





*A Member of The Texas State University System*

# Expressions

Spring 2009

Volume XXIII

# Dedication

November 25, 2008

Dear Ms. Byrd,

As I will soon be graduating I feel compelled to write a few lines to express my thanks to so many good people at Lamar State College-Port Arthur. Words fail me—and I am an award winning writer—in expressing my gratitude.

I must thank you Ms. Byrd, as editor of the Expressions contest, for accepting my sometimes controversial entries. The Expressions contest has meant a great deal to me and has, in fact, changed the course of my life.

I must thank Dr. Huval for opening my eyes to the world of literature, forever altering my view of the world.

And also to Ms. Copple...for her kindness and inspiration has affected me in ways I doubt she even realizes.

And last to all the students who competed each year and pushed me with ever increasing zeal, forcing me to work harder still.

God bless you all and may God bless our great state and country.

With all my heart,

William H. Davis, Jr.



# Expressions 2009 Student Winners

## *ESSAY*

### **First Place**

A Bloodless Coup ..... Walter J. Williams

### **Second Place**

I Believe in Me ..... Morgan Woods

### **Third Place**

Feel My Words ..... Kimberly Green

### **Honorable Mention**

Snow Day ..... Michael Carl

This I Believe ..... Elizabeth Medina

Learn to Respect ..... Chad Louviere

Every Family Has a Story ..... Tammy Huynh

Teamwork ..... Cody Almond

We All Have a Purpose ..... Lori Champagne

## *SHORT STORY*

### **First Place**

Limits of Restraint ..... William H. Davis, Jr.

### **Second Place**

“Easy” Eddie and “Ace” O’Hare ..... David Gillespie

### **Third Place**

The Beat of Rita’s Heart ..... Julio A. Marcos

## *POETRY*

### **First Place**

The Vineyard ..... William H. Davis, Jr.

### **Second Place**

The Family We Choose ..... Rachel J. Scott

### **Third Place**

Eradication Day ..... Clifford M. Nowell

*POETRY*

**Honorable Mention**

- Higher ..... Norman Patterson
- Dear ..... Stephanie Hammell
- Death to a Planet ..... Walter J. Williams
- Oh, oh, oh, oh Sweet Love of Mine ..... Abigail Vincent
- Conversations with Mom ..... Rachel J. Scott

*LITERARY CRITIQUE*

**First Place**

- Everyman ..... William H. Davis, Jr.

**Second Place**

- O’Brien’s Recipe for a Novel, a Review of Island of the World .....  
Richard Hall

**Third Place**

- Castor’s Disaster.....Richard Hall

***SPECIAL CATEGORY-Funded and Sponsored by: Phi Theta Kappa***

- The Paradox of Affluence: Choices, Challenges, and  
Consequences: Tangible Consequences .....Steven C. Hatfield, I

*COVER ART*

- First Place** ..... Thomas Jackson
- Second Place**..... William H. Davis, Jr.
- Third Place**..... Carlos Gonzalez
- Honorable Mention** ..... Samuel King
- Honorable Mention** ..... Terence C. Prevost
- Honorable Mention** ..... Adrian Oliver

*GENERAL ART*

**First Place** ..... David Gillespie  
**Second Place**..... Carl B. Harris  
**Third Place**..... Christina Buchanan  
**Honorable Mention** ..... Michael S. Beheler  
**Honorable Mention** ..... Samuel King  
**Honorable Mention** ..... Eric Flores  
**Honorable Mention** ..... Carl B. Harris

*PHOTOGRAPHY*

**First Place** ..... Sakinah Thomas  
**Second Place**..... Sakinah Thomas  
**Third Place**..... Alicia Rascoe  
**Honorable Mention** ..... Jessica Thompson

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# Early Expressions 2009 Student Winners

## *DESCRIPTION: PERSON*

### **First Place**

Hero..... Tiffany Fowler

### **Second Place**

Raven Christine Stephenson ..... Kelli Jo Allen

### **Third Place**

Lorena..... Lorena Sanchez

### **Honorable Mention**

Who Is That Man?..... Casey Guillot

Yvonne Howard ..... Jacovin Buckner

## *DESCRIPTION: PLACE*

### **First Place**

The Jamin' Kitchen..... Kyle Hales

### **Second Place**

A Night and Morning ..... Jared Romine

### **Third Place**

The Sweetest Memory..... Alberta Welch

### **Honorable Mention**

Childhood Kitchen ..... Kelli Jo Allen

Grandma's Kitchen..... Antonnia Mansfield

## *DESCRIPTION: THING*

### **First Place**

Green Lawn Resting Place..... April Coleman

### **Second Place**

Tombstone..... Jalisa Delafoisse

### **Third Place**

Gravestone..... Raul Lopez

*DESCRIPTION: THING*

**Honorable Mention**

A Remembrance in Oak Bluff Memorial Park ..... Christina Powell  
Stanton’s Headstone ..... LaQuinta Vonner  
Cemetery ..... Stephanie Gray

*FICTION: LOVE STORY*

**First Place**

Cameran and Derrick ..... Ashley Vaughn

**Second Place**

With Me at the Altar ..... Ashley Vaughn

**Third Place**

Gone Fishin’ ..... Heather Holt

**Honorable Mention**

Skating or Dying ..... Chris Kelly  
Arkansas ..... Felecia Londo

*FICTION: FEAR*

**First Place**

Home Alone ..... ShaLondrya Porter

**Second Place**

Friday the Thirteenth ..... Jacoby Joseph

**Third Place**

The Doghouse Beast ..... Ra’shad Balloue

**Honorable Mention**

My Brush with Death ..... Ron Collins

*FICTION: REVENGE*

**First Place**

A Story of Revenge ..... Kristy Johnson

**Second Place**

Neighborhood Revenge ..... Chris Varela

**Third Place**

A Tale of Revenge ..... Nathan Nguyen

**Honorable Mention**

Revenge ..... Kyle Hales

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## Lamar State College-Port Arthur and Expressions:

### The Articulations of the Visions of Others

In 1909, John Gates articulated his vision: he established a small college in Port Arthur for workers in the burgeoning petrochemical industry to better themselves through higher education. Today, 100 years later, that original “small college” is now the sprawling campus of Lamar State College-Port Arthur.

