off and drapes it around the back of the plastic chair across from me. He is wearing blue jeans and a red flannel shirt. It makes him look rugged,

Strong, like the man I always envisioned him to be. He sits down and the chair creaks under his weight.

The waitress comes over to take our orders. "What can I get you?" she asks him.

"Coffee. Black," he replies.

"Tom, you want a refill?" She asks me.

"Sure, Wendy, thank you."

"I'll be right back then." And with that she is gone.

I take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

"You're looking good," I say.

"Yea."

"It's been a long time."

"Yea."

I have to take another deep breath.

I guess you're probably wondering why I called you after all this time?"

"Yea."

I wonder if 'yea' is the only word that he knows.

Wendy comes back with our coffee mugs and sets them on the table.

"Can I get you guys anything else?"

"No, thank you, Wendy."

I take a deep breath.

"Well, I wanted to see you and --," I start.

"I came."

"Yea, I can see that."

Damn, I don't want for it to go down like this.

"I have something that I want to tell you," I say.

"You haven't been watching Dr. Phil and suddenly have a desire to confront people, have you?"

"No. But I do have something to say and maybe a few questions."

"Well, come on then. I don't have all the time in the world."

If only he knew.

"It's been twenty-five years since you've been gone. No word, no nothing for me. Why?" I ask.

"Your mother knows the answer to that."

"Yea, well, she said to ask you. You kept contact with her."

"Some things you can't let go and forget."

"And me?"

"Like I said, some things you can't let go and forget."

I stare at his face. His grotesque face. Could this really be the man who fathered me? Who helped raise me, at least for five years?

"Let me get to it."

He glances at his watch.

"I have been diagnosed with cancer," I continue to tell him. "They say it may be less than a year that I have left. I didn't want to end my life without seeing you, without trying to have you in my life and making up for these past twenty-five years. I forgive you and just want what I never had."

"And what is that? Money?"

I shake my head.

"No, I don't need that."

"Good. Because I don't have any."

"I don't want anything material from you."

"What do you want then?"

"I want to know my dad. My father. I want the relationship that I've never had. I want time. I want love."

"Hmmm..." is his reply.

Then he reaches into his pants front pocket and then withdraws his hand. My mind races to wonder what he has for me. He slaps his hand down on the table top. All the cups, napkin dispenser, the spoons and the sugar do a little jig. When he removes his hand there lays a quarter and a

dime. Thirty-five cents. Then he slowly rises from the table.

“Call someone else,” he says as he grabs his coat and walks out the door.

I stare at the coins on the table and then look out the front door. He is gone. Again. I slowly rise from the table, pay for the coffees and grab my coat. And as I walk outside to the sidewalk, it occurs to me that it is not that cold out here.



Photography-Second Place

Love Today
Kira DeVillier

Short Story-Honorable Mention

Derutna's Demons

Josh Schaver

In the land of Yoshika, there lives a boy named Derutna. His life has been one of heartache and loneliness, after his father abandoned him and his mother. His heart over the years has filled with hatred, they now live in a small town called Kiyoto. Derutna is fifteen years old, but has the build of a twenty-year-old bodybuilder.

"Derutna!" calls his mom.

"Ya!"

"it's time to eat!"

He sets down the tools he has using to rebuild their shed, runs inside, and begins to sit down.

"Now please do not break this chair," his mother says urgently.

"Don't worry. I'll take it slowly."

As he waits for dinner to be served, he begins to think back on all that he and his mother have gone through. This has become a routine for Derutna. As he does this, it always goes back to the day his father left them.

"Daddy, do not go," cries Derutna.

"I must son. I have to take this job, for the family. You will understand in time."

"it's ready," says this mother.

The aroma of the food brings Derutna back to the present.

"Mom, you shouldn't have."

"I know, but sweet and sour pork is your favorite. Besides you have to get your strength up to finish the shed."

Soon all the food is gone, and Derutna makes his way back to the shed. As his mom starts to clean up, she breaks down and cries.

“Look what you are missing out on Yasumi.”

When he finally makes it to the shed, a knife cuts through the night air like a hot knife cutting butter. It is as if the knife has a homing beacon tracking its prey.

“AHHH,” exclaimed Derutna.

He looks down at his leg and the knife has pierced right through his left calf. As he pulls it out, a man enters with another knife in his left hand.

“I should have done this a long time ago,” speaks the man.

“I know you. You are...? No it cannot be. NO,” shouts Derutna.

“Yes, it is your ‘wonderful’ father,” Yasumi says as he chuckles.

“Why did you leave us?”

Derutna thinks back, and all the memories of that horrific day come back.

“I cannot believe you are leaving us for her,” yells his mother.

As Derutna walks in their bedroom, he sees his father punch his mother.

She falls down unconscious. Derutna walks over to his mother and tries to wake her.

“Mommy, wake up.”

Yasumi just leaves with a woman Derutna has never seen before.

When he comes back to reality, another knife is coming right for his face but he catches it and throws it directly back at this father.

“You think you can beat me. I cannot believe I looked up to you once,” says Derutna.

The knife goes straight through his father’s chest. Yasumi drops to his knees and pulls the knife out. Blood begins to pour out of him like water coming out of a faucet.

“I never loved you,” says his father.

Derutna gazes as his father’s lifeless body falls to the ground. A smile starts to find its way across Derutna’s lips.

“Finally, my demons are conquered.”

After it is all over and done with, his mother comes running out the door

Screaming.

“DERUTNA!!!”

“I am all right mother. We have nothing to fear anymore.”

She looks over at the dead body.

“It is finally over,” she says relieved.

“Now let us put the past behind us and move on Mother.”

They embrace while walking to the house.



General Art-Second Place

Faith
George Jones

Essay



Cover Art-Third Place

An Unidentified Lovely Lady
John Enard

Essay-First Place

“Go With the Best, When You Want Success!”

Ashley Gott

Thousands of students every year have to make the significant decision of where they will be attending college. For many, this task is not difficult because they have desired to attend a certain college for as long as they can remember. But for some, this decision can be stressful. Lucky for me, my decision to attend Lamar State College Port Arthur was an easy one. I chose this campus because it is close to my home, the teachers and staff are friendly, and it is a great place to start a career.

The campus was founded in 1909 by John W. Gates and was intended to be a business college to train people for the petrochemical industry. However, through the years, Lamar State College Port Arthur has expanded and now offers many degree plans and various classes. Lamar is located in the heart of Port Arthur and is established in a convenient place for many students who live in the Golden Triangle. Lamar lies between the 1,000 and 1,800 blocks of Procter Street and Lakeshore Drive, which makes the campus effortless to find. If for some reason a person does not have transportation, there is no need to worry. The city of Port Arthur offers a city bus that will delightfully transport students to the campus.

Lamar strongly emphasizes their mission statement which explores the premise that education is an ongoing process that enhances career potential, broadens intellectual horizons, and enriches life. The faculty and staff truly believe that student achievement is a top priority, and, therefore, they are very helpful and friendly. Because LSC-PA is smaller

However, this enables the professors to have an enhanced one-on-one relationship with their students. Unlike many other colleges, the professors at LSC-PA strive to learn their students by a first or last name basis instead of knowing their students as a set of numbers. The faculty and staff here at Lamar Port Arthur are a pleasure to be around and strongly believe in treating the students with respect and dignity. All of the efforts made by the faculty and staff at Lamar State College Port Arthur truly set this college apart from many other colleges worldwide.

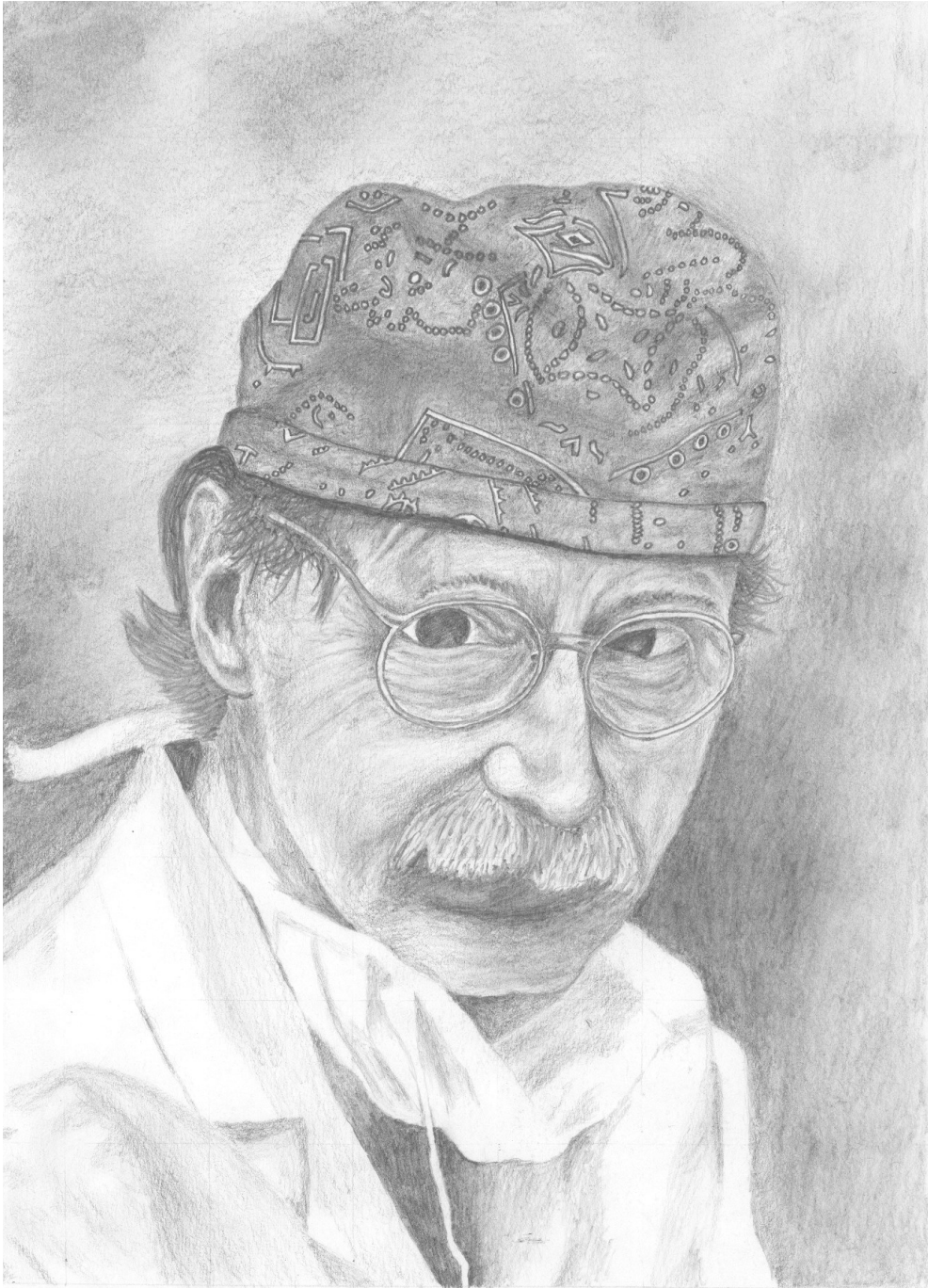
The key aspect Lamar offers to their students is the various and general courses needed to earn a two-year degree. A student has the opportunity to complete two years of course work and then transfer their credits in order to complete a bachelor's degree. Attending LSC-PA is a great way to ease a student into his freshman and sophomore years, while also preparing him for his challenging junior and senior years. Another essential aspect Lamar offers is the affordable tuition available to all students. In fact, a person may save up to two thousand dollars a semester! Also, LSC-PA has several scholarships and grants that are available to any student who may need financial help. Lamar offers a variety of helpful resources to all of their students; therefore, this campus is a great place to embark on a career.

There are many reasons why I have chose Lamar State College - Port Arthur as my college. By choosing LSC-PA, I have saved over a thousand dollars alone just from the tuition fees and gas. Lamar offers endless possibilities to its students, and faculty and staff are willing to help in any way. I truly believe Lamar State College-Port Arthur is the right path to chose!



Photography-Third Place

Kendall Johnson



General Art-Third Place

James Henry Duke

George Jones

Essay-Second Place

Next November, Please!

Richard Hall

“We just need to get our people to turn out and vote!” This is the universal cry of almost every political group and politician. This line will be repeated over and over in one form or another starting near the end of September (and maybe before). Voter apathy is a big problem! It should not take a lot of work to get our nation’s citizens to exercise a right that so many have fought and died for to preserve. To get voters back to the polls, consideration of the issues keeping them away and addressing these issues should be of utmost importance.

The first issue some absent voters express concern about is the electoral college. The electorate believe popular votes are overridden by a small group of elitist called the electoral college. “Why bother,” is their mantra; “My vote doesn’t count anyway!” There are two ways as a nation to address this problem, either educate the voters as to how the electoral college operates or abolish it. I prefer abrogation over education. Our nation’s public education system cannot teach students to read or write. Why would we want to further burden it with something as complicated as the electoral college system. It is supposed to be a national election and not a series of state elections with national consequences. Afterward, people would believe one vote could truly make a difference and be motivated to participate.

Another issue is voter burnout. Many of the electorate feel the strain of one election campaign right after the other. The voters get little more than two months’ break from the end of one election to the time the process starts anew. Because they lack the patience to keep informed, they relegate the process to those who are interested in it. These are the

very ones who later complain the loudest at the policies of the elected official. There is only one way to bring these voters back to the booth, and that is to shorten the duration of the election process. Of course, this would be a move in the opposite direction of the current trend in politics. I propose since there is some validity to the complaint, that party nominations may begin six months prior to the national election. Three months later the parties can have their conventions and begin their national campaign. Also at this time candidates for lesser offices may start to campaign. Does this seem too short a time? I think not. In our age of mass media, three months will produce more than sufficient amounts of information to make an informed choice. Also it would allow good leaders to enter into the process. Before they were prevented from entering due to the extremely long and expensive campaigns. Which brings us to another issue to deal with.

Some voters stay at home because neither candidate is worthy of their consideration. They choose to withhold their vote to demonstrate their contempt for both candidates. In the movie Brewster's Millions, Richard Pryor's character influenced the outcome of an election by advising the electorate to vote "none of the above." Now there is an idea with true merit. The opportunity to vote "none of the above" should be added to each race on the ballot. Then if by popular vote "none of the above" is chosen, and new candidates may make themselves available to run for the open office. This would cause current candidates to be responsive to the voters and not just someone who bought his way into office. It would also create the opportunity for more people to get involved in governing our communities.

Another issue that creates voter apathy is when candidates play loose with the confidence the voters entrusted to them. An example would be George H. W. Bush and his famous, "Read my lips, no new taxes" promise, or the recently elected Representative Chris Carney (D) from Pennsylvania,

who ran on a pro-life platform but since elected has voted pro-abortion on the two bills that have come to vote dealing with the issue. This is certainly one of the biggest turn offs of the voting public. Let politicians vote the way they said they would, and the public may get involved in the process. Until then, expect more voters to just stay home.

Will any of these changes ever occur? Probably not. So buckle in and prepare to navigate an endless political process where only the few elite candidates can afford to participate, and once in office, thumb their collective noses at those of us who put them there. But then again, who really cares?



General Art-Honorable Mention

Portrait
Culberson Campbell

Essay-Third Place

Invitation Frederick Very

My wife and I were invited to live somewhere where we had never lived before, in a lifestyle we had never imagined. I now think that our greatest miracle may be waiting for us in our future where we have never been before, living a life that I had never imagined.

These people have a nine point belief system that they say causes good things to follow you around like a puppy. It's not necessary for us to live their lifestyle in order for us to use their system of believing good things into happening. It's sort of like a living prayer. All I know is that it works. We weren't even looking for their nine point system. We just 'happened' into it.

My wife and I would often stop at the Mennonite country store to buy things grown or handmade by the Mennonite Community near where we lived. The prices were more than reasonable, and the people were lovely, even though they dressed like they lived in America hundreds of years ago, having just stepped off the Mayflower.

They are off shoots of the Amish, and they live in communities away from the rest of the world just like the Amish do. Electric power is still evil with them, but unlike the Quakers, they do not shy away from mechanical things as long as they use no electricity. Diesel engines are okay as long as they handcrank them to start them, since diesels use no electricity to run them like gasoline engines do. Diesels run on compression with only the fuel. Gasoline engines, however, require that evil electric spark. So do electric starters and those evil diesel engine glowplug preheaters that allow trouble free starting.

One morning we stopped by their store to buy something, and a lot of

Mennonite men were crowding around the woodstove heater discussing what they were going to do since they could not start either of their diesel tractors. It was just too cold to handcrank start them. They had given up.

Since I drove a diesel VW Rabbit, I thought I could help and said so. I had forgotten that they would have stripped the entire electrical system out of it. I had also momentarily forgotten they used no 110/49 Volt wall outlets in their homes. My second suggestion had nothing to do with electricity, so was received by the men much quicker than the first one. "Sorry. I wasn't thinking. What you need to do then is to go get a dozen of your kids and give them each two little mirrors to shine on the glowplugs. Hold the sunlight on the plugs for several minutes and then crank the engine." They left without a word.

The next time we went to the store, the men were ecstatic. No more taking turns handcranking the machine forever until it started, and the children were all having a blast starting campfires with the mirrors at great distances. They were all cautioned not to burn down any barns, homes, or standing timber. By then there were twenty-five children with fifty mirrors. They were also cautioned not to burn up each other, either.

They asked me for other solutions to other problems that they had, and I gave them. For a while it seemed that I could do no wrong. However, one bitter cold and overcast sky morning, we drove to the store. The men and children were all standing around the woodstove heater trying to warm back up. They had a couple of dozen small children with them holding small mirrors. They asked me my suggestion of what to do.

"Well, if God won't even supply you with even one minute of sunlight," I joked, "then He's telling you all to go take the day off and be home with your families. He's telling you that He's declaring some time off so that you can go home and relax and smile and have fun all day at home enjoying all the good He has given you so He can look down and

smile too. He wants you all to have fun.”

I had expected them to laugh; to ridicule; to all look at each other and smile at my silly joke shaking their heads no. “Makes sense to me,” one said.

“Me too. I don’t know why I couldn’t see it before.” They all left and went home. I couldn’t believe it. I had just messed with their Mennonite work ethic, and I was just making a joke.

The next week they all invited me and my wife to join their Community becoming Mennonites. I couldn’t believe it. Maybe they were just looking for some more days off, I thought. Actually, they just asked me. They expected me to make the decision for both me and my wife, as per their beliefs that the man made all family decisions. I didn’t know how my wife would react to that kind of mentality. I didn’t even know how she would react to dressing like a pilgrim for the rest of her life. There were no computers or T.V; no phones or lights or swimming pools; no 110/49 Volt wall sockets, and I would never learn to fly a small plane or graduate from college. How was I going to make it through life if I did not graduate from college? I had to refuse their offer politely. I didn’t even tell my wife about it.

A week later they shared with me their nine point secret of believing things into happening. It was not a secret, really. It was just that outsiders never wanted to know. This is the secret of making or letting miraculous things happen because of your belief that they will. They all involve your relationship with your spouse.

1. Be open to how your goal will happen. Don’t limit it to ways you want it to happen. It can happen miraculously if you let it. Both partners must become unlimited.

must be open to time.

3. No disagreement with your spouse about it. Work together on the same team. Believe that it has already happened or started to happen. The partners must not disagree or say no to each other for any reason. The partners must agree.
4. Expect no credit for it. No ego. No thanks from others. The partners must be egoless.
5. Consider both partners to be equal in the effort, even though one of you may seem to be doing more work or believing than the other, they are not. The partners must be equal.
6. Focus your hearts on it. Release your heart to your partner. The partners must be in love with each other.
7. Feel no violence. Be calm inside. Feel that you do not 'want' your goal, just that you goal must 'BE.' The partners must feel calm inside.
8. Your public self and your private self to your spouse must be the same. The partners must be real. Both partners must have single-mindedness. The partners must never present a false front to anyone. Always be themselves.
9. Always act from of each inner self, the part of each that is connected with the greater universe, with God Himself. The partners must be connected with God.

So there it is. I now believe that our greatest miracle may be waiting for us in the future in a place we have never been before, living a life that I have never before imagined. Living my life by the nine points. It's like a living prayer. It just works when you live the part.

And you know... I think my wife would look real cute dressed like a pilgrim.

Essay-Honorable Mention

My Life at LSC-PA

Diane Hare

Going back to college as a thirty-something adult has been a challenge with a wide range of emotions. Many of these emotions came from the fact that I had not been in school for many years. I attended college right after high school, but I quit after my second year. At twenty, I believed that a job in restaurant management would be a great career decision. It was a decision that I spent the next fifteen years regretting. Being a restaurant manager is a hard job with a lot of stress and very little reward. I craved something different. I craved a new challenge that would allow me to help others and have a better quality of life. I spent some time trying to decide on a new career. I finally decided that nursing would be the best choice for me. I decided that Lamar State College-Port Arthur (LSC-PA) would be where I started my new college life. After I made the decision to return to school, I went through a series of emotions. At first I was scared, then I was nervous, and finally I was excited about my new life at LSC-PA.

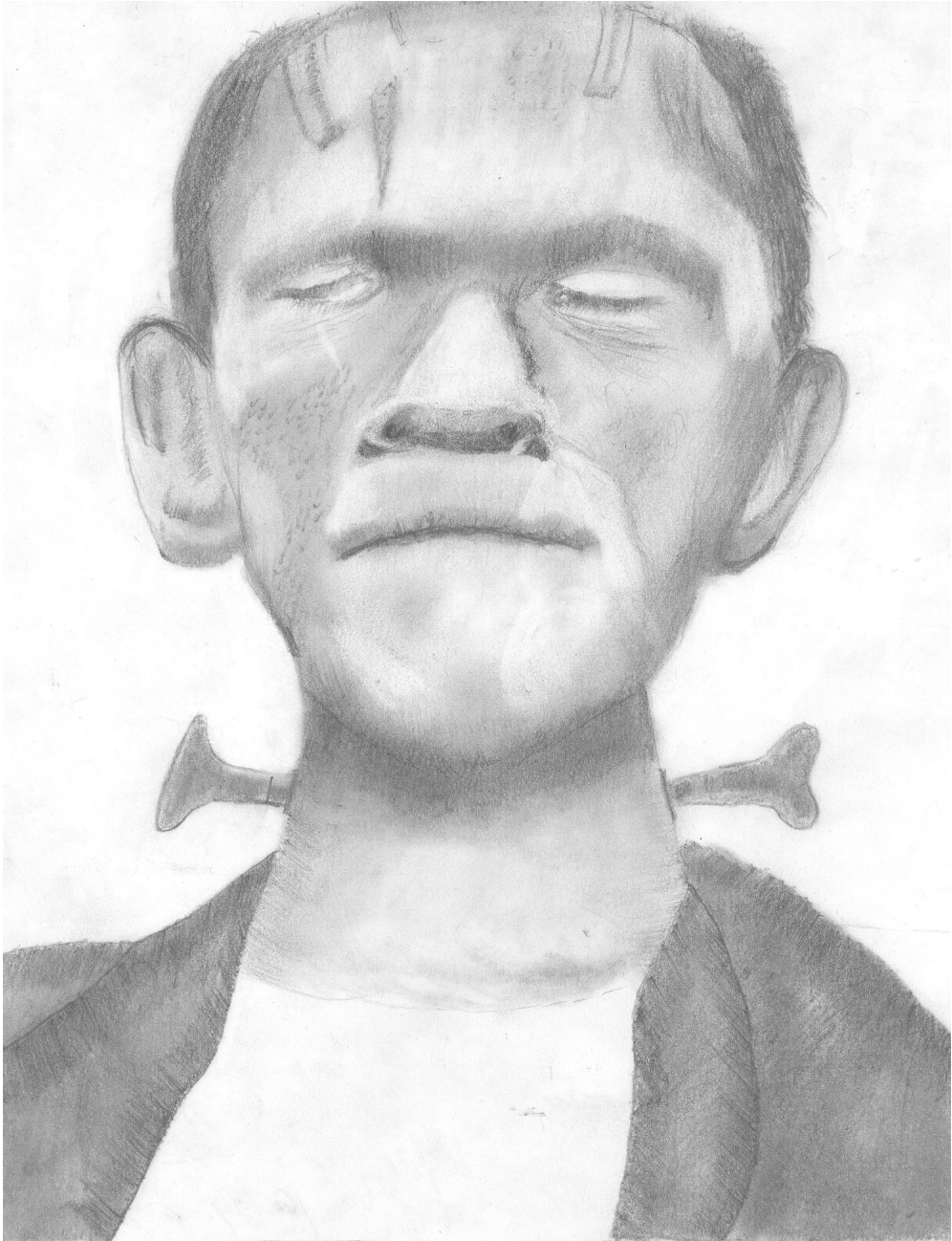
As I thought about returning to college life, I was scared I wouldn't be able to juggle work, home, and classes. I would have to continue to work full-time while I took college courses. I knew that some days I would be getting up at five in the morning to attend classes and not get off work until after one the next morning. I knew that I would have to be very organized to balance it all. I was scared that my role as wife and mother would suffer. I was also concerned that I wouldn't be able to keep up with the course work. I knew that I would have to take math courses, and I was never strong in mathematics. Returning to school after so many years, juggling work, home and school was a very scary experience.

I was nervous about fitting in at the college. I wondered if I would stand out because of my age. I worried that I would wear the wrong clothes. I was nervous about not knowing anyone and not making friends. I felt like a teenager again, nervous that I wouldn't be accepted. When I walked into my first class, I was shaking because I was so apprehensive. My first class happened to be a math class, and as I looked around, I saw several students my age. These student looked just as bad as I felt. I must admit that it was a relief to see that I wasn't the only older student. I noticed that the dress was casual and that my blue jeans, shirt and tennis shoes were normal attire. As I sat down, the student seated behind me introduced herself. I knew at the point, I would soon make new friends. My being nervous about fitting in was something that I believe all students feel on their first day of class, whether they are going to college right after high school or they are returning later in life.

As I began my college career at LSC-PA, I was very excited with all the new possibilities and experiences ahead of me. I dreamed of the day I would graduate and be able to start a new career in nursing. I was excited to be able to start learning new things. I was thrilled at the thought of a career that would allow me to help people and really make a difference. I thought of the day when I would be able to work a regular forty hour week, instead of a fifty-hour week. I was looking forward to a job with normal hours. I loved the thought of helping to save lives and ease suffering. I was excited about the possibilities and experiences that my college degree from Lamar State College would give me.

As I made the decision to start my new life at LSC-PA, I experienced many emotions. I was scared, nervous and excited. I was scared that I wouldn't be able to juggle work, school and home. I was nervous that I wouldn't fit in. I was excited that about the new possibilities and experiences that I would have at LSC-PA. I find that each semester, I go through these emotions again. I believe that all student go through many of the same

feelings that I did. We all learn to cope with these emotions in different ways. I learned to embrace these emotions; they give me the courage and drive to continue with my new life at LSC-PA.



General Art-Honorable Mention

Frankenstein
Marquis Grant

Essay-Honorable Mention

First Day Thien Tran

“BEEP, BEEP, BEEP!” That was the annoying noise released by my alarm clock, which marked my first day of school. I struggled to pry my eyes to take a quick glance at it. The digital clock read seven o’clock. I reasoned with myself, “I can afford a few more minute of sleep time.” So I reached over and swatted at the time machine. After a few whacks, the clock went silent. I, then, closed my eyes and fell back to sleep. Once again I was awakened by an alarming noise, but this time it was my mother. She was screaming, “Wake up Thien! It is seven thirty already.” At the sound of that, I jolted out of bed and hopped into the showers. I quickly took a shower, brushed my teeth, and got dressed. I looked at the clock that had awakened me earlier. I noticed that is wasn’t on anymore. I guessed those forceful swats demolished it. My next resort was my cellular phone. I flipped it opened, and it read seven forty-five. I snatched my car keys and backpack as I rushed out to my car knowing that I only have fifteen minutes to make it to school on time.

On my way to school, I was unsure about how the classes were set-up at Lamar State College-Port Arthur. I am in the co-enrollment program, which allows me to take college classes while I am still in high school. With this program, I receive credits for both college and high school. It was going to be my first day in college so I didn’t know what to expect. My only exposure to college life is through movies. Movies always depicted colleges with large auditorium-liked classroom completely filled with students. That idea was engraved in me for years.

Once I got to Lamar State College-Port Arthur, I scrambled out of the car and sprinted to the student center. The student center was occupied by

numerous people. The environment seemed so diverse. Students ages range from very young to very old. I was surprised by the many races and ethnicities that were showcased there. I, once again, looked up at the clock. The school's clock read seven fifty-five. I had a problem on my hand: I had five minutes to get to class, and I didn't know where it was. I began to run around frantically as I tried to find my class. After a period of about three minutes, I stopped and asked a professor for help. The professor happily escorted me to my class.

I entered the classroom and took a seat. The classroom was very different from the ones in the movies. It was very small with a maximum of thirty seats. We all were waiting quietly for the instructor to arrive. Like a magic trick, she appeared out of nowhere and began introducing herself and what course we were taking. "Good morning class! My name is Mrs. Sally Byrd, and this is English Composition 1301," she said with an enthusiastic voice. She then told us to seat ourselves in alphabetical order. As soon as that task was completed, she dismissed us from class.

After I left her class, I began searching for the location of my next class. I knew it was in the same building because it was stated on my schedule. I located that class quickly. I proceeded inside and took a seat in the back of the classroom. A few minutes later, I was greeted by a friend of mine. He, Phong, had registered for the same class that I did. We sat there and conversed until the teacher showed up. He was a heavy-set guy with long hair and a beard. He wrote his name and course title on the board, "Rudy Reyes, Art Appreciation." Mr. Reyes began to inform us on what this class is about. He said that this class is going to teach us about the history and progression of art. He motioned us to get out some paper to begin taking notes. Mr. Reyes then began to chant about ancient Greek and Roman art. I daydreamed the rest of the class until the bell disrupted my deep trance. All the students zoomed out of the classroom and went their separate ways.

I went back to the student center where I hung out with some of my friends from high school. We started to discuss how different college life was. We talked about the different environment and how differently the professors teach. My first day in college turned out to be better than I thought. Then off to high school I went as I still had another half a day of education to receive.



Photography-Honorable Mention

Kendall Johnson

Essay-Honorable Mention

Life at LSC-PA Mallory Prejean

Lamar State College-Port Arthur is a two-year public college that started in 1909. It provides affordable and quality education to anyone willing to learn. This college is located in Port Arthur, Texas, and is between the one 1000-1800 blocks of Procter Street and Lakeshore Drive. This campus provides a great start for many people who want a head start on their future. The main reason I chose this college is because it has numerous career opportunities, professors that can work one-on-one with their students, and many elective programs to choose from.

There are many career opportunities at Lamar-Port Arthur. Scholars either come here to get a two-year degree, to get their basics to transfer to a four-year college, or simply just to find out what they want in the first place. The two-year scholars can choose a variety of careers. There is accounting, administrative assistant, air conditioning and refrigeration, automotive technology, child development and early childhood, computer information systems, cosmetology, electronics, industrial instrumentation, legal assistant, legal secretary, management development, medical office administration, microcomputer support specialist, substance abuse counseling, surgical technology, vocational nursing and upward mobility for registered nursing. The Courses for transfer to a four-year college are offered in accounting, economics, anthropology, art, government, health, home economics, physical education, physics, history, speech, computer science, mathematics, psychology, biology, chemistry, geography, geology, sociology, criminal justice, music, drama, English and Spanish. This college not only gives students a head start on their future, but it also gives them

a great foundation for their education.

In addition to the many career choices, there are also people that help contribute to this well-developed college. These people are the hard-working professors, who also had to go through college to get where they are today. With the small number of students, professors here at Lamar State College-Port Arthur are able to interact with students on a more personal basis. Whenever there is a student who needs help, professors allow them to ask questions during class, after class, and even in their spare time. The professors are able to get in touch with the scholars through email from the campus website. The website allows professors to also put up their curriculum, which lets scholars know their assignments in advance and gives the information on how to do the assignments. Most of the time, the curriculum is easy to follow and the professors explain everything very clearly. The professors here at Lamar are willing to work with their students and help them as much as they can. I could not ask for better mentors.