As a two-year facility, Lamar has enabled, encouraged, and empowered thousands of people of all ages to gain a foothold in the world of academia, into furthering their education and improving their lives.

Twenty-three years ago the Lamar faculty, staff and students brought forth Expressions, a literary flower bed of the articulations of ideas, visions and inspirations of those who chose to bare their inner most selves as writers, poets, artists, and photographers. We, whether entrants, readers, or both have been blessed with this cornucopia of artistry. We have also become acquainted with others as well as ourselves through our respective endeavors.

As Lamar State College-Port Arthur marches boldly and proudly into its second century, it is my hope as a writer that all of you may continue to pursue your academic and literary endeavors.

With warmest regards,

John R. Nosler  
LSCPA-Class of 2002  
Member Sigma Kappa Delta

# Expressions 2009

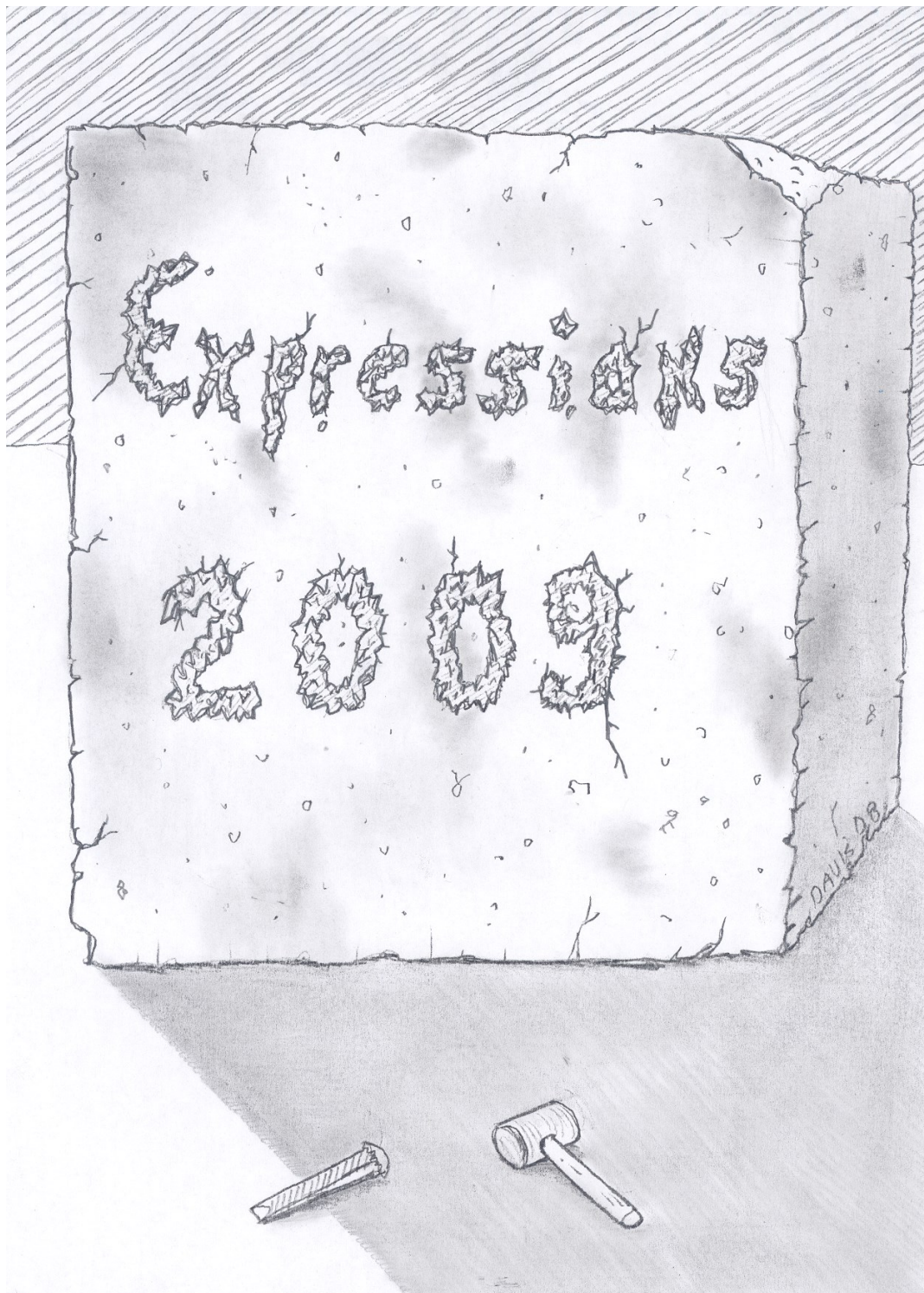
Alma Alfaro  
Nathan Allen  
Cody Almond  
Lauren Angelle  
Alaa Baduan  
Bittnie Bazile  
Cassandra Bazile  
Dallas Bean  
Michael S. Beheler  
Kourtney Benoit  
Abbey Best  
Brittanie Braquet  
Patricia Britt  
Reginald Broussard  
Shanika Brown  
Brandi Buchanan  
Christina Buchanan  
Robert Bushnell  
Mayra Camacho  
Michael Carl  
W.J. Carlisle  
Cassie Carlquist  
Sabria Carter  
Jheryll Casmore  
Shantel Ceasar  
Marco Ceja  
Ariel Cezar  
Lori Champagne  
Cori Cluelow  
Kelly Conkle  
Micki Covington  
Shandi Conner  
Ashley Corcoran  
Kevin Cormier  
Kasey Crowder  
Casey Guillot  
Marilyn Dartest  
Barbara Davis  
William H. Davis, Jr.  
David Die

Gracie Duplantis  
Courtney Duvall  
Junior Espinoza  
Patricia Figueroa  
Eric Flores  
Adrian Fontenot  
Jameshia Fontenot  
Joe Foy  
Beth Gay  
Leah Gesser  
David Gillespie  
Hannah Godina  
Carlos Gonzalez  
Erik M. Grandos  
Kimberly Green  
Mark Gregorio  
Casey Guillot  
Yvonne Gutierrez  
Richard Hall  
Stephanie Hammell  
James Craig Harmon  
Carl B. Harris  
Kaci Harrington  
Steven C. Hatfield I  
Caitlyn Hayes  
Madalyn Hayes  
Veronica Hernandez  
Kristy Hoang  
Ne'LaDonna Jacobs  
Carissa Holland  
Tammy Huynh  
Jeff Janise  
Jamie Johnson  
Jaral Jones  
Brandon Kelley  
Samuel King  
Shawna LaFleur  
Bernard Legar  
Felicia Londo  
Chad Louviere

# Expressions 2009

Chris Louviere	Meredith Sellers
David McGlumphy	Zachary Segler
Elizabeth Medina	Joshua Slaughter
Melissa Munguia	Kenneth R. Smith
Stephanie McDonald	Jacob Sonnier
Julio A. Marcos	Chaz Swearing
Schieta Martin	Blisha Swearing
Henri Matisse	Ashlin Tahaney
Ariel Mayfield	Ashley Thibodeaux
Patricia Mayfield	Sakinah Thomas
Elizabeth Medina	Jessica Thompson
Schalanda Minix	Danny Tran
Ashley Moser	Thu Kim Tran
Melissa Munguia	Abigail Vincent
Zuleima Munguia	Marcus Walker
Ashley Murphy	Margie Walker
An Nguyen	Nicole Webb
Eileen Nguyen	Nicole Welch
Michelle Nguyen	Samantha Williams
Nathan Nguyen	Walter J. Williams
Shawn Nguyen	ZeQuazha Williams
Clifford M. Nowell	George Williamson
Adrian Oliver	Eric Wisenbaker
Jose A. Hernandez-Pache	Morgan Woods
Lucky Panelo	Jermaine Young
Jessica Parsons	Maria Zavala
Norman Patterson	
Anthony Peterson	
Matthew Pfromm	
Luc Pham	
Amanda Piletere	
Terence C. Prevost	
Lisett Rangel	
Holley Reimer	
Stacie Roccaforte	
Alicia Rascoe	
Kerrie Ross	
Kayla Rougeau	
Adam Sanchez	
Rachel J. Scott	

**Essay**



## Cover Art-Second Place

William H. Davis, Jr.

# Essay-First Place

## A Bloodless Coup

Walter J. Williams

One of the most exciting, dangerous, and memorable events in my life occurred when I had the opportunity to work in Nigeria, Africa. Nigeria is one of the world's leading exporters of oil, and is located in northern Africa. The capital, Lagos, is located in northern Nigeria. This entire region is low-lying swampland, containing huge oil reserves. North of Lagos is a Chevron/Texaco compound, and installation that receives oil from wells in the surrounding areas, storing and pumping it to waiting supertankers offshore. The name of the compound is Escravos, and it became my home for four months. Here I witnessed some of the most poverty afflicted people in the world that live in one of the most politically corrupt, but potentially wealthiest regions of the world, and their epic struggle not only be recognized by their government, but to raise their standard of living by claiming a portion of this great wealth.

Escravos is basically a huge tank farm with a living facility, power generation plant, and oil pumping station at its center. Surrounded by two rivers and an ocean, it is inaccessible except by boat or airplane. Encased by earthen levees topped with electric fences, it is patrolled continuously by an elite division of the Nigerian Army. The fence was designed to keep the surrounding communities out of Escravos. The patrolling army has shown no reservation concerning keeping this facility secure and undisturbed, and places little or no value on human life outside the fence.

Although the Nigerian government controlled the facility, and it was visited on a routine basis by government officials, it was operated by Chevron/Texaco. Expats, individuals with various technical skills, were recruited from all over the world to keep the operation running smoothly. Part of the agreement with the Nigerian government was to use personnel from Nigeria whenever possible.

The Nigerians who worked inside the compound were not from the surrounding areas; they were transported in from other areas, mostly Lagos, and they composed the vast majority of the workforce. The natives who lived outside the fence were terribly agitated because of this. They wanted the opportunity to work and support their families and raise their standards of living by working at Escravos. It was very common to see members of the outside community begging at the fence. The people inside were warned not to encourage this behavior, and the natives were chased away continuously by the soldiers. This activity waxed and waned incessantly, and as long as the situation was regulated without gunfire, it was considered to be in a controlled or quiet period.