Besides having a good education, there are also organizations for students here at Lamar. There are clubs to fit every student's personality. There is everything from honor society, religious groups, athletic organizations, and even career-based organizations. The organizations are put together by the students on the campus and have elected officers in most of the clubs. Students need to get involved in their college, and it is especially helpful for people who are looking to meet new people. Students get to meet people that have the same interests as they. They also get to meet people who live close to them and that they will get to see often. Being involved with sports also helps to improve fitness; some people might just want to get involved in a sport to stay in shape. Either way, getting involved in organizations is a great way to spend spare time.

Lamar State College-Port Arthur has been a great experience for me so far. My career choice is something in the medical field, and this college has allowed me to pursue my dreams and to help me figure out what it is I am interested in. Everyone could benefit from trying out Lamar. The professors here have truly been a big help and have made my classes a pleasant experience and have helped me further my education. Not only are the classes great, but the students here are all here for a common purpose, and being involved with other people who have high standards like I do really helps me motivate myself to improve my future. I would strongly recommend anyone to come join the experience with all of us at Lamar State College- Port Arthur.

Poetry



Cover Art-Honorable Mention

Robert Rauschenberg
George Ramirez

Poetry-First Place

Who Am I?

Charneth Ramdoo

I am from Madras and Calcutta,
Indians are my ancestors—
I am half tassa drums and curried food
Saris, Dhotis and nose rings

I am a Portuguese immigrant mixed with red mulatto Negros,
This is another half breed in itself—
My family tree has many different roots,
In fact we are many different trees—

I am from light complexions and straight hair
To rich eyes and chocolate skin—
My blood is Quarter Caucasian and Quarter Negro
The rich tradition and Creole food supplements my wellbeing—

My last name shocks many who don't know me
Ramdoo is named after a street in India—
If you line up the members of my family
They are the colors of the rainbow—
This is my unique ancestry.

So I am a half breed
Outcast by some—
Just where do I fit in?
Where do I belong?



General Art-Honorable Mention

The Ghost Bird (Ivory Billed Woodpecker)

John Enard

Poetry-Second Place

Oh Wouldn't It Be Wonderful?

Frederick Very

Just a small farm to grow things in the sun,
Peanuts, beans and sunflowers by the ton,
And strawberries and popcorn just for fun,
Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful?

I'd experiment with seeds to make a brand new crop,
Gumball bushes and a tree for soda pop,
We'd grow everything and never have to shop,
Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful?

Lie berries when you eat them make you lie,
A pie tree growing every kind of pie,
And doesn't our chocolate bar tree grow high,
Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful?

A bush that grows French friend by the bunch,
A flavored drink tree, but watch out for the punch,
And assorted sandwich trees to complete your lunch,
Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful?

Our honey bees I'd make to be spelling bees,
To help our spelling and pollinate our trees,
But watch out, they like to stick in extra "B's."
Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful?

I went to the tree that grows our pants,
Picked a pair of jeans that fit me just by chance,
Told the shirt tree size and color I want in advance,
Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful?

Watch your finger when you pick the ginger snaps,
Have fun at the hat tree picking hats and caps,
And the grapevine's runners get you entwined in its traps,
Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful?
Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful?

Poetry-Third Place

Burdens

Charneth Ramdoo

My back is bent with the burdens I bear;
I hear your voice cry out to me somewhere in the darkness;
My hands are tied with chains of duty;
My orders bind me to this spot.

You fall and die in front of my eyes;
I watch helplessly as you take your last breath;
Your lips whisper "mama"
Your heart bleeds "brother"
You die for your brothers in war.

Your life stolen away from you,
Young man in his prime;
The things you'll never get to do
Is a burden on my mind.

My back is bent with the burdens I bear;
I'm on my way home without my fellow comrade.
I leave behind a war won-
But victory isn't so sweet
As I also leave behind
The blood of my brothers.

Their corpses rot on foreign soil,
While I remain the hero.
Mothers are left without a son,
Wives without husbands,
Fathers are lost to children unborn
These are my burdens.

Poetry-Honorable Mention

High in the Sky Peter Trevino

Bird high in the sky
Come and sing to me
Tell me of the lands
That I dream to see

Bird high in the evening sky
I see you flying so high
What secrets have your eyes seen.
Of the world beneath your wings

Bird high in the sky
You travel freely day and night
O' what freedom to have in life
What country will you see today?
Or the ice mountain above the sea

Bird high in the hot summer sky
Soar over a golden field of wheat
Mesmerized by the scenery
Place your feet on a crystal beach
See the sand playing with the sea
Catch a sunset by a clear lake
See the moon reflect on the waves

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Soon Someday

Peter Trevino

Received a visit from my son
When he was just a couple months
So young with a handsome face
He asked me if I'm coming home today
I answered him, "Soon, Someday."

He visited me on his twelfth birthday
Looking like a strong young man
With his football trophy in his hands
He asked me if I'm coming home today
I answered him, "Soon, Someday."

My son and his wife saw me today
Told me a grandson is on the way
Before he left he turned around
With tears in his eyes and asked
He asked me if I'm coming home today
I answered him, "Soon, Someday."

I went back to my cell and
Began to pray
How do I find a way
To tell my son
I'm never getting out
Of this place

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Wrinkled Hands

Rachel J. Scott

I never saw a beauty so great
Until the day I first saw wrinkled hands, and with each passing year my
heart hurts more
As I sit by and watch them wither away back to the dust they once were
Forever gone

O, the wisdom those hands hold
The challenges they have faced, we have yet to know

I love wrinkled hands
Gentle as doves
Fierce warriors who understand how to win a war

How I long for the day when I, too, shall have wrinkled hands

Poetry-Honorable Mention

A Beautiful Rose Melody Lynn Hendrix

The park bench was deserted as I sat down to read,
Beneath the long, straggly branches of an old willow tree,
Disillusioned by life with a good reason to frown,
For the world was intent on bringing me down.

And if that were not enough to ruin my day,
A young boy out of breath approached me all tired from play.
He stood right before me with his head tilted down,
And said with excitement, "Look what I found!!"

In his hand was flower, and what a pitiful sight,
With its petals all worn not enough rain or too little light.
Wanting him to take his dead flower and go off and play,
I faked a small smile and shifted away.

But instead of retreating he sat down next to my side,
And placed the flower to his nose,
And declared with over reacting surprise,
"It sure smells pretty and it's beautiful too.
That's why I picked it, here it's for you."

The weed before me dying or dead,
No vibrant colors: orange, yellow, or red,
But I knew that I must take it or he would never leave.
So I reached for the flower and replied,
"Just what I need."

But instead of placing the flower in my hand,
He held it in mid-air without reason or plan,
It was then that I noticed for the very first time,
That the weed toting boy could not see,
He was blind.

I heard my voice quiver, tears shone in the sun,
As I thanked him for picking the very best one,
“You’re welcome.” he smiled and then ran off to play,
Unaware of the impact that he had on my day,
I sat there and wondered how he managed to see,
A self pitying woman beneath an old willow tree.

How did he know of my self-indulged plight?
Perhaps from his heart he had been blessed with
True sight.

Through the eyes of a blind child at last I could see,
The problem was me,
And for those times I’d myself been blind,
I vowed to see the beauty in life,
And appreciate every second that is mine.

Then I held that wilted flower up to my nose,
Breathe in the fragrance of a beautiful rose,
Smiled as I watched that young boy,
Another weed in his hand,
About to change the life of an unsuspecting old man.

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Son, I Told You Michelle Renee Lopez

Son I told you this morning
I told you when you were getting ready for school

It's too late now
The time has passed
The hour is gone

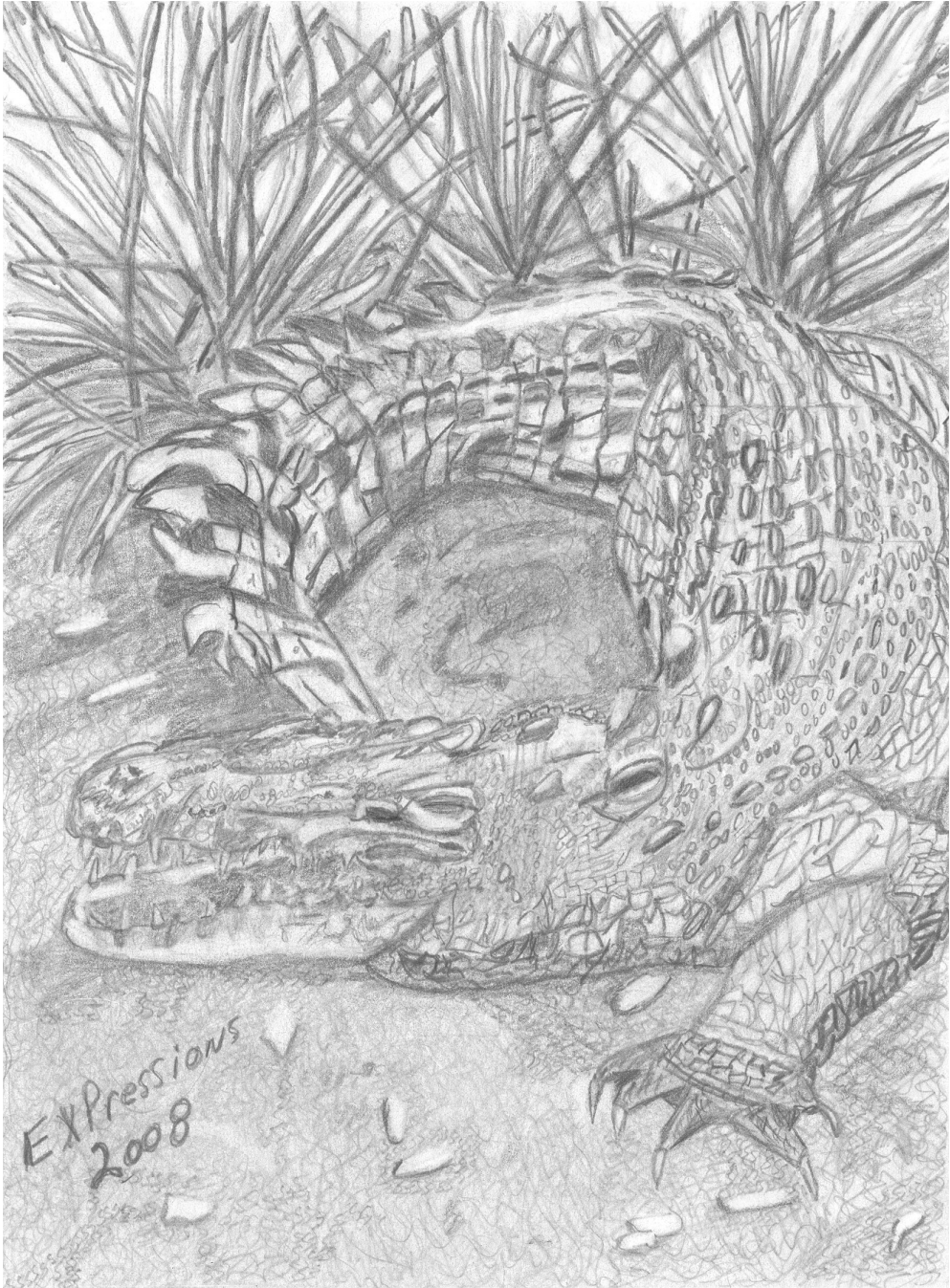
You should have listened this morning
It could have saved a lot of trouble, son

One day you will listen
One day you will learn

I'm not sure yet what that will take
I sure hope it doesn't take anything too important to you...
I sure hope it doesn't take something that may even hurt you.

Listening is a skill that I guess takes time to perfect
Listening is a skill that is too important to forget.

Literary Critique



Cover Art-Honorable Mention

Alligator
Clyde Fraizer

Literary Critique-First Place

Best of the Best

Frederick Very

How do you explain an anthology to someone? It's a collection of many writings from many people. The authors may all still be alive, or may have all gone on to their rewards long ago. There is no set way of choosing which stories are set in an anthology.

The best anthologies have some sort of common thread. I came across one years ago that was so expertly put together that no preambles or prefaces before each story were needed to explain it, or to try to tie it together with the rest of the writers in the anthology. It told of everything from the deep, deep past to the far, far future, and how it all tied together. It has travel and excitement, mixed up with the good old fashioned good guy, bad guy thing. It has just regular folks fighting the good fight with unexpected help coming at the last minute from unexpected directions.

Mysteries and secrets, dark sayings and glad tidings, and even future events and happenings showed up unexpectedly later in other author's segments. The funny thing about this last part is that most of these authors didn't even know each other. It just happened that way.

This anthology encompassed man's role in the cosmos, the bigger picture. Many events show man's failings and also their courage, and their suffering for others and also man's selfish nature. The good guys don't always win and the bad guys don't always lose—except in the end of course, or who would buy it? Nobody would buy a book without a meaningful or happy ending, or would they?

But happy endings without a lot of striving in between are worthless as literature. What good are they? Without striving there is no winning. Without tears there is no appreciation of what we have been rewarded

with, and without defeating bad, at great risk to ourselves, what good is good?

Some of the author's segments concentrated on history. Some stories of the improving of man's condition through hope for the future and also through intelligence and reasoning. Poetry and songs aren't missing either, and in fact seems necessary for the completion of the anthology. There are brave children, cowardly adults, strong good leaders, evil enemies and much, much more.

In the later anthology entries a rebel leader appears and is taken care of by putting him and his followers down and oppressing them. He had a message of peace and love, but all the governments of the world saw only threats to their power base and tax base. After all, most economies are based on war and the consolidation of power.

The government killed the rebel leader, but had inadvertently made a martyr out of him. As it turns out, his followers found great power in following his teachings, his path and his ways.

This anthology has made it to best sellers lists. Somehow, no competing book covering similar ground has even come close. It has come through much controversy from the very beginning, the proponents of the anthology never agreeing completely with each other on everything, but banding together against the critics of it in common defense.

The book survived all its critics and bad reviews, and why not? It's a wonderful book full of meaning, adventure and mysteries to figure out. A never ending story of man's struggle against himself and his very nature. A story of the betterment of man by looking for and finding and following a higher truth. Inspirational to say the least.

The last books of the anthology haven't even been written yet. Nobody knows who will write them, but hopefully you and I will somehow be included in its pages. In any case, by then, I'll look forward to shaking the editors own had.

The anthology is named “The Bible.” I can hardly wait for the sequel.

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Literary Critique-Second Place

What They Saw

Frederick Very

The Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks and Mayans saw what they described as a huge comet coming from the planet Jupiter. Around 1450 B.C. (Some records indicate that it was 1486 B.C.) this so-called comet came so close to the Earth that it had the apparent diameter of eight-to-ten times the apparent diameter of our moon. It took two weeks to cross the sky from side to side. These four civilizations followed this so called comet as it settled into more stable orbits.

As the centuries went by, more civilizations took over the observations. In the last century, a man doing research on Ancient history decided to pool all these ancient records together along with other ancient records to make sense of it all. His name was Immanuel Velikovsky.

Immanuel Velikovsky was born in Russia in 1905 and got his medical degree when he was only sixteen. He then moved to Berlin where he published a book on mathematics and physics that was edited by Albert Einstein himself. Eighteen years later he traveled to America to finish research on a book of ancient history.

He was concerned with the disparity between the dates of the biblical story of Exodus and the dates listed in the Egyptian records. The Egyptian records appeared to be about 500 years older than the Hebrew and Babylonian ones for the same events; however, when the times were adjusted to the events, everything matched perfectly.

Ancient records suggested that a planet-sized object came near the Earth around 1450 B.C. and took about two weeks to cross from one side of the sky to the other. This would put the object at about the same orbit as our moon. Since it had an apparent diameter of eight to ten times the

apparent size of our moon, this would make the object Earth's twin size.

Velikovsky pointed out that this Earth's twin was a highly elongated orbit, so it, of course, had a static charge build up from constantly getting closer than further away from the sun. This is one way to build up tremendous static charges. Planets in mostly circular orbits do not build up such forces.

Objects in space in elongated orbits can generate tails just like comets do because of the tremendous electrostatic charges that is built up. This is why the ancients called this celestial object a comet. Velikovsky decided that this was Venus, still in a 50 year highly eccentric orbit, and that gravitational forces along with huge electrostatic forces generated between Venus and the sun helped to circularize its orbit to put it where it lies today. Albert Einstein wrote that gravitational forces alone could have done this these 3,500 years.

All this got Velikovsky in really hot water with the scientific community. After all, he was a medical doctor and a historian, not a cosmologist.

He published his ideas and theories as Worlds In Collision in 1950. The scientific community was thrown on its ear by Velikovsky's ideas. It certainly helped that he suggested that Venus formed from Jupiter's core that was ejected when Jupiter was hit at high speed by a massive object from outside our solar system. After all, everyone already knew that all the planets were spit out of the sun one by one over long periods of time, even though Venus spins on its axis backwards from the way it would spin if it were indeed spun from the sun. It's amazing how the otherwise intelligent can ignore key facts that conflict with their preconceived ideas.

In January of 1974 a symposium was called. Velikovsky was to have equal time to debate and defend his theory with his detractors. As it turned out, this meant that he got one hour for every five hours his five opponents got in their total time. Dr. Carl Sagan, the famous science writer got star billing (Ginenthal 55).

Dr. Carl Sagan attacked Velikovsky venomously. He precalculated that the probability of the six near collisions needed to circularize Venus's orbit using gravitation alone and ignoring the electrostatic forces to be on the close order of a trillion quadrillion to one. This figure also ignores Newton's laws that say that once two celestial bodies have interacted gravitationally, that they will continue to approach each other periodically. Dr. Carl Sagan in his own book Comet that it is a statistical inevitability that this very thing happen (Sagan 266).

Sagan also claims that the tails of comets have no aldehydes which are the building blocks of carbohydrates, which Velikovsky says is what fell to Earth from Venus's tail as the manna from Heaven in Exodus. However, in Dr. Sagan's own book Comet, he says that the sun's rays produce formaldehyde from comets' tails, which is, of course, an aldehyde. These two instances show Dr. Sagan making false statements when, of course, he knows better.

In Velikovsky's book Worlds In Collision, he states that Mars's polar caps are made of carbonates. It turned out that they were. Carbon dioxide is a carbonate. However, Dr. Sagan misquotes Velikovsky saying he wrote "carbohydrates" which, of course, are things like sugar and flour. Dr. Sagan at this point is becoming disingenuous (Ginenthal).

Velikovsky's book shows why he believes that Venus's clouds are composed of hydrocarbons. Dr. Sagan again misquotes the book saying carbohydrates again. We are at this point beginning to wonder if Dr. Sagan even bothered to read Velikovsky's book before this symposium (Ginenthal).

Fully two years after the symposium, Dr. Sagan prints that Velikovsky was wrong that light would not penetrate Venus' cloud cover since the Soviet Venera Lander took fine pictures (Scientists Confront Velikovsky). This, of course, completely ignores the fact that the lander had huge flood

lamps to enable the craft to take those pictures (Scientists Confront Scientists Who Confront Velikovsky). Since there was no later article named Scientists Confront Scientist Who Confront Scientists Who Confront Velikovsky, I assume Dr. Sagan gave up on this one.

Dr. George Talbott was commissioned to do a thermal curve of Venus to see if the planet was only 3,500 years old. The highly respected thermodynamics space expert calculated it out to be 750° K. Since this is Venus's actual measured temperature, the scientists against Velikovsky decided not to use it. However, seeing that the report was already paid for, Velikovsky did. (Talbott 95) It was later printed in "The Velikovskian."

Dr. Sagan claimed that Velikovsky's fragile crust and constant volcanism could not support the huge mountains and abundant craters on Venus, yet in Carl's own book Comet, he says, "The sparseness of craters and mountains on Venus shows that the surface is being continually modified probably by volcanism" (Sagan 258). If Carl is correct in his published book, then he can't be correct in his statements given at the 1974 Velikovsky symposium (Sagan 258).

The important thing is that Velikovsky's theories and ideas should have been attacked scientifically. Not ad hoc or through misquoting his words in his published works. He should have been taken down to the mat using scientific facts against his theories.

Worlds In Collision survived the symposium, and why not? It's a wonderful book that even after fifty plus years in print is still not dated. From the predictions of the conditions on the planet Venus, to the theory of space objects in highly eccentric orbits building up massive negative charges, Velikovsky's book has been proven in the test of time. It's still amazing that someone in 1950 could be so far ahead of his time by looking at the ancient past.

Attempting to take Velikovsky down the way they tried to at the 1974

Velikovsky symposium suggests that his ideas must have merit, and they just might. After all, could the records of the Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks and Mayan people all have been wrong in what they saw?

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Literary Critique-Third Place

Indicators and Idealism of Blake

Richard Hall

For the purpose of this assessment on William Blake, the author intends to limit the focus of this critique to the poem "Visions of the Daughters of Albion." One may ask "does this poem qualify as a romantic work?" For an answer, we must observe if the poem contains any points that would indicate a romantic era poem, although its composition appears to be a decade before the romantic era began.

When reading "Visions of the Daughters of Albion," one is quickly able to determine its romantic roots due to the many indicators within the text. It may be a decade before its time, but, be that as it may, Blake gives us a foretaste of the forthcoming era, taking poetry in a new direction, relinquishing credit for the new approach to others. Blake not only changed the face of poetry but also developed an idealism that reaches forward through time to modern issues facing a changing world.

The first indicator that the reader might notice when reading this poem is the prominent use of nature for different purposes. In the opening scene, "Oothoon wandered in woe, /Along the vales of Leutha seeking flowers to comfort her" (1.3-4). She finds a marygold to converse with. A single flower, not quite the same as Wordsworth's single violet in "She Dwell Among the Untrodden Way," but one can draw a parallel to the single flower usage. In Wordsworth's poem it acts as a marker by which to guide him to his lover and the marygold of Oothoon acts as a contemplative guide to free her from her troubled mind, allowing her to turn herself over to her love.

In contemplating Blake's use of a storm for a rape scene, "Bromion rent her with his thunders. On his stormy bed/Lay the faint maid" (1.16, 17),

the reader might note how Samuel Coleridge used a personified storm in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The result of Coleridge's storm was the boat stuck in a cold, chilling ice lock similar to the icy cold response Oothoon's rape elicits from her true love, Theotormon.

Parallels in usage could spring forth a whole new topic. These have been used here just to demonstrate that Blake's ideas were common to the romantic poets of record that came after him.

Blake gives the allusion of a new day by presenting the reader with observations in nature, for example:

I cry, 'Arise O Theotormon, for the village dog
Barks at the breaking day, the nightingale has done lamenting,
The lark does rustle in the ripe corn, and the Eagle returns
From nightly prey, and lifts his golden beak to the pure east.
Shaking the dust from his immoral pinions to awake
The sun that sleeps too long. (2.23-28)

He also uses nature to demonstrate the difference between instinct and thought or intuition. An example of this can be found on plate three lines 2-13.

Another indicator that "Daughters" is a romantic poem are its references to the supernatural, the world of gods and goddesses. Take for instance the main characters of this poem. Oothoon brings to mind a winged angel or perhaps Hermes of the ancient Greeks, who besides being the messenger god was also associated with commerce, as "she went in wing'd exulting swift delight;/And over Theotormon's reign too her impetuous course" (1.14-15). It may be best to use the Hermes association because the slave trade is a major topic of this poem. Oothoon also calls to mind the torment of Prometheus when "she can howl

incessant, writhing her soft snowy limbs,/And calling Theotormon's Eagles to prey upon her flesh" (2.12-13). Bromion recalls the Norse god of thunder, Thor. He also brings to mind how the Greek god Zeus disguised himself as a shower of gold, to have sex with the beautiful mortals Alcomene and Danäē.

Then there is Theotormon who, "rolled his waves around, and folded his black jealous waters round the adulterate pair"(2.3-4), which recalls the Roman god Neptune, ruler of the seven seas, also known as Poseidon by the Greeks.

Blake also introduces the Golden nymph of the "Marygold of Leutha's vale" (1.5). A nymph is a lesser deity; often a lovely woman, who would live in forest, trees and rivers. Urizen is also spoken of in the poem. Oothoon speaks of him as, "Creator of men! Mistaken Demon of heaven: thy joys are tears! thy labour vain, to form men to thine image" (5.3-4). Blake intends this as a question for the reader, who may connect Urizen with God of the Bible and yet wonder why evil exists. The question that comes to mind would be how a benevolent God would create good and evil. Blake attempts an answer with "mistaken Demon of heaven" (5.3) apparently telling the reader the act of creating was an act of evil to begin with.

Some of the lesser used indicators are those of irrational thought, common subjects, and even a mention of Middle Ages with the line "To build him castles and high spires, where kings & priest may dwell" (5.20). Of these three, the strongest is the irrational state of mind involved in the actions of Theotormon. A rational mind would not punish a rape victim by binding her "back to back" (2.5) with her attacker, or take pleasure in eagles as they "rend their bleeding prey" (2.17), when that prey happens to be the woman he claims to love!

These indicators and others not mentioned are common to romantic poetry. Blake made use of these leading the way for others to follow.

“Visions of the Daughters of Albion” is a romantic poem although it predates 1798. It is this date that begins the romantic era for poetry, for that is when Wordsworth and Coleridge published Lyrical Ballads. Blake seems to be the leader of or ahead of the new style but doesn’t get credit for it.

Blake also stands out as an extraordinary poet because he was not afraid to stand up for his ideals. He wrote in protest of anything he perceived as misguided, even against socially acceptable practices of his time. In “Visions of the Daughters of Albion” plate one lines 20-23, Blake addresses the intrinsic evil of slavery. It is easy for us today to see why Blake would ideologically write against this perverse practice, especially in a country of proclaimed freedom and equality like America. However; the point here is not so much that Blake would write in protest of slavery, but that he does write about a practice in a land an ocean away from his home. He seems to take the modern idea to heart, that social justice is a universal problem that must be solved if true world peace can be achieved.

Blake’s belief in sexual freedom is another modern idea that pervades this poem as in:

Does not the worm erect a pillar in the mouldering church yard,
And a palace of eternity in the jaws of the hungry grave?
Over his porch these words are written: “Take thy bliss O Man!
And sweet shall by thy taste & sweet thy infant joys renew!”
(5.41-6.3).

Blake did not follow the traditional belief that sex was for procreation only. He believed that sex was equally beneficial for enjoyment. Does this concept bring to mind the “sexual revolution of the 1960’s—the age of free love, which Blake seems to be referring to with:

The moment of desire! The moment of desire! The virgin
That pines for men shall awaken her womb to enormous joys

In the secret shadows of her chamber (7.3-7.5), or “I cry, Love! Love! Love! Happy happy Love! Free as the mountain wind!” (7.16). Ideas such as these stand in stark contrast to the lifestyle of the people in Blake’s time as witnessed by other authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne in his book The Scarlet Letter. The prevailing thought of Blake’s time was that premarital sex defiled a person spiritually and physically, and yet Oothoon can ask, “How can I be defiled when I reflect thy image pure?” (3.16) and tells Theotormon:

With nets found under thy night pillow to catch virgin joy,
And brand it with the name of whore, & sell it in the night,
In silence, ev’n without a whisper, and in seeming sleep.
Religious dreams and holy vespers light thy smoky fires;
Once were thy fires lighted by the eyes of honest morn.
And does my Theotormon seek this hypocrite modesty (6.11-6.16).

It is very hard to argue that this is not a new age presentation of human sexuality.

Blake also expresses in this poem the modern age idea of the equality of the sexes. Sure, this concept may be hard to pinpoint at first but is present in lines such as, “Theotormon severely smiles, her soul reflects the smile, as the clear spring muddied with feet of beast grows pure and smiles” (2.18-19). One can make an argument that Blake was giving us a foretaste of the modern era woman’s movement by comparing Oothoon (a woman) with a “spring muddied with feet” (2.19) or downtrodden “growing clear” (2.19) or realizing self worth and potential equal to that of her mate. Then again “How can I be defiled when I reflect thy image pure?” (3.16), may be restated as, how can I be less or beneath you when we are both made in the divine image?

Blake’s “Vision of the Daughters of Albion” is a romantic poem exhibiting most of the indicators of romantic era poetry. It is also a foretaste of

modern idealism in an age when true freedom was a concept, not a reality. Let us; therefore, guard our hard fought for freedoms jealously so that “The Daughters of Albion [will not] hear [our] woes & echo back [our] sighs” (8.13).

Literary Critique-Honorable Mention

Jane's Inferno

Anna Sites

An Adaptation and Short Discussion of Dante's Divinia Commedia

In Dante Aligheri's Inferno, the poet outlines the underworld that is Hell, sparing the reader no small detail. He colorfully illustrates a world in which there is no (divine) light, no (inner) warmth, no (heavenly) hope. And at times a dismal and depressing place, it is at others a disorientingly rapid flurry of pain and fear. Every time Dante and his guide, the great poet Virgil, proceed, they are only a few steps away from being thrust into an entirely different eternal torture, each even more terrible than the last. The punishments fit the crimes to a 'T' in this portrait of damnation. No sense - be it sight, smell, hearing or touch - is safe. Dante creates a world that none could scoff at.

While I hate to compare classic literature to pop culture (on paper, at least) the poem does strike a familiar chord. In the movie Constantine, the title character has to journey into the horrors of Hell to see if a certain person has gone there. The ferocious demons, incomprehensible pain and the indescribable terror that he sees are dumbfounding. The first time I saw it, I had immediately to turn away and begin praying for forgiveness and repenting my (many) sins. I usually save my 'big' prayer for bedtime, but for that fright, I made an exception. It is amazing the emotion that a fictional work of Hollywood can evoke. Dante's Inferno does the same thing. His graphic imagery makes me shudder and the penalties endured by the damned make me want to plead for my soul. The latter may be a bit dramatic, but it makes it no less true. While I very much enjoyed both the movie and the writing, they both gave me a jolt; both made me analyze

myself and really, truly wonder: If I died right now, where would I go? What would happen to me once I got there? Can I even dream of salvation? I still hold out hope that I can.

I've been assigned to write a paper detailing in which of Dante's Circles I think I or my family members would be placed if we were to die today. As for my family, there would be a few in Limbo, a few in Circle Three, I'm sure some in Circles Four and Five, respectively, and even one in the first section of Circle Six. But I can not bring myself to see my loved ones - if only imagined - in such a cruel and unyielding place. It is very hard for me *honestly* to admit where I am quite certain I would be headed at this current place in my life if somebody dropped a house on me (even if the only person to ever read this is my lovely professor). So to that end, I think that the person to be placed in Hell shall be called 'Jane.' Yes, I can put her in Hell with no doubt as to her fate and no sympathy to her plight.

Why is she to be so condemned? Poor Jane, hopeless by her own doing. How innocent and pure she once was, even after her peers had long since left the straight and narrow. Loneliness, naiveté, and inexperience caused her to make so many mistakes in her earliest days of adulthood, leading her to need a hero who came in the form of the man who is now her husband. He saved her from not only those demons who had and would again abuse her, but also from herself. He was not perfect, but he loved her, and that was what she needed. She began to love him, too, and for several years they had made a (mostly) happy home. House, yard, babies, cat, dog, cable TV; their own little American dream. They had all the basics and each other, and that was all *they* needed. But the life of an emergency responder's wife is a lonely one. So many nights are spent as a single person in a bed made for two. Twenty-four and 48 hours at a time, sometimes even more, nothing but the children and the chores to keep company with. Enter: The Friend.