To understand the underlying factors that dictated the following series of events, and explanation of the dominating religious beliefs is necessary. Almost exclusively, these people were Muslims, although some of the English speaking Nigerians working inside the compound were Christians. From verbal information gathered during this period, common belief was that very old women were considered to be sacred, and any older woman with an infant was highly respected. If a very old woman was to display her breasts, it was considered to be a huge insult, and this action was used to show contempt to a figure of authority, such as a government official or policeman. The only acceptable reaction was to submit to the insult, and if that proved to be impossible, then the only other alternative was to feign submission either by retreat or to disregard the action deliberately by paying no attention and refusing acknowledge the insult. Aggressive retaliation, either physically or verbally, was simply not an option. The soldiers would kill men, boys and even young women who could handle weapons or were considered to be a serious threat. The very old women or older women with infants were ignored and avoided if at all possible. If one killed a very old woman or older woman with and infant, one was believed to be excluded from the grace of Allah and any chance of going to heaven. The soldiers



would use any violent means possible to expel anyone from the fence, with the exception of very old women or older women with infants.

Although Chevron/Texaco was working in a cooperative effort with the government of Nigeria to provide food and emergency supplies, it was never enough. It never got through to the one who needed it the most. The same soldiers who patrolled the fences distributed truckloads of relief supplies on a regular basis. It was common knowledge that the majority of the communities dwelling outside the fence lived almost exclusively on these supplies or the compound's discarded refuse. The compound was widely regarded as lavish and luxurious, even better than most of Lagos. The use of electricity, abundant food and clothing, and plenty of clean water, were painfully obvious to the people living outside the fence. Chevron/Texaco standards required fire retardant coveralls, leather work boots, gloves, hard hats, and safety glasses. All of these items were highly coveted by the people outside the fence.

Since I arrived during a relatively quiet period, the first few days were uneventful. A national presidential election was imminent, and things escalated quickly. First, access was restricted to the living quarters or immediate work vicinity. Then everyone was instructed concerning the "duck and cover drill" on how to take refuge in a concrete drainage ditch, concrete machinery space building, or living quarters if aggressive military action or audible gunfire was observed. Escravos represented enormous wealth for the Nigerian government, so the operations of the facility could not stop, or even slow down, no matter what happened. The airstrip was closed, so evacuation was not an option. Bonfires appeared in close proximity of the fence at night, and gunfire could occasionally be heard from the living quarters, gunboats could be seen patrolling the adjacent rivers, and the troop numbers increased noticeably.

As the tension increased, the experts started to hoard food in the living quarters. Although forbidden by company policy, this practice was now unofficially encouraged, especially since each four-man room was equipped with

with a mini refrigerator. Items such as potted meat, canned vegetables, bottled water, and processed snacks virtually disappeared from the mess area. This was a practical response to a potentially volatile situation, especially since the buildings that composed the living quarters were constructed of concrete and stone. Fireproof metal doors that could be secured from the inside covered the entrances. Nervous, tense expats stayed inside as if holding their breath, waiting for the inevitable.

Just when the new routine was becoming habitual, and the fear generated by the anticipation of hostile takeover was starting to dissipate, a most unusual series of events occurred. Although the people on the outside of the fence were very poor, they were not stupid. For years, they had been pushing the limits of the Nigerian special guard, and were learning from their observations. They had learned that the soldiers would react violently to men and boys, even children and young women. They had also learned that the very old women and older women with infants were, for the most part, ignored. Some soldiers had shown favoritism toward them when distributing food. Using this information, the surrounding tribes banded together and launched an offensive plan of action. The invasion force was comprised entirely of very old women and older women with infants. The method of entry was unclear, but common opinion suggested that they gathered in the jungle near the gates used for the delivery of relief supplies, and when the gates were opened for one of these trucks, they stormed the entrance. The sheer volume of their collected efforts prevented the guards from stopping them. Although it was never proven, speculation that the guards were sympathetic to the villagers was common. This act would have been considered treason, punishable by death. Within a matter of a few hours, the compound was entirely dominated by large, naked, old native women, some with infants at their breasts, totally weaponless.

During the first few minutes of the invasion, automatic rifles were heard almost continuously, and since the gates were not visible from the populated

portion of the compound, everyone either barricaded themselves inside of the living quarters or retreated to the machinery spaces, depending upon their schedule. Since the guards were firing in the air in an attempt to frighten the women without results, the shooting soon stopped. The soldiers then surrounded the most sensitive areas of the compound, standing shoulder to shoulder with elbows locked, trying to prevent the office buildings, living quarters and operations center from being invaded. The passive nature of the invaders along with their patience and persistence soon broke this attempt at resistance. They patiently waited at the doors of the living quarters until shift change, using the exact same strategy they used to get inside the fence. Soon the women were wandering freely throughout the compound, ignored by the soldiers and avoided by everyone else. Surprisingly, the work never stopped; everyone kept to his schedule, and production never even slowed down. The South African, European, Australian and American expats simply moved from the living quarters to the machinery spaces. The natives were afraid of the machines. Although some would come wandering around and look occasionally, for the most part the expats were left alone. Because everyone had been hoarding food, although not the choicest, there was plenty. The worst inconvenience was sleeping on the concrete floor. Water to drink and water to bathe was plentiful, but soap and clean clothes became rare commodities. Supervision was nonexistent. Heated debates concerning the recent events became the most common form of recreation among the expats. Everyone agreed that although things were not the comfortable, conditions were still far better than outside the fence, and the paychecks just kept piling up.

After the first day, the soldiers totally ignored the women. They resumed their routine of patrolling the fences, and avoided the center of the compound where the women were concentrated. The soldiers were now quartered in the center of the operations control center, which the women avoided. The women had parties, complete with bonfires, drums and dancing. They completely gutted

the living quarters, dry stores warehouse, kitchen, and community buildings. The refrigerated warehouse was left virtually undisturbed. Common opinion was that the women were afraid of the cloud of white vapor that escaped when the doors were opened. When this was discovered, the expats now had even more food, and they regularly left quantities of dairy and produce as well as frozen meat a short distance from the warehouse, in thoughtful gratitude for being left alone.

It was totally different story for the Nigerians who were brought in from Lagos to work in the compound. The women actively searched for these individuals, and groups of women regularly beat them mercilessly. The soldiers generally did not interfere, only breaking up the assaults if the women became obsessed with a killing lust. Lagos workers were routinely slapped, kicked, bitten, thrown down, spat and urinated upon, and had feces rubbed in their faces. Their only refuge was the operations center and the machinery spaces. If one of the workers came into an occupied space, the expats would move to another to avoid confrontation with the women. These women were formidable adversaries, even if they were old, naked, and they attacked in groups.

After the first couple of weeks, the bonfires and dancing became less frequent, and small groups started to go back to their villages. Every scrap of material had been converted into clothing, and some wore new jewelry fashioned from shiny cooking utensils or chrome plated wrenches. Many proudly displayed hard hats, work boots, coveralls and glasses. An occasional journalist could be seen snapping pictures or videotaping for later broadcast.

The internet connection and satellite link had never been broken, so if enough courage could be generated to make the journey through the accommodations where the women were concentrated to the operations center, e-mail could be sent or received. Sky News, a British international news network, could be observed, and for a fee, international phone calls could be made. According to Sky News, the incident was officially labeled as a time of political unrest. Information gathered indicated that only one was killed or seriously

injured. Production never stopped or even decreased noticeably, and any monetary losses incurred by Chevron/Texaco or the Nigerian government were minimal. The airstrip was closed only for an undisclosed relatively short duration just prior to the incident and was officially weather related.

Finally, the airstrip was operating again and rotation of personnel resumed. My extended tour was over, and I rotated out at the first available opportunity. As a bonus, I was given an all expense paid, two day and three nights recreational holiday in a four star hotel in Lagos. As I watched Sky News at the airport on my way back home, I caught a glimpse of a short news clip concerning the disturbance at Escravos. A few of the women were shown leaving the compound voluntarily, all carrying a shiny new pot and wearing coveralls. As one of the potentially wealthiest countries in the world, I can only hope that the Nigerian government will recognize these people who live outside the fence at Escravos are citizens of Nigeria, and will share a portion of the vast wealth generated by oil exports from Escravos to raise the standards of living of these people above that of the stone age.



Photography-First Place

Sakinah Thomas

# Essay-Second Place

I Believe in Me  
Morgan Woods

I believe that my past does not always have to determine my future. Instead of pitying myself for being in a bad situation, I should find a way to get out of it and better myself. I shouldn't let any bad things I may have gone through in the past hinder me from creating a bright future for me and my family. I believe that no matter what, I determine my own destiny and not my circumstances. My situations are just that, situations from which I can coach myself out of and make a better me. I believe in me.

I learned all these beliefs from the very blood flowing within my veins. My uncle, once a young kid faced with multiple adversities, overcame all his obstacles and became a very successful adult. Following the death of his older brother who was killed in the Vietnam War, my uncle became a very different young man. He was once known as a very respectable young gentleman until his brother's death began to take its tolls on him. He started cutting class to hang out with what he called the popular kids. Instead of focusing on his school work, he was more concerned about getting high and being a bad boy. His hobbies such as academics, basketball, and music were soon replaced with his need to get high, have sex, and cause his mother all type of grief. No longer did what others thought of him influence his everyday decisions. No longer did making a A on a science project matter even in a small amount to him. In his head, he felt as if he were destined to be nothing anyway, so wasting his time trying was pointless. One day he was depressed an at an all time low. He wanted to make himself feel better, but all he knew how to do was get high by smoking, sniffing , sticking and inhaling. That's exactly what he did. He filled his body with what seemed like every drug known to man and then some. He got high until he was no longer conscious. His friend found him and called the ambulance, and they rushed him

to the hospital. Once he woke up, the doctor explained to him that he was very fortunate to still be alive. I guess he saw this as a wake up call because ever since that day, he has been clean without thoughts of turning back. He got his GED and went on to a small college to further his education. He graduated with honors and is now very successful in his career.

From his experience, I learned that no matter what I may have gone through, there is always a way out and that path starts with me. I believe that my past does not determine my future; it only determines my strength as a person. I am who I am because I say I am, and I've chosen to become this person with my actions. I believe that when I pick myself up after a very hard fall, it's the beginning of a new chapter of my life and my success as a person.

I believe in me.



# Essay-Third Place

Feel My Words  
Kimberly Green

I've seen my mother crying, beaten, depressed, sad, and alone at the hand of her abuser. She was forced to work and bring her check home to him. Mother was young, beautiful, smart, and confident. This was why her abuser wanted to be with her, but that was also the same reason he beat her. Her abuser wanted her to go to college so she could make more money, not for the family or to better herself, but to bring the money home to him. Mom's abuser was so controlling that he wouldn't let mom buy anything without his permission. He would give her an allowance from her own money. Sometimes mother would pick us up from school and treat us to a burger, even though it wasn't allowed. We had to hide behind a building and eat our delicious burger just in case he rode by and saw us. On top of that, we had to eat fast. Most of the time, I never enjoyed the taste of my burger out of fear of what he would do to my mother, but to spend the time with mom was the best feeling ever. After eating our burger, we had to eat mints so the onion smell wouldn't be on our breath. Mom's abuser always found out and that meant another black eye or busted lip. The abuser was my father. I want my words to stop the abuse that kills so many women's self-esteem, trust and even their lives.

My words need to open the eyes of young and older women today so they can see that they can leave their abuser and live a better life. Let my words stop kids from seeing their mommy screaming while getting beaten with a broom because she was five minutes late from work. Our kids are growing up not being able to trust men, turning gay, and even becoming abusers themselves.