He had come around a time or two, helping her husband move

something, hanging out with her husband after work, coming by for a quick dinner, even bringing his wife a few times (a cold and unfriendly woman). Other than his obvious physical attractiveness, she knew little more about him than that he was polite and gracious, and when not in his presence, she seldom gave him a second thought. But then one night, a group of friends and colleagues all went out and Jane was excited to go. Many drinks were had by all and with them a very good time. Innocent flirting all around seemed to be the theme of the evening with that raucous crowd. But it seemed The Friend and she kept ending up talking (often the less-than-eloquent speech caused by an excess of alcohol) with one another. Phone numbers were exchanged but, after all, it's good to know how to contact a spouse's friends, 'just in case,' especially when they live only 10 minutes away. She didn't expect The Friend's call later the next day while her husband was at work. They chatted and talked, flirted a little, nothing grossly inappropriate. She found out that his wife had left (idiot, she thought) and that a divorce was in the works, one he was relieved to receive. But he was also quite hurt. 'Mother Hen' mode kicked in and she felt the need to cheer him up. They talked and laughed a little longer, and after what seemed like a few minutes turned into an hour, she ended the call with an invitation to dinner 'anytime.' Later that night he texted her, only (humorously) that he was watching a horror movie and was scared. They then proceeded to text back and forth for almost two hours. Each message growing a bit more flirtatious, a bit more daring, until finally, another invitation was made. After all, they were adults, they were friends. And they were lonely. She told him he could come over, despite the late hour, to watch TV and keep each other company. Surely there was no harm in that? A shower later he was at her door. They laughed and talked and watched Saturday Night Live re-runs and had a good time. However, the sexual tension was so thick, it hung in the air like the acrid smoke from a murderous pistol. They both felt it, but is that not half the

point of plutonic relationships between the sexes? Friendship with a little flirting? Pretty soon hours had flown by and it was now in the wee hours of the morning. As she talked, to the point of rambling to avoid the uncomfortable silence, he kissed her: an electric, unsettling, amazing kiss... one she hadn't experienced in so very long. That kiss that can only be The First Kiss. She regained her composure and tried her best to play it down, chalk it up to impulsiveness on both parts brought on by exhaustion from the night before. But then it happened again, and with her sigh, he had all the courage he needed. They fell into the motions that only lead to one end. She hesitated here and there, greatly unnerved that not only could someone like him want her at all, but that she wanted her husband's friend so badly. Running her fingers through his thick dark hair, in awe of the mixture of strength and gentleness he used as he held her in his arms, she was in a dreamy state of shock. Surely, this wasn't *really* happening. While she would begin to stop, she couldn't bring herself to say the words. They sank together into a state of passion and sin that neither one had seen the likes of in years, the latter of which only making the act more powerful to both. A few hours later he was home again getting ready for work and she was lying in bed, the bed she shared with her husband, waiting for him to arrive home at any minute. While the deed had not quite reached the physical bed, she knew that the symbolic marriage bed had been stained. Defiled. Desecrated. And although she had never felt a guilt so great nor a shame so deep, she hid her indiscretion from her husband, sincerely professing her love for him every chance she got and trying her best to be the perfect wife. "Yes, Dear," and "Of course, Darling," became her response to everything asked of her, trying to somehow make up to her husband the wrong he was oblivious to. But Jane and The Friend began talking every chance they could, she wondering if what had happened would ever again take place, hoping that it would and yet praying that it wouldn't, all at once. Both sickening and intoxicating, a

strange mix of exhilaration and self-loathing, her new-found extra marital obsession with the not-quite divorced friend is what I think will damn her to her eternal place: Circle number Two, the penalty of the carnal.

Using Dante's interpretation of the adulterer's place of damnation, unless she immediately changes her ways, severs ties and really repents once and for all, Jane will spend eternity spun around in a whirlwind of despair, guilt and shame. Lashed by the dark tail of her sin, she will find no comfort in the presence of her lover, who will share her fate if he does not himself repent. The two will forever be violently swung to and fro by the vicious cyclone of their crime, "with never a hope for hope to comfort them" [Aligheri 45]. Their fate will be the same as those doomed lovers, Francesca and Paolo. My favorite part of the Inferno is where Francesca relates their story to Dante:

"We were alone with innocence in dim time. Pause after pause that high old story drew our eyes together while we blushed and paled [much like when Jane and The Friend were watching television together];... For when we read how her fond smile was kissed by such a lover, he who is one with me alive and dead breathed on my lips the tremor of his kiss. That day we read no further," [Aligheri 125-135]

When I read that passage I was speechless. It was almost like reading a book about someone reading the same book, about someone reading the same book; like some sort of time warp. It was really freaky. It could not have more accurately described Jane and her lover had it been written with specifically them in mind. If the mark of a truly great work of literature is its ability to remain relevant, then this one wins the gold. I could not have been more thrilled or more horrified (for my friend Jane, of course).

Dante is very talented in his ability to incite such fear in his readers. Bringing in characters for the reader to somewhat relate to in each realm of Hell is genius. It puts the reader right there, standing beside Dante and

Virgil, talking to that condemned soul, relating to their pain and thanking God that you aren't really there. The things he describes in his Hell actually seem as though they could be real. Constantine's Hades was the one I pictured in my mind when I thought about the opposite of Heaven, but now it's Dante's Inferno that I see. Now THAT is some good literature.

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The Paradox of Affluence: Choices, Challenges and Consequences

Derrick L. Griffin

It's kind of ironic that this would be a topic at this current time; however, most people may or may not ever realize the effects they have on an individual's life. The person whom I'm speaking about is a very special teacher that helped me find my voice. Barbara Huval had no idea who I was when we encountered one another, yes I had in my past been a drug dealer/fool/madman/on and on... nor did she give a damn. I went through high school with all failing grades, for most of my time in school I never once figured that I could do anything but be a total mess up...then like all losers I came to a place where my world was turned upside down, and I found that I was extremely tired of Smitty. I walked into that office and the first person that I met was an old white-haired lady with the kind of smile that only few people in this world have.

I politely misspelled Beaumont, and Texas... she smiled and passed the small form back and pointed at my misspelled words, and I simply focused all my attention on those words and redid them. I completed my small task and passed that form back, frightened to hell and back that I was right. Mrs. Huval smiled and placed the form into her pile and thanked me kindly.

I stayed away from her English classes, worried like hell that she would flunk me on sight but the time came and I had to take her class in order to graduate. She gave us this large stack of books, and I was the first

to drop my head... I knew instantly that I couldn't cheat my way through an essay in my current situation... I went on to do the work and discovered something that I never knew existed in me; essays came too easy to me... she would assign the work and before class was over my rough draft was done; all I had to do was revise and turn the work in. One thing led to another and another and with every challenge that she dished out I passed with flying colors.

I remember her words, "I cultivate my garden," and "resilience..." those words are still stuck to my senses even till this day. Thanks to Mrs. Huval I have become a writer; so far I have completed eight movie scripts, two kids' books, three novels and still counting. I look back over my shoulders and reminisce on the days when those very impatient teachers told me that I would be dead by eighteen... Now I'm a 36 year old college student who has finally got some kind of clue what life is all about. Fortunately I will be obtaining my first degree in December and yes, I am currently in prison, and yes, I'm still setting goals and achieving them one day at a time. This place is what it is, and I would have to write another whole essay just to explain being considered a loser, but being a loser is one thing, and like wonderful Mrs. Huval taught me, No one has to stay a loser... Not even me...



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Early Expressions

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Early Expressions
Faculty Advisor-Editor
Peggy Gene Knight

Description
of a
Cemetery



Description of a Cemetery

Description of a Cemetery-First Place

Nana's Tombstone

Britney Cotton

Today is the day I take my daughter to the cemetery. It is the third Sunday of January. The sun is shining, and there is a cool breeze in the air. While we make our way to her grave, I tell my daughter that Nana would have loved the weather today. When we arrive at her tombstone, I kneel down to clean it off. I feel the smooth cold marble beneath my fingers as it sends chills down my spine. As the words become clear, I read her tombstone aloud "Viola Annie McCoy born May 2, 1914 died March 31, 2002." I have to pause and catch my breath to finish reading the words that are so deep and dear to me. The words "Beloved Nana to all" are engraved into the bronze of her marble tombstone, arched across the tomb as if they were climbing to heaven. Viola was her name but not known to many. She was everyone's Nana. As we sit on the cool grass I begin to watch my daughter pulling weeds from around her tomb, and I cannot help but smile, remembering back to when I was a child and would spend my days picking weeds from her flower beds. It begins to bring back the sweet smell of all her flowers. As I tell my daughter stories of her great-grandmother, I can almost hear Nana in the wind and feel the soft touch of her hands. As strangers walk past her tombstone and read her name, they cannot help but be touched by the words "Beloved Nana to all."

Description of a Cemetery-Second Place

Eternal Slumber

Clint Duncan

Soft grasses flow over a green field offset by many different types of stones arranged neatly. Many of these stones are closer together to resemble families and loved ones who wanted to be closer to one another even after death. Others, however, are further apart and seem to fade away into time, unkempt and unvisited. So many lives which used to walk this earth now lay in this warm blanket of earth in their eternal slumber, resting as peacefully as they may. One might wonder what these lives have accomplished. Were some doctors or some just loving townfolk who kept to their daily lives working hard and making their own way in life. With so many headstones, one wouldn't nearly have the time to look at all of them. So many look unkempt, the writing starting to fade away from the stone as the water, wind and sun erode away at the only thing that may identify or even provide a testament to the accomplishments or the type of life these men or women had made for themselves.

Many of these graves, which are open to the public, still have regular visitors, ones who would come and perhaps leave small tokens of affection, or even something that just reminded them of a life once lived. So sits here this little toy car to resemble what this person may have loved once in his life. But all things here are eternal, the stones that mark the head of the dearly departed, and the neat box that holds them eternally to rest forever. Even if it were so that some of these things could be broken down to erosion, ashes to ashes and dust to dust, none of these things would ever truly be lost to the sands of time. There is always something out there that keeps some type of memory, be it a headstone and a neatly cut lawn with small roses, or other types of items that hold memories of

someone or become the nutrition of the earth we provide after we lie down.

It is all one big circle of life. The graves are just small reminders and memories to the contribution that these people once had given to society.

Description of a Cemetery-Third Place

Granite Sadness

Ashley Murphy

Earthy brown grass, gray overcast, and a cool breeze that brings life to the leaves in a lifeless place, this was the overwhelming sight that struck me when I set foot onto the sacred ground that held mine and so many other families' relatives. The way I felt was very confusing. It was a combination of feelings that I didn't know could co-exist. I had grief dwelling inside me with a sense of peace with everyone who was laid in the ground. They had no suffering, but their absence from the world brought sadness into ours.

With these feelings wrenching in my stomach and the smell of a late wet winter filling my nose, I approached the grave marker. It was a granite headstone, lying where a tree once provided shade before the harsh cycle of winter had robbed it of its greenery. I then found myself at the marker, with bouquets of flowers lying all around. Looking at the headstone, I saw my grandfather's name, a name that honors my family. The letters were bold and largely engraved. This name is Coker, the name has been a part of me since birth. On the sides of the name are engraved flowers. Below the name is a picture of my grandparents. Looking at this gave me feelings of happiness and sadness.

I then stood back; I looked at this marker that represented someone's final resting place, an everlasting object to remember my grandfather, a piece of granite sadness.

Description of a Cemetery-Honorable Mention

Arlington
Heather Hussey

Upon entry to the Arlington National Cemetery, I was overwhelmed by a sea of white headstones that from far away looked like a field of snow. As I walked the long path, up the hill, past these fallen brave souls, I came to stop at a grave very much different from all the others.

Its smooth dark blue almost gray-colored rectangle lay down among rough white slabs, which made it catch my attention immediately. Smelling the faint smell of natural gas in the air, I lifted my eyes from the headstone and slightly above I saw a flame burning. The smell of gas and morning dew reminded me of a delicious morning breakfast in the summer time. Even though it was the fun filled summer time, I remember there was no noise. The only sounds that could be heard were the birds chirping their happy songs and the wind whispering against the trees. As the wind blew, the chain that formed a barricade around the grave preventing anyone from trespassing on the last home of this man started to sway. I then grasped the chain in my hands and the cool chain felt heavenly against my warmed skin.

As I moved on to visit more fallen men, it was hard for me to forget that one man. This grave provoked me to think about this man who seemed to be more honored than the rest. Maybe people held him so high because of his being the youngest ever to become president. Maybe it was because of all of his accomplishments when he was in office, or maybe it was because of the way he was given to death, taken away from his family, his office, and his country. At the end of the day, I could only think of the

Description of a Cemetery-Honorable Mention

Together Forever Trisha Romero

I maneuver down the steamy black top driveway, dodging and weaving, trying to avoid the huge craters, slowly making my way to the end. I remember that my late father-in-law's birthday will be approaching us soon. I pondered on what it would have been like to celebrate it with him and the other loved ones that I now call family. Getting out of my newly polished car, I made my way over the fresh sharp green blades of grass around the other grave sites. I walk in a zigzag pattern, much like a squirrel chasing an acorn, trying not to step on the tarnished bronze headstones. My husband's parents' final resting place is only one plot away from a towering oak tree. The tree's branches hover overtop like a mother protecting her young, shielding the grave site from the wind and rain. Perched on top of the headstone is a glorious vase filled with a collection of flowers filling the air around the site with a sweet aroma. I brought a new arrangement for the spring time and a new flag, knowing that it would not last long due to recent winds and rain. Just faintly above the whistling of the wind, I can hear the chirping of a mockingbird, making a beautiful musical melody. I remove the old flowers that once felt smooth and silky but now are rough and crumble like weathered leaves. On the bronze headstone on either side of the vase lay two golden plates reading *James Romero, April 27, 1950 to June 20, 1999 and Debbie Romero, September 22, 1953 to June 20, 1999*. Below the plates in script writing flow the words *Together Forever*. Reading this statement sends vivid pictures through my mind of the glorious place, Heaven, where they

Description of a Cemetery-Honorable Mention

EERIE
David Gillespie

I have never sat down and described a grave before. To be honest, this is the strangest, most disturbing English subject paper I've ever had to write so far. This graveyard is eerie, creepy and frightful. It would make anyone's heart rate pound at the mere sight of it, dark and gruesome, the bed where all men must lie. I could not imagine how one could bring himself to visit a beloved family member at this graveyard. The sound of walking on that low, crunchy, dust-like grass is appalling to the soul and fills it with a tremendous fear. Even the toughest in heart would bend and break at the woeful look of the trees with no leaves, leaning and bowing over, scrapping the grass, appearing to make dying faces in the bark, perhaps the faces of those who lie before them for the rest of eternity, with a chill in the air and a breeze to pass through and render bones weak and helpless. An icy mist covers the grass and the tombstones that have cracked in the passing of time. Ghastly noises that seem to sound like voices whispering in the surrounding, and what sounds like a soft flute accompanies it, bring a terrible fear to the pit of my stomach. In an atmosphere that can make one's mind believe that a hand could reach up from the grave and pull them under would force anyone to dread being there, let alone returning to this awful experience. It could make one wonder, whether years are taken off a life by being in the presence of such a breath-taking, mind-numbing place. However, in the end, no matter how spectral, pestilent, or malignant it may sound to us, nor how determined we are not to visit a place like that, we all must visit a place

Bucket List



Bucket List

Bucket List-First Place

Heart Desires

David Gillespie

What would be my three desires before my time is up? That's a wonderful question. Since death is unexpected enough, these desires shouldn't be put off any further by anyone before we all draw our last breath. To be honest I've pondered, thought, and brainstormed over this topic for a week now, and yet nothing has come to my mind, and I know why. I gave my life to Jesus some time ago, and I've trusted him for His every word in that bible and yes, He has proven Himself to me time and time again. No, I may not have the finest cars or houses, nor have a load of money to flounce around with, but what reward is there in such materialistic pleasures? Yes, there once was a time when my heart desired such things, but after walking and talking and growing nearer to God, these desires, as well as the sins of the world, no matter how tempting they may be, faded from my heart naturally, nothing forced. This is when I knew that God was not a myth, nor a fairy tale, but very much real because I had tried Him and seen results. I could also feel Him somewhere on the inside, and still can. It was and still is something that wasn't there before; once again, nothing forced or made up, but natural, naturally from God. So what are my three desires before I die? They can all be narrowed down to one: simply to grow closer to God. I may not have the best of everything, nor be the best in anything, but I know someone who has everything, and that someone is my everything. I'm so glad to know that I am His child.

Bucket List-Second Place

My Bucket List

Britney Cotton

Often in my life I am drawn toward the people who live their life with passion. I can sense their urgency and hear the excitement in their voice. There are many things in my life that I feel passionate about and recently my mind has been on things I would like to accomplish before I die; my bucket list. First and foremost, I would want to take my daughter to Disneyland. I want to be able to see the stars in her eyes, as she walks into the big castle. As we approach the top of the roller coaster, I want to see her hair blowing as we scream together and make our descent. I find myself naturally drawn to water. I would want nothing more than to be able to go to the Caribbean Islands. I want to be able to smell the mixture of the salt with the tropical flowers. I want to feel the sand between my toes as I watch the clearest of blue waves come crashing on the shore. I want the taste of the salt water to linger on my lips. I have made a promise to my brother that on his eighteenth birthday we would share an experience together. I want to skydive with my brother by my side. I want to be able to jump from the plane holding his hand. I want to be able to share the same adrenaline rush, fear, and pleasure as we fall to the earth. My mission for my life is never to have regrets. I want to be able to live my life with passion. When my time here on earth is done, I have not a worry, for I have lived my life to the fullest.