My mom was treated badly throughout her marriage by my father. He didn't allow mother to have friends, so her only friend were her kids. She would shower us with so much love, and she couldn't do that too much because my Father

would find a reason to make us clean an already cleaned house. If he got too jealous, he would make us as young kids go outside and take nails out of an old house he knocked down. I mean every nail that was embedded in the house! Don't get me wrong. He wasn't always mean, at least not to me because I never feared him. I loved my father and just wanted him to treat my mother better. After beating my mother, Dad would set me on his lap and tell me, "Don't ever let a man put his hands on you." Growing up I never knew why he was so cruel to my mom or why he would tell me to never let a man put his hands on me when he would put his on my mother. On the outside everyone wanted a dad like mine, and every woman wanted a husband like him. Dad would buy mom the newest cars, flashy jewelry, nice clothes, and flowers, but to put salt in the wound he would take the gifts. Her job and all the ladies would tell mom how lucky she was to have a man like my dad. Mom knew how untrue that was and how everything to him was for show. She would call the cops on him, and they would come to the house, but the cops would never take him to jail. One time he went to jail, for a ticket and the cops took him while he was at home raising hell. We all played like we were going to miss him by crying and saying, "Don't take our dad and leave him alone," but inside we felt free for the first time. Mother took us out to get something to eat, and we laughed for the first time without getting fussed at. Even though he was gone and we felt free, inside everyone was still living in a state of fear. Every noise made us jump, thinking he was back. Our freedom party did not last long because he was back the next day and life was back to hell again. After five years, mom got the courage to leave him. Dad was a true manipulator, and he was good at it. He called my mom's job acting like someone else and got her fired. To make her life worse, he took us from her. Dad went to court and lied about mom, but before leaving home he promised us everything just to stay with him. Dad told us we would still see our mother even if the people at court said we wouldn't. He also told us to say we wanted to stay with him and we did. But we soon learned that we made the biggest mistake of our

lives. Mother fought tooth and nail to get us back, but we would never get to see our mom until ten years later. My sisters and brothers got tired of dad's mess and we plotted to leave forever. That was something we would have never dared to do, but once we did it, we wished we would have left years ago. The fear he put in us made us paralyzed.

Now that we are all grown up, dad doesn't talk to any of his children because we talk to mom. I can't understand his hatred towards my mother, but I do know that mom was the only woman in his life that didn't back down from him. He couldn't control her and that upset him the most. My mom is my best friend and I love the strength she portrays. My mom is a true super woman, and now she helps other women leave their abusive relationships.

Mom's love changed all our lives because we were angry kids and fighting was all we knew. Now when we laugh we laugh for the times we couldn't. When we cry, we cry for the times we couldn't and nothing has to be wrong. I want my words to encourage women to step out in faith and make a move if not for themselves, for their kids.



General Art-First Place

David Gillespie

# Essay-Honorable Mention

Snow Day  
Michael Carl

Living in the southern regions of Texas, “hot” is usually the weather forecast. It is not uncommon to have 98 degrees as the high for the day somewhere in the middle of May. However, through my 18 years of living, I have come to realize the beauty in how unpredictable the weather is.

This year has become a very interesting year for Southeast Texas weather, from two hurricanes in the same year, to snow on December 11th. The unexpected white wash of the landscape was the most memorable day the area has seen in a long time.

Any time weathermen say the word “snow” in their East Texas forecast everyone gets a good laugh. It has not snowed and stayed on the ground since I was born. However, on the night of December 10th, everything changed. My little brothers and sisters woke me up to play with them at six in the morning because of the snow. Waking up seeing everything covered in a beautiful unbroken blanket of white seemed almost like a scene from a movie. I had seen plenty of snow on a ski trip to Colorado during spring break, but I had never seen snow like this at home. The fact that I had two classes later on in the day did not matter anymore, neither did the finals I had next week. My dad stayed home later than normal instead of going to work at the crack of dawn. He normally leaves at five o’clock in the morning, and I do not have a chance to see him. What mattered to him that morning was sharing a once in a lifetime opportunity to make memories with the family. That morning all we did was play in the miraculous white powder together. Afterwards, we came inside to warm up and my mother cooked breakfast for all of us to eat.

Often I wake up before everyone in my house to get ready for school; usually, my morning tends to be lonely, but not that day. My family and I talked and

laughed at how amazing the snow was. My sister and I waited outside to throw snowballs at our friends, and talked about what was going on in our lives. Later at school, people stopped for just a moment in life to throw the soft white powder at friends and classmates, taking time for some carefree fun. The snow melted later that afternoon, but it still had a lesson left to teach me. Later that night, as I reflected on the day, something hit me. It had not just snowed at my house that day, it had snowed all over the area. People made snowmen, kids skipped school, and schools let kids have an extra few hours to enjoy themselves. During a time when the economy is bad and lots of people are struggling to recover from a hurricane, time stood still for a little while. People simply put their troubles aside and just enjoyed the wonderful moment.

The events of the day made me realize that we can learn many wonderful lessons from snow. No matter if one is black or white, rich or poor, the weather is no respecter of persons. If it snows or rains, everyone is affected equally. The snow provided everyone an opportunity to look at life as an unbroken landscape of white. I believe that the two most important lessons we could learn from snow would be that we should treat everyone equally no matter who they are and that we should do our best to make our world as beautiful as possible.