Bucket List-Third Place

Kick the Bucket

Joshua Miller

Life can be taken away within a blink of an eye, and I truly try to live every day as if it were my last. Every day, my goals may change; however, there are a few things that I want to accomplish that will always stay the same. Accomplishing life dreams before we “kick the bucket” is a never ending cycle. Once an accomplishment is completed, we always tend to find something else to strive for. The song “Live like You Were Dying” by Tim McGraw is an excellent example of doing the things you have always dreamt of doing. I want so many things in life, but the three that I want the most are to marry my girlfriend, to live on a ranch, and to go duck hunting with the legend, Phil Robertson.

Marrying my girlfriend of two and a half years, Lacy, would make my life seem complete. Our love has withstood almost every circumstance imaginable. With her, I will be a successful husband and father. Marrying her would make me the happiest man alive. Living on a ranch with my wife and children is a dream I have had since I was a child. I want as much land as the eye can see. On this land will be a log home, lots of animals, and a pond. Living on a ranch is almost every southern man’s dream. I love the outdoors and wildlife and living amongst Mother Nature would be the ultimate life. Duck hunting is my biggest passion in life. If I could hunt every day, I would. My biggest inspiration in hunting is Phil Robertson, also known as the Duck Commander. He is among the elite of duck hunters in the world. A hunt with him would be the absolute coolest thing in the world to me. I can only imagine how many ducks we could shoot. I have been through many experiences in my life and have learned that life can end at any moment in time. The most I can do to accomplish my

dreams before I “kick the bucket,” is to work as hard and dream as big as I possibly can.

Bucket List-Honorable Mention

Experiences Before I Kick the Bucket

Cheryl James

I want to experience these three things before I kick the bucket. First, I want to travel to each state in the United States. Second, I would want to travel abroad: Paris, Italy, Germany and Africa. Lastly, I would like to graduate from college with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communications.

Firstly, I would resume my travels of the United States. I have already visited 33 states which means 17 more to explore. I am not talking about roughing it in the backyards with tents and sleeping bags. I am talking about traveling America in my 30 foot recreational vehicle with all the amenities of home. Imagine me on the back roads to North and South Dakota, circling stunning mountains, passing stone pillars, going through rock tunnels; stopping to see Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse Memorial. I'm on the road again exploring the rustic scenery of Montana, Wyoming and Nebraska. I would sit down to enjoy the beauty of Martha's Vineyard, continuing north heading towards New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine. As I hear the sound of the waves breaking on the beach, eating the delightful crustaceans of clams, lobsters and crabs, I would begin to plan my next destination.

Secondly, my travel journey would continue abroad: Paris, Italy, Germany and Africa. With my passport updated, First class, of course, I am on my way. I want to see and do so much. I want to relax on the French Riviera, visit the Louvre Museum, see the Mona Lisa and climb the Eiffel Tower. I would shop in each country, especially the Louis Vuitton store. In Venice I would sing along with the gondolier as he serenades me down the canal. In Africa I would visit Cairo, the largest city in Africa. I want to ride down the Nile River, see the amazing temples and Pyramids. In South

Africa, I would go on an adventure go on an adventure safari: Elephants, lions, Hippos. I want to hear the rhythmic pounding feet of the Zulu warriors.

Lastly, my most personal endeavor is to graduate from college receiving my bachelor of arts in communications in 2010. I returned to college after a 20 year break and it's been a big change, but I love the whole college experience. I feel higher education will open many doors for my future.

The bucket list has given me time to reflect on how short life is. Traveling has been educational, historical and very enjoyable. Live life and enjoy.

Bucket List-Honorable Mention

One Step Ahead of Time and Death

Heather Hussey

As I grow older, I find myself trying to be one step ahead of time and death. I look back and remember all of the things that I have done in my life, only to realize that there is still so much that I want to do.

One of the first things that come to mind when I think of what I still want to do before I “kick the bucket” is start a family. I feel this is something that has a smaller window of opportunity than others. I really hope to find a husband that will live up to all of the standards that I have. I also hope to have children that can live a happy, healthy life. Another thing I would like to do is travel to Japan before I get too old. The culture and beauty of this country has great appeal to me, and I really would like to visit, if not live there, for a little bit. As I think of all these wonderful and exciting things, I can't help but be pulled back by that one leash in my life that could keep me from doing any of these things, my health. That's why before I do any of the things listed above; the first, most important thing on my bucket list is to find out what disease or medical problem I suffer from. For if I do not find out what is wrong, I will never be able to go out into the world and meet new people and fall in love. I will never be able to travel the long distance to Japan and walk around under its rising sun.

So left with this list, I can only walk the long path from doctor to doctor in hopes that someday they will find my problem and a cure. For now, my dreams will be pushed back, but as long as I have them, I can still move forward.

Poetry



Poetry

Poetry-First Place

A Song to Sing

Kevin L. Davis

A song a song what really is a song. Is a song long or does it ring all the night long. When you got some wrong going on why don't you just sing a song. Even when it's right in the light, just sing a song with all your might.

A song to sing in the morning with the birds and the bees and the wind that blows the trees. As they celebrate the coming of the morning light that said goodbye to the dark night. Is there a special song I'm talking about, or is it a song you don't know about? Does a song need to rime or do you have the right time.

What is a song? Or who will sing a song? Does this song have a name, or do they all sound the same? Does anybody have a song? Somebody once wrote a song:

"Give me a song and the spirit, and I'll sing praises, praises to your name. Grant me a song, and I will lift my voice as tho the altar of my heart was set on fire."

Now this is the song that I want to sing, with a beautiful melody that will ring.

Poetry-Second Place

That Woman Kimberly Green

She is a woman overflowing with a fragrance of frankincense

An intercessor:

Her sweet smell drags even a smile from her Heavenly Father.

The angels sing praises as they dance and rejoice.

Because their creator is pleased.

Men and woman will bow on bended knees

Blessing her presence with royalty.

She is:

A woman overflowing in abundance in the fragrance of Myrrh

Over flowing in purification and

Preparation for the man she loves most.

Her Heavenly Father

Who keeps her sacred and close

Men will weep at her Pomegranated scent.

She is:

Fruitful flowing in blessing and favor

She is his lily of the valley showing Him honor with a pure heart

Her Heavenly father weeps with joy

for she has placed Him first in her life

now she is highly favored.

She will anoint many with her sacred oil fragrances from her Golden Bowl
full of incense flowing with abundant love and a strong character.

For she is:

That woman that God has captured, she is the woman in all of us

That woman that all men trust

The woman that God has made us all to be.....

That woman is you and me.

Poetry-Third Place

Our World Mahmoud Ali

The world is a different place now.
Than what it was before
Violence, blood shed, and war.
Kids being abused
Plastic not being re-used.
Stores getting shop lifted.
Children act as if their ancestors never existed.
Drugs are being over used.
And drinking is being abused.
But yet no one cares.
They walk around as if they're not aware.
Making problems over garbage.
Fighting over nothing.
Never having enough of something.
Can't get their priorities straight.
Inheriting bad traits.
But it's okay,
All their problems are bigger than the rest.
They are just the best.
We'll just put all the world's problems aside.
As if no one else survived.
The world's problems are no big deal.
We'll just have our kids of the future,
Live in a world of torture.

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Shattered Nga Thi Truong

Laying beneath the stars, there my mind starts to wonder, There's no real reason to keep on moving when seemingly everything that I touch shatters all around me.

Dreams of freedom and understanding slip from my fingertips as though they were not meant for me.

Tears bound to me by my existence, streaming out like a river, can anything more be done?

My mind shuts out the feeling I knew for too long, not resurfacing to be resurrected.

These feelings that I tried so hard to forget but yet again bound to me by my existence.

My past a blur, images of the pain and agony that I had gone through submerged, laughing at me it seems.

Peace and quietness I longed for never came, if it did, then I paid a high price for it.

Shadows of my past linger behind me, as I look in the mirror, I caught the ghastly image of it.

I smashed the mirror and realize what I had done, as if telling me, I am shattered just like this mirror,

Causing splitting images of me, splitting images equaling up to my splitting personalities.

Where am I? Please find me.

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Seasons
Cheryl James

Winter, Spring, Summer or Fall

What's your favorite season of all?
I like Winter with its blanket of snow
I like Spring as the Flowers grow
I like Summer all decked 'n' green
I like Fall with its colorful falling leaves

There's no question in my mind
I like each season in its own God-given time!

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Weather

Luc Pham

The weather changes,
One day it's good,
The next day it's bad.
It's a devastating thing.
It will determine your life.
When will it be perfect?

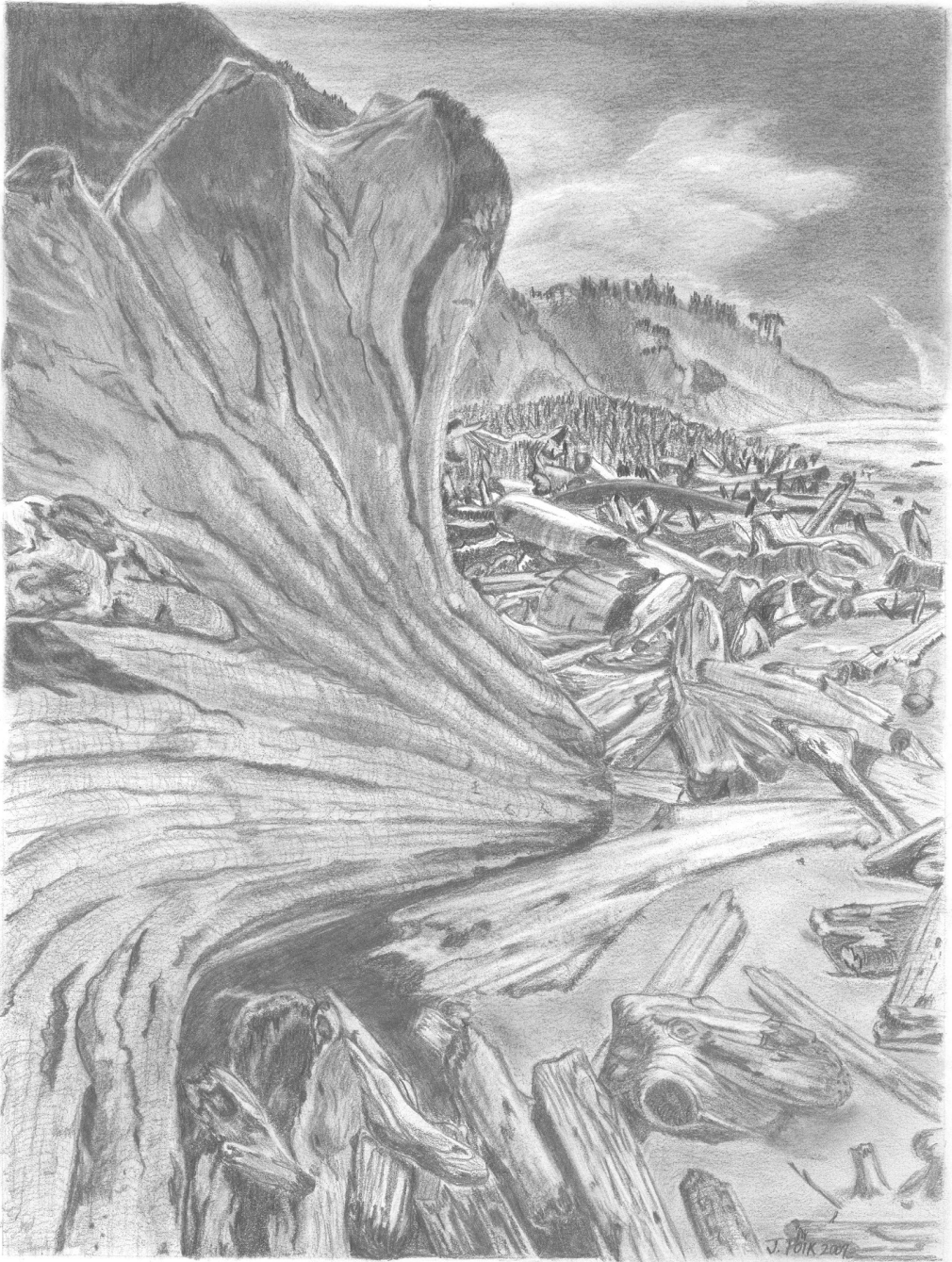
Poetry-Honorable Mention

Path

Heather Hussey

Be you cement or dirt may you be soft of hurt.
You guide me along like a melody of a song.
You are my path, my road, my way.
Like a lantern in the night that shines my way home.
I am not worried about where you may lead.
As long as I have you to follow.

Faculty
and
Staff



Driftwood at Cape Blanco, Oregon
Janet G. Polk-Staff

"Somebody's Me"

Do you, do you think of me?
Like I think of you?
Do you spend your time,
remembering all we've been through...?

Love, love cannot go wrong,
when you push (away) I still hold on,
I've invested my time &
we both bared our cross &
what we have isn't lost,
as I hold us here in my thoughts...

Somebody loves you,
somebody needs you,
somebody feels (you) til their heart bleeds...

Somebody wants you,
somebody haunts you,
hoping you will eventually see...

Somebody hopes for,
(he's) the one you long for,
someone fulfilling all your needs...

Somebody can't wait,
to see or touch your face,
somebody feels so incomplete...
...somebody's me

You will always be in my life,
cause I can't let you leave my sight...
...or my memory

When you, when you think of me,
smile joyfully,
your somebody's me...

Damon James Gaspard
Staff



At Work
D.L. Ross-Faculty

"Telling My Life Like A Story"

I caught her staring at me;
I seen she had a style...
Lost in conversation,
we embraced for awhile...

Did she see me or see through me;
said 'I love you' without a sound...

Telling my life like a story, (she was)
writing it as time went by...
and she knows how to make me happy;
how to make me frown...
It depends on if her world makes her
happy or brings her down...

I went beyond imagination
to show how much I care...
Every time she called, I listened,
she was damn sure I'd be there...

As I think of all the good times,
I hear her laughter grow so loud...

(as she was) telling my life like a story, reading my words as I looked in her
eyes... and she knows how to make me happy, and how to bring me
down... If my life with her was a circus, that would make me her favorite
clown...

She had a gentle presence,
like the most pleasurable song...
She whispered in my ear:
"...this is where you belong..."

"...Why have I been cheated;
was I meant for the solitary life...?"

(as she was) telling my life..."

Damon James Gaspard
Staff



The Boys—and Girl—of Summer
D.L. Ross-Faculty

"Thoughts, Sometimes"

There are memories all over, everywhere I go, thoughts, sometimes
bringing it back all so clear...

I've invested so much time, wishing you were still here...

Letters & songs remind me,
of the way you made me feel...
Maybe I was frightened, maybe I
walked while you were standing still...

I go back to the places we've been to,
laughing; smiling; it feels like you're still there...
Thoughts, sometimes I believe that you still care...

Since you've been gone, I wonder did I have what your heart needs...
Maybe I could have tried harder,
maybe you would still be here with me...

I followed your steps in the snow
though the traces have disappeared...
Know what we've lost is now gone
but wishing you were still here...

Thoughts sometimes, I wish I could feel your kiss again...
your warmth and your presence like the most pleasurable sin...

Every time I see you I want to show you how I feel...
The words I spoke truly touched you, I know you felt they were very real...

I would have given, if you needed some time or some extra space...
Names are soon forgotten, but true feelings cannot be replaced...

One thing you could always count on was my being there, if only to smile...
While you act like there is nothing between us, it's just you in denial...

The truth is no matter, what we had is still haunting me...
I've done all I can, to open your eyes and truly see...

The loving feelings I felt when I held your soft hands...
was like holding on to water, like clutching at falling sand...

The friendships I have created over the course of the years...
lets me know I am not alone & I shouldn't waste one more tear...

but I still wonder of things I could have done, I still wonder of something I
could have tried...

Thoughts, sometimes remind me the best you have given was saying
“good-bye”...

Damon James Gaspard
Staff



Nova Scotia-Acadian Village

Michelle Judice
Faculty

I TELL THEIR STORY

The man who said, the past is prologue to the present,” was most certainly a genealogist. It becomes clearer to me with each family line I embark upon to study that we are the sum total of all our ancestors. When I come upon a picture of some long dead relative, I find myself, magnifying glass in hand, studying the curve of an eyebrow of my great grandmother taken when she was a beautiful girl of 16. And what about those piercing black eyes of the man in a proud civil war uniform. Why do they look familiar? It’s because they were passed on to my brother, eyelash for eyelash!

And when I read of the arduous journeys undertaken by my great grandparents who set out in oxcarts and covered wagons to uncharted territories, leaving behind family, friends and possessions, and taking with them only their barest needs, plus courage, determination, and yes, stubbornness, I don’t mind so much when my family points out a stubborn streak in me. I know where it came from.

I read their lives and feelings on their tombstones. Here’s the grave of an ancestor, who, though having lived and died in Texas, expresses homage to his birth state: “Born in Kentucky, and proud of it.” And others, three in a row: grandfather, father and son, all with Masonic emblems on their stones-- mute testimony to a strong belief that transcended generations. And others, with their regiment and unit numbers inscribed on them, bear silent witness to their patriotic service to their country.

Not everyone is interested in genealogy, subscribing to the theory that the dead past should bury its dead. But fortunately, for all of us, there seems to be one in each generation of a family who is happy to spend untold hours scanning vital statistic and census records looking for elusive ancestors, to put flesh on their bones and words in their mouth, and make them live again, to tell our family’s story and to feel that somehow they know and approve. Genealogy is not just compiling dates of births and deaths. It is a way to breathe life into all who have gone before us. And in finding them, we somehow find ourselves.

Genealogy takes pride in what our ancestors were able to accomplish. It respects their hardships and losses, it honors the deep pride in our forefathers who fought and died to make and keep us a Nation, and to

keep our Nation free, and in our foremothers who struggled to give our generations life, sometimes under the worst of circumstances and then struggle to rear those children in crude dwellings on some raw frontier. They are responsible for who we are; without them, we would not exist.

That is why I do genealogy—to study and to tell the story of my family, and through them, gain a better understanding of myself, the composite of their faults and foibles, their wit and wisdom, their triumphs and disappointments. I feel a oneness with my ancestors and with those who will come after me as I realize that I am not the end of a line, but a merely one in long line of contributors to it.

Sue Lanier Wright
Faculty



Thirteen Ways of Looking at Poetry

I

The observation of something as
simple as a flower
or a tree . . . or as complicated
as all of human history.

II

Happy or sad, jealous or in love,
alive or dead, soul-searching or trivial—
poetry is all of the above.

III

The rhythmical composition
of my thoughts offered up
for the pleasure of both our tongues.

IV

Poetry is a headache—
it makes me labor in one hundred
degree heat—digging a ditch
never deep enough to reach
the water I need.

V

I put my past, my present,
my future on paper,
then fold it into an arrow
and aim it at your thighs;
poetry makes me high.

VI

A concoction of lemony honesty,
fifty-proof emotions, and mint sprigs of
fantasy poured over ice,
sipped in the late afternoon
of a clothes-shedding mid-July.

VII

The truth underneath
the basement of everything;
the seed, once planted
in your brain, that wraps around
your ears like macramé.

VIII

More than words, maybe life's
happiness; the right poem at
the right time could save a mind.

IX

Like eating a chunk
of cheesecake
in a hot bubble bath,
poetry is grrreat!

X

The way I feel
when I feel
safe enough to feel;
the permission I give to me
when I imagine that no one—
not even myself—
is looking.

XI

A slice of pie
or a slit of the wrist—
you decide.

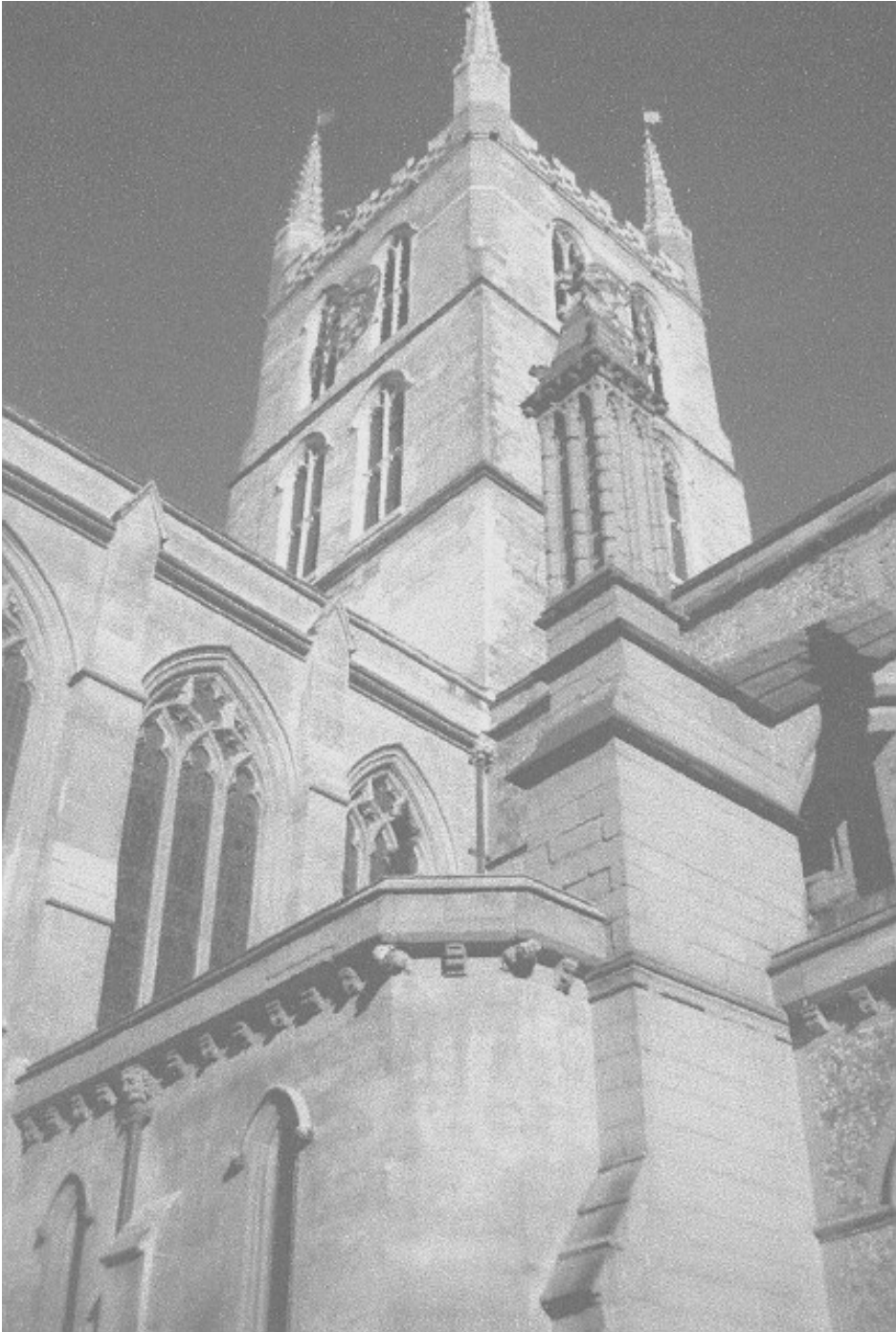
XII

Since I cannot see
what it is telling me,
poetry relies on faith.

XIII

A gift, of sorts, like
forgiveness;
poetry is grace.

Mysti Rudd's English 1302-51 Class,
Spring 2007



Southwark Cathedral-London

Michelle Judice

Faculty



Rebirth

Smart....but too much freedom.
Skipping school, smoking, drugs,
more mistakes....and then prison.

Out of prison....argument with spouse.
Anger, frustration....crossing street,
hit by car....paraplegic, wheel chair.

A new-found life...with help from above.
A new way of thinking....a new person.
College enrollment...a blessing to others.

Life comes at you quickly sometimes,
but Amanda knows there is hope.

D.L. Ross-Faculty



Paris in Springtime

Michelle Judice

Faculty

Assurance

It is an absolutely brilliant translucent day, as if I'm peering through the prism of an elegant piece of lead crystal; the light is bright but not hard on my eyes. It surrounds me and strangely passes through me. I am driving on a highway; the concrete ribbon is pristine--unblemished from the hundreds of thousands of vehicles yet to pass over. I am unfamiliar with the stark surroundings, for there are no homes or businesses built up against the expressway and I don't recognize any of the highway numbers.

I need to be heading the right way towards home and panic begins to bubble to the surface, a sense that I have experienced so often this year. My husband's illness and disability, adjusting to an increase of expenses and decrease in income, the death of my mother-in-law on Mother's Day, Mother three weeks later in June; then, in July making the journey with my sister to bury Mother's ashes in the family plot in North Texas. Tears begin to well, "Get a grip," I say, chastising myself. I choose to go to the right and smile at the proverbial "*fork in the road.*"

This is so odd . . . , I have no sense of time or . . . , how did I . . . ?

The bedroom is awash with the same glorious light; our white comforter gleams. My cell phone rings from the middle of the bed where I often leave it when I get home. I hesitate as I reach for the phone, the caller ID indicates that the call is from . . . *Mother*? Mother never had caller ID; isn't her number canceled? I struggle for composure as I flip the phone open and place it against my ear. Initially some static, but her voice is strong, "Janet, this is Mother."

I reel and choke, "Mother, I miss you so much."

Compassionately she replies, "Yes, Dear I know. Everything will be all right, ***everything*** will be all right."

A rush of feelings flood over me; I could barely answer in the affirmative. Sensing that time was short, I sputter, "Mother, how are you?"

Vibrantly she answers, "It is all so wonderful and I am learning so much!"

“I love you, Mother.”

And with such warmth, she softly replies, “I love you **too**, Janet.”

I lower my head, cup it with my free hand, I twist in agony as I stand there by the bed; such a profound sense of loss but amazingly I am filled with assurance. Slowly, I lift eyes upward; I press my lips firmly together; as I try to comprehend having both emotions at the same time.

Then . . . ,

I awakened to my sobbing and realized that God had allowed Mother to come to me.

November 2007

Janet G. Polk

Staff



My Father, Myself

To the memory of Phillip A. Olson, 1926-2008

Until I was six, I thought that my father and God and the Easter Bunny were all the same entity. Every evening, near 6 p.m. when he was due to return either from his twelve-hour-day in the wheat, corn, and soybean fields or his ten-hour day at Breberg's Tractor Repair, I watched out the bay window for his rusty orange and sky-blue 1957 International pick-up truck. And when I spotted it, I burst out of the house and ran down the hill to the Quonset, like a puppy dog eager for a treat. And the treat? Why, every minute I was in the company of this magnificent man was a gift to me. I would try to match his uphill gait, three strides for every one of his, and when we arrived at the old farmhouse, he would plop down on a metal chair next to the Formica table in the kitchen where I would unlace his tan Red Wing boots and remove his grey work socks, then grab him a Buckhorn from the vegetable crisper. With a great big sigh of an exhale after he swallowed that first mouthful of beer, he would say, "Man . . . that's real livin'."

If it's true that we learn by doing, I first learned to love by loving my father. He was a hardworking, funny man with a permanent farmer's tan. At the age of seven I was "invited" to walk the rows of the soybean fields along with him and the rest of my family, pulling and wacking at unwanted sunflowers, cockleburs, and milkweeds. Whereas my five older siblings had hoes and machetes, my little brother and I had wooden lats, sharpened by my father on the grindstone inherited from his father. Keeping up with my father was my earliest goal, an enormous source of pride and identity as I struggled to carry a fifty-pound bag of seed. I cared what he thought of me, and I never, ever, EVER wanted him to think of me as lazy. So I ran if I had to, and when the horseflies got bad or the heat and humidity of a Minnesota July threatened to undo me, I chanted the mantra of

The Little Engine that Could: “I think I can, I think I can, I think I think I think I can,” until I traded it for the Olson battle cry: “FORWARD EVER, BACKWARD NEVER!” And I think I did earn my father’s respect—and consequently his love—which, by the way, are the same thing in a Lutheran Norwegian farm family.

I remember Saturday nights as the family gathered around our new 19-inch Zenith (RCA?) color t.v. and together we watched *Get Smart*, *Carol Burnett*, and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. Dad loved the skits where Tim Conway improvised a line in order to crack-up Harvey Cormann. When my dad laughed, not only would his bell shake, but the whole farmhouse would resonate with his enjoyment. So many times I remember laughing and letting go—experiencing the relaxation that comes after laughter—not because I got the joke or enjoyed the skit—but because my dad was laughing at it. Laughter is indeed contagious, I learned by age eight.

And I also learned to pray. Breakfast was at 6 a.m., dinner was at noon, and supper was at 6 p.m. Morning and afternoon “launch” (as my father insisted on mispronouncing it) occurred out in the fields at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. respectively, and generally consisted of a dried beef sandwich, and oreo cookie, and a cup of instant Sanka coffee poured from the thermos of his barn-shaped lunchbox. When I was old enough to ride my bike out to the fields where he was working, I whole-heartedly took on the chore of bringing his lunch to him, stuffing his lunchbox in the pink-flowered basket of my purple banana-seat bike. But before he would eat a thing, my father always bowed his head for the seven seconds it took him to utter, “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest. Let these gifts to us be blessed. Amen.” Long before I knew what these words meant, I learned to repeat them as if they were a foreign language I did not speak—a long, meaningless string of syllables recited as quickly as possible, just like our bedtime jingle: “Now I lay me down to sleep./ I pray the Lord my soul to keep./ If I should die before I wake/ I pray the Lord my soul to take./ Amen.” In my earliest

understanding of this prayer, I thought the last line had something to do with chocolate cake. And since I liked both chocolate and my father, I loved reciting this “poem” again and again and again, never worrying too much about what the words were “supposed” to mean.

The earliest prayer that I ever composed, uttered, and truly meant was an appeal for rain. If you live on a farm, especially an un-irrigated one, your livelihood is dependent upon the weather. I could see the worry in my father’s eyes, the tightness in his neck as he watched the sky, hoping for a cumulo-nimbus that would shower upon us and revive the dehydrated leaves of the crops we hoped to harvest in the fall and store in the dryer bins until we needed the cash for groceries. But in 1976, the rain didn’t come—and no grain worth harvesting was produced—so my father disced under the dried-up plants and “fired” stalks. This single season of drought seemed to last a lifetime at my house, as the walls forever whispered just like the ones in D.H. Lawrence’s story, “The Rocking-Horse Winner.” And this is what I heard them say: “There must be more money; there must be more money.” Since the crops weren’t bringing the money in, my father was forced to borrow from the bank that year in order to feed us.

Though my father hasn’t farmed now for nearly twenty years, every time I come home and return to the house on the hill, I look out the bay window and see the soil of my childhood. I stare at the same field that my father tilled for forty years, and I easily imagine his father tilling it before him. It is the same field where he taught his children to distinguish the difference in greens between soybean and sunflower leaves. The same field where his mother, then my mother, then my sisters and I, then his grandchildren grew radishes and tomatoes and onions and potatoes. The same field where I will forever picture my father as an eternally forty-four-year-old farmer, smiling under the Minnesota sky in July as he pulls a

“pruney” carrot out of the earth in order to thin the row so that others can thrive. Like he has done so many times before, he brushes the baby carrot across the crook of the sleeve of his chambray shirt, then bites the crisp root still coated with crunchy dirt: “AAh . . . chomp, chomp,” he says to me with a twinkle in his eye as if egging me on, “A little dirt is good for ya.”

And in this same vision, I am perpetually nine, clad in overall cut-offs and a swim suit top. I look over at my father—this absolutely beautiful charismatic man, and I follow his lead as I pull a carrot carefully straight out of the ground so as not to break off the root, then dust it off on my sleeveless arm. In the dream we stand next to each other as we take our time chewing the sacred soil of Cerro Gordo township in the southwestern corner of Lac Qui Parle County. Together we watch the rain clouds blow in from South Dakota, and my father does not have to whisper a single syllable for me to understand how proud he is—of both his family—and this land.