# Essay-Honorable Mention

This I Believe  
Elizabeth Medina

The memory is still fresh in my mind. I remember every detail that day. It was very rainy and cold. I was wearing my hair up in a ponytail and my warm blue jacket. I was sitting in the passenger seat of my mom's truck. She was driving with a stern look on her face. She had a strong temper because my sister, who was in the backseat, and I had fought in the house earlier. All of a sudden, my sister and I began arguing again about the stupidest problems, but that normal to me because that's what sisters are supposed to do. Apparently, my mom didn't think the same way because as we argued louder, her grip on the wheel tightened and her eyebrows drew in close. Our boisterous remarks made her so angry and nervous; she took one hand off the wheel and planted a hard and painful slap on my cheek. In a flash, my sister and I shut our mouths, and my mom placed her hand back on the wheel. This memory is not only unpleasant to me, but it's also a learning one. I learned through this experience how important it is to know how to forgive and, in my case, how to accept forgiveness and let go of the past.

I was in complete shock and felt so much anger that I received the physical discipline and not my sister. The stinging slap wasn't solely what disturbed me. I often received a whooping because every kid is a troublemaker and now that I look back, I agree that I deserved them. This time, it was difficult. I wasn't a kid anymore and I definitely didn't think I deserved to get slapped in the face that day. I was seventeen, and I felt like I was the least favorite daughter. I had noticed for awhile that I was the one getting yelled at for the little things and my sister hardly ever had to be disciplined, and she'd sometimes break the rules of the house, too. It was the small things like that that added up and ended making that shocking slap a huge deal to me. Surprisingly, on that rainy day, I was able to sit

in the front passenger seat without getting kicked to the back seat so my sister could sit in the front just because she was older. Unluckily, though, I was the one who was the hard blow.

Days passed and I would avoid my mom as much as I could. At first, it seemed like my mom didn't care that I wasn't speaking to her, and it hurt me so much. Later on though, while I was in my room doing homework for school, she walked in and sat down next to me. I kept writing on my paper, pretending she wasn't there. I did not want to meet my eyes with hers because I knew I would start crying and that was weakness I didn't want her to see. I was focused on letting her know that I was furious and that I didn't need her. I was focused to let her realize that what she did was wrong, that for once, I wasn't the one to be disciplined or feel horrible for a simple rule broken. I tightened my eyes so hard, but the tears were on their verge of exposing themselves. The room was silent. Then, she places her warm hand on top of mine, preventing me from writing any further. In my mind I told myself, "No. Don't look at her." My body didn't listen and did the opposite of what I told it to do. I looked at her and was immediately taken aback. Her eyes weren't cold and careless. They showed real love and how much she was hurting inside for what she did to me. She opened her mouth, in a shaky voice with tears at the edge of her eyes, and said, "I am so sorry. Please forgive me." I bit my lower lip hard to prevent myself from breaking down in front of her, but it was impossible. I loved my mom so much and to see that she was genuinely sorry, allowed me to let go of the grudge inside of me and accept her apology. I hugged her so hard and she hugged back. Feeling her love and motherly hug was the best feeling in the world.



# Essay-Honorable Mention

Learn to Respect  
Chad Louviere

When I was younger, my understanding of events and people was simple. Things were either good or bad. This made it easier for me to deal with the world around me. Then as I became older, things seemed far more complicated, and instead of black and white, I saw the grays everywhere I looked. This has made life dense with meaning and motive and decision, and has made life harder. Now, as a young adult, I find that my view of life is reducing itself to the simple again. I think this is because I am trying to be a good adult. I naturally break complex things down into small pieces to explain aspects of life. Far from oversimplifying life, I find this brings me back to the handful of important basics of being alive. One that I come back to again and again is respect, respect for yourself, respect for others, and respect for the world we are born into.

I teach myself to try whether it is in school, football, or with friends. To fail feels bad, certainly, but not to have tried feels worse, because I respect myself for it and as I discovered, if I don't respect myself, no one else is going to do it for me.

Self-respect is a kind of pride, not an arrogant pride, but a pride in my own way of trying. It is a belief that I will do what I can, as best I can. Only when a person gains self-respect can he or she start to have respect for others. Then he will be able to see in them the strengths and weaknesses he already recognizes, and accepts, in himself. If he or she can accept himself, he can both accept the weaknesses and admire the strengths of others.

So I believe in respect because without respect there is no caring; and without caring, life is a barren, harsh wasteland with no safe home. Without respect, we are all enemies, with just the occasional bridge to a friend.

I'm not perfect in this regard, but I respect others for doing their best in this changing world. I respect people for trying, in whatever way they can, to live according to some internal standard to hope, to try and to respect.



## Photography-Second Place

Sakinah Thomas

# Essay-Honorable Mention

## Every Family Has a Story

Tammy Huynh

I believe that every family has a story of its own to tell and in that family I believe that each person hold his or her own story hostage until it is set free. I believe that we should empathize with others before making judgments.

We all have days when we feel as if we have nothing to lose and days in which we feel as if we had everything to lose. These are the times we contemplate our existence and compare them to the times we silently speculate about the lives of others at their worst. No one was born to vandalize a pure heart nor was anyone created to destroy the life of an innocent child. No matter how many times we attempt to reverse the hands of time, life still goes on. I wonder why anyone would neglect or appear as a misanthropist? I have distaste for a person because of his malicious attitude toward me when he has absolutely no reason at all for it.

I grew up in a family in which I began isolating myself at a very young age. My parents were never present during my early childhood. In order to gain their attention, I performed at my best in everything I was involved in. My heart shattered countless times each night when I brought home awards I earned in school. My parents showed no interest whatsoever. Their sigh of apathy motivated me to perform even better. I had a point in my life in which I felt as if nothing mattered anymore. There was no purpose for the achievements I made. As time flew by, God slowly revealed his plan to me. Everything happened for a reason. It sound like a cliché but it is true. Time proves the veracity for every reason there is. I began to understand my parents' way in expressing their love to me. My parents had all kinds of reasons for how they raised me up. I no longer question their authority because I know that everything they do is in by best interests. The person I am today, I owe it all to them.