Mysti Rudd
Faculty

April 26, 2001

Thoughts and a few words about this extraordinary day before I forget what it feels like, the look of it, the scent, how it tasted; the sounds of late spring not quite yet summer.

The breeze from the gulf is light, soft, caressing, playful and tantalizing.

I breathe deeply the fragrant aromas of honeysuckle, hints of gardenia laced with the salt tide; reminiscent of the salt water taffy of my youth.

The azure blue canopy is radiant, pure and limitless.

Birds noisily busy with their nests and young; there are students laughing, lighthearted and giddy; enjoying their time outside.

There is a bounce in my step, walking is enjoyable; taking it all in is a marvelous experience.

The lazy breeze plays with my freshly washed hair, and then finds its way underneath my shirt tail; mischievously twisting one way and then the other before it leaves and finds another to tease.

Playfully, the breeze dances around dresses softly draped, that enhance the sway and cadence of the casual stroller.

This is the day that I will forever compare future spring days to.

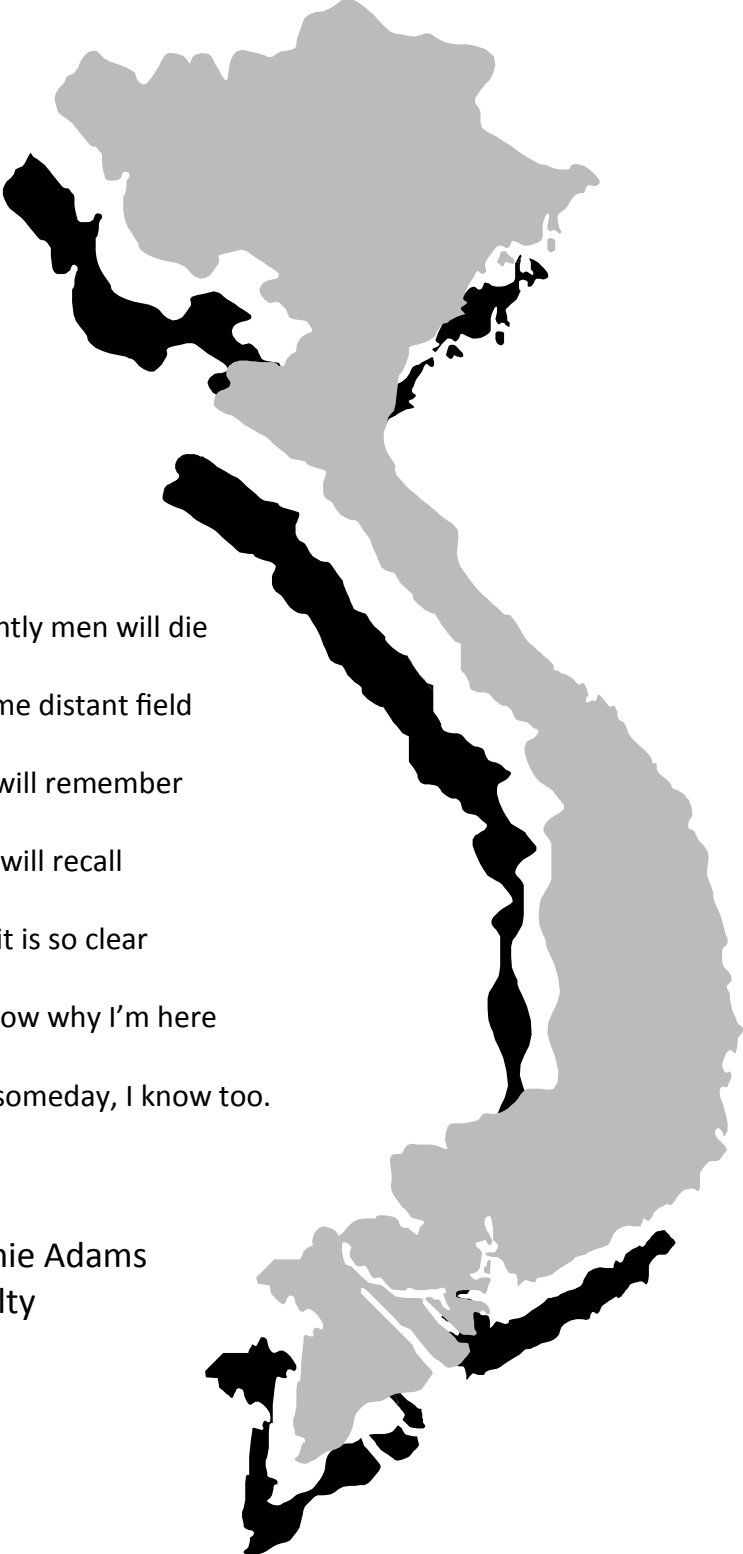
Janet G. Polk
Staff



Man Eating Crab
Cindy Guidry
Faculty

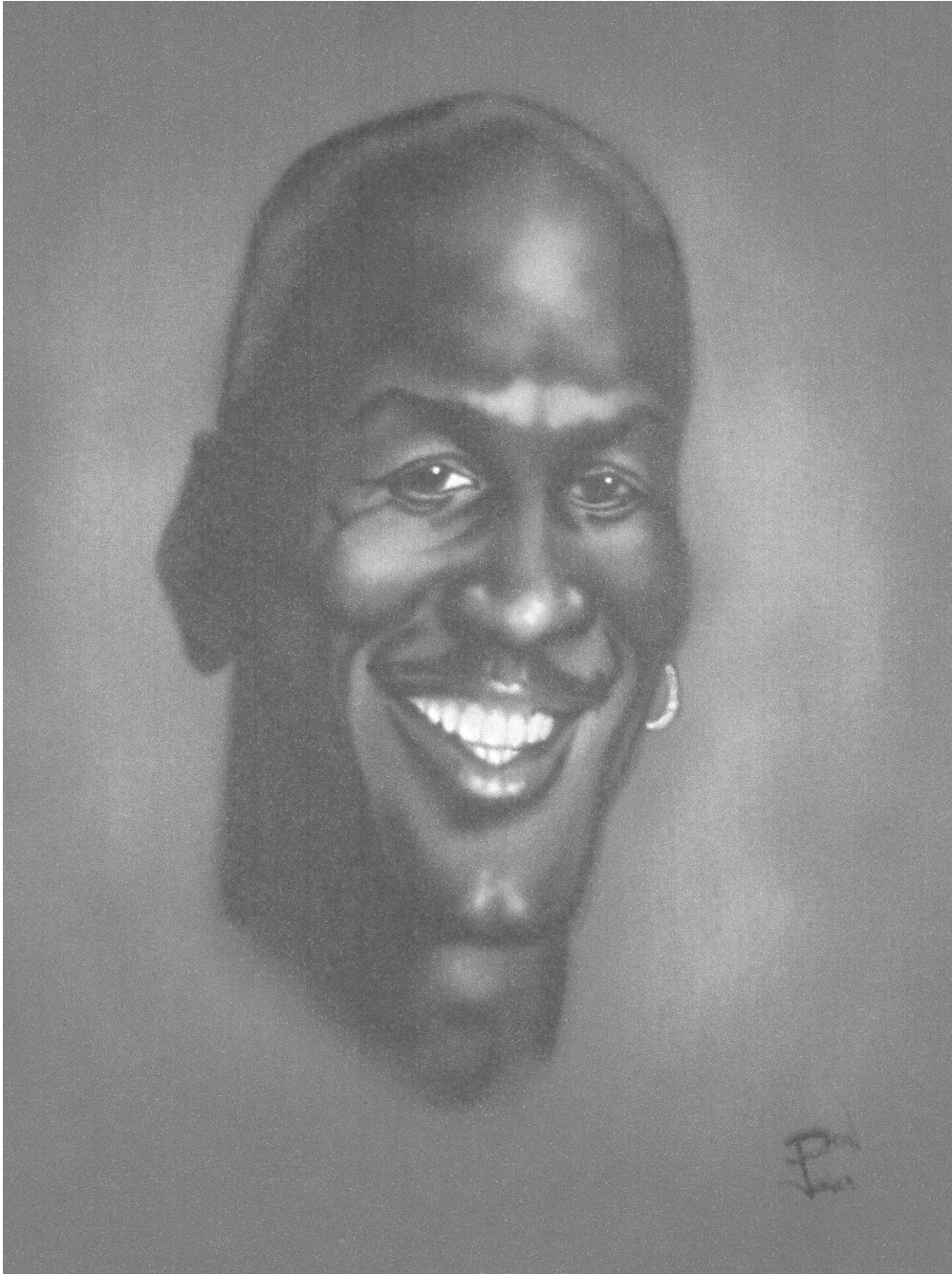


Sunset Island
Don "D.J." Jones
Staff



Violently men will die
In some distant field
Ever will remember
Time will recall
Now it is so clear
All know why I'm here
May someday, I know too.

1969
Jimmie Adams
Faculty



Michael Jordan
Don "D.J." Jones
Staff



Iraq 2007
Jimmie Adams
Faculty



Future

Counterthoughtwise

Present

Past

If I could reverse my thoughts

And think, I think, in reverse

And time is two then one

And night comes before day

January then December

And all the dead were back alive

And all those living yet unborn

And all bullets were back in guns

And guns were back in holsters

And ol' Sam and his Colt

And time keeps going counterthoughtwise

And all thoughts are in reverse

Eve places the apple back

Would we do better with a second chance?

Jimmie Adams

Faculty



Wild Thang.....
Don "D.J." Jones
Staff

Her Last Day at Last

She'd buried her dad first and later, her mom.
Her brother who came from far, far away—
Came for the funeral on the funeral day
And then returned home—what could *he* say?

She knew that her day had now come at last;
Now she was alone, no one hollered "Come Fast."
She was, so they told her, finally free—
She could do what she wanted and be what she'd be.

It was a day meant for lovers,
For her a big plus.
She'd have them all looking
With the day spend in girlish fuss.

She'd bought a new dress, red flowerets on white,
And it clung snugly down to her ankles so neat.
Her coach purse perched where her wrist and hand
meet.
And hot spiky red heels adorned her two feet.

But under her dress she had not neglected;
She'd visited the spa and now smelled like roses
At Victoria Secret bought white lacy undies,
Which looked *really good* in all sexy poses.

The red wine of her choice on the table set breathing
Beside the two goblets with their blessing bequeathing.
She filled up one goblet and gave it a try
And drank it on down and breathed out a sigh.

She slipped on her new clothes
And sipped on more wine
And made up her face
And looked at the time.

It was getting so close
To her special debut
She'd finished her wine—
She knew what to do,
 She stepped to the patio
 Of her high rise apartment
 And breathed in the cool air
 A soft breeze in her hair.

She drank up her wine,
Looked down below
Swung over the rail
And let herself go.

 She was quite a picture
 On the pavement below
 She had been so right
 She sure stopped the show.
 At last it was her day—
 It was her last day, alas.

Sally Byrd
Faculty

What I Talk About. . .

When I Talk About My Roots

I. “Roots”

Yes, I am literally referring to the spindly protuberances that keep the tree of me from falling over—teleporting nutrients to the xylem and phloem of my trunk, stretching out from my toes, my ankles, my soles, my heel bones, forever fastening me to the exfoliating epidermis of Ms. Mother Earth, hidden from your careless view unless you know how to round your knuckles in the dirt, outlining my rhizoids with slow swirls, uncovering the secret of my nurturance as if you were excavating my entire net worth.

I sometimes claim I am a vegetable rather than a tree—a carrot, in fact, difficult to pry from the soil without breaking me in half—unless you pull straight toward the sun. When I speak of my **ROOTS**, I speak of seeds and dirt and the marriage of ovum and sperm, the beginnings of all endings.

II. “My”

When I speak of **MY** roots, it is less a matter of possessiveness—a claim on someone or something else—such as “my wife,” “my career,” “my children,” “my bank account,” “my degree,” or “my dreams,”—and more like a tribute to those-who-came-before me, the ancestors whose hard-working genes gave to me not only the way I look and talk and think and move, but also the obligation to continue the DNA of their solitude. *My*, in this sense, is followed by *duty*, *gratitude*, *legacy*, and *fortitude*.

When I think about **MY** roots, I am thinking about family—and responsibility—and the sacrifices we make, whether healthy or decaying, that enable us, like the roots of a tuber, to survive until May.

III. “About”

Yes, I am hesitant to be pinned down—to jump in and confine any word or phrase with the handcuffs of dictionary restraint. I prefer, instead, to

speak with modals, using qualifiers that some might hear as weak when I say, every single day, “Perhaps,” “Maybe,” and my favorite: “What if?” By avoiding certainty, I avoid being wrong on Any given day, such as last Thursday when I could have sworn the lecture began at 8 Instead of 7. So if I avoid the pre-recorded message when asked about my roots, the false Boasts and egocentric head trips that would have you believe that my family is any better or worse than yours, what other propaganda is available to me?

Can anything, ultimately, be directly written about—or does language necessarily fail us in depicting experience—so we sidestep the fissures of description by feasting on the figurative use of language as we gorge on assorted cupcakes of similes, tossed salads of metaphors, strolling in the corridor of the grand masked ball of personification. When I talk **ABOUT** my roots, am I any closer than any other sentence I’ve crafted in my cobbler’s pose, searching for the perfect fit between my thoughts and the words available to me? Is the difference between the right word and the almost right word as significant as Mark Twain claims it to be: “the difference between *lightning* and the *lightning bug*”? If not, then won’t the words surrounding *root* in the *American Heritage Dictionary* serve just as well? Let’s see, there’s *Root stalk. Rhizome. Roosterfish and rootbeer. Root Canal, root cellar, root climber. Root hair, root hold, root knot. And my favorite: rootlessness* (though I am also fond of *rootworm and rope*). “What’s in a word?” To a writer or a witch, in a word: everything—for her power is derived from words used to cast spells on readers as well as worms.

IV. “Talk”

Like many poets/writers/thinkers/spiders (think of Charlotte from E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web*), when I say “talk,” I actually mean “write.” And when I say “write,” picture me flexing my fingers beneath a waterfall of

meanings: my thumb begins the counting as it claims that *to write is to breathe*; my index finger—the one that also guides my pen—points out that *to write is to try to make sense of the world*; my longest finger reaches into my torso, prying my heart out from beneath my rib cage—pushing the shy child out of the shadows and on to the stage, for *to write is to reveal*; my ring-finger circles up the free weights of courage and compassion required *to do the heavy lifting of writing to change the world*; and my pinkie won't let me forget *the pleasure of writing* something that tickles my own fancy or tenderly tweaks the web of another's psyche. Lest my thesis has escaped the explicitness of a five-fingered theme, let me scream it from the power position of the last sentence of this paragraph: to write is to claim my humanity in a frequently hostile society.

A thought, like a yellow and black moth, just landed on one of my leaves: what if writing is the single most defining characteristic of being human—since music can be sung by birds or crickets or even thunderstorms, and art can be woven by spiders as well as wind and ice, and paintings can be produced by the feet of penguins or brushes tucked in an elephant's trunk—but only humans *compose*; only humans are able to funnel the hope required to write something down because they believe there will be a tomorrow.

V. "I"

When *I* talk about my roots, I hope to speak for more than me. Sure, I sometimes delight in pinning the tail on the donkey of a piece of writing as I aim my words at my meaning. But the meaning cannot bloom if I insist on speaking only for myself—if my roots don't produce a stem, a stalk, a flower, a fruit, a social intercourse. So when I talk about my roots, I'm really asking you to examine yours. I want you to get out your hoe or trowel or pruning shears, to dig beneath the weeds or rake aside the

refuse so you can discover where you were planted.

What would happen—to your thoughts, your writing, your future trajectories—if you turned and re-turned the earth, exposing old family photographs? If you fingered the spine of each book an ancestor had read? If you caressed the keepsakes in attics or heirlooms in hope chests, turning over and over in your hands the things that had been touched by your ancestors? What, then, would YOU discover about your roots?

Mysti Rudd
Faculty



Picasso's Eye
Grace Megnet-Faculty



Greek God
Grace Megnet-Faculty

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Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial staff of EXPRESSIONS 2008 would like to thank all of the students who submitted work for consideration to EXPRESSIONS 2008 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 2008 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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