I believe that if everyone knew the reason behind the work that was created by God, then this world would be more amicable. Unfortunately, we weren't created to understand the miraculous craft from God. As, we continue with our journey in life, we must empathize with others whether or not we receive the same gift. A person faces a myriad of obstacles each day. Thus, it is extremely difficult to comprehend the simple mind of why a person behaves in a certain way he or she does. I believe what we all stars God has cast in his film. I believe that God plays as the director of each person's life and that the script has already been written.

# Essay-Honorable Mention

Teamwork  
Cody Almond

I believe in teamwork for many different reasons. Teamwork can get you through many different situations, whether it is at your job, while playing a sport, or in your everyday life. For example, if you are down one point in a basketball game with then seconds left to go, who are you going to count on? It won't be your mom or your friends. It will be your team. If you believe in a team or in teamwork, you can get very far in life. If you don't, you can still succeed, but it will be a tougher and a longer road. Relying on yourself can be a hard thing to do at times. Good friends and teamwork will always give you someone to lean on or go to in a time of need; it is like a kickstand. It is never in your way, but when you need it, it is there to lend a hand and support you fully.

In my senior year of basketball season, our team was one win away from making it to the playoffs. It was our last game and our last chance of making it to the playoffs. We had to play West Hardin. They were always a good team and one of our rivals. The atmosphere was intense from the time they arrived in our gym. They did not like us, and we did not like them. The ball was thrown in the air and the game started. The game was back and forth for the whole thirty-two minutes of the contest. Coaches were screaming, fans were yelling, and players were leaving it all on the court.

With fourteen seconds left on the clock, the game was tied, sixty-five to sixty-five. The other team had the ball and my team knew that we had to play great defense not to let the opposing team win. When the other team shot the ball at the end of the game, one of my teammates blocked the player's shot! We were going into overtime! This is where having a good team is crucial. With now five minutes left to play, our season was hanging in the balance. Win in overtime meant playoffs, lose and we went home. So, as a captain, I pulled the team

before we started and told them what they already knew. I also said that if we played hard and played as a team, anything was possible.

In overtime, we outscored the other team fifteen to five. We were going to the playoffs, and everyone was going crazy. We knew we were the best team that night because we believed in each other. With our confidence and heart, we knew the sky was the limit. We bled, we sweated, and we left everything we had on the basketball court. When we went to the locker room and all put the hands in the circle, there was only one reasonable thing to shout; it was “team.” All being together as a team and believing in each other was what got us to the playoffs that year. Playing as one and never giving up, that was what we lived by that year.

When speaking of teamwork, one popular saying always comes up, “There is no I in team.” And this will always be a true statement. If one person believes that he is more important than anyone else on the team, the team is ruined. A faulty link in a chain will cause the whole chain to break apart. If you have a faulty teammate, your team will surely fall to pieces. So if you are ever down and need someone to lean on, look towards friends and family. In the game of life, these people are your teammates. And with a good team comes a great life. So be a team player, because you never know when you will need a lending hand or words of support.

# Essay-Honorable Mention

## We All Have a Purpose

Lori Champagne

Every morning I wake up and ask myself, "What is the day going to bring me?" I wonder if it is going to be a good or bad day, if I'm going to meet new people or maybe lose someone close to me that I love. Waking up each morning is a blessing, knowing that I've made it another day on this earth. I believe that each and every soul on this earth has a purpose for living.

It doesn't matter what color, race, or gender someone is. I know that each and everyone of us has a reason for being here. Everyone goes through hard times, like losing someone special he loves, going through a divorce or going through a rough childhood. All of these times are part of God's plan. He gives us bumps in the road every now and then to teach us lessons. There is only one way to come in this world but many ways to leave it. Some people never stop and just enjoy life. Life is too short not to live everyday to the fullest.

Growing up, my grandmother would always tell me to live each day as if it were my last. She would always tell me that no matter how rough days may seem, I should always try to make the best out of every situation. My grandmother was my idol when I was younger. I would go to her house every weekend and just she and I would play together. She was always happy when I was around. Not once did she not have a smile on her face. She taught me about right and wrong. On October 1, 2001, she died of breast cancer. I thought that I was never going to be the same again. When she died, I remembered everything she had told me about life. I know she lived hers to the fullest, and I know she fulfilled her purpose on this earth.

On March 11, 2006, I was in an extremely bad car wreck. My car slid across the road, flipped twice, smashed into a tree and landed upside down. It was the scariest fifteen seconds of my life. The roof was caved in, every window burst

and both side doors were smashed in. The airbags never deployed, which in a way is a good thing because I would have had a bruised face if not worse. I had not one scratch on my body, just a body that was experiencing tremendous whiplash. As I was in the ambulance on my way to the hospital, all I could think about was how in the world I just survived that. I look at life from a totally different perspective everyday now. I think back to what my grandmother used to tell me about living my life to the fullest. I think a lot about how I survived that. I believe that my grandmother was watching over me that night. I think that I wasn't taken that night because I still have a reason for being here.

As I go to sleep each and every night I pray. I pray for my family, my friends and for everyone else on this earth that they live to see tomorrow. I believe we all have a reason for waking up each morning. One day my life will flash before my eyes. I make sure I have made it worth watching. I make memories, live everyday to the fullest and never hold back. We are all put here for some reason that only God knows. He has created this world and everyone living in it. The movie *Forest Gump*, Forest states "Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're going to get." I believe in those words. No one ever knows when something tragic will happen, when our time is up, or when we may hit another bump in the road. I just know everyone of us has a purpose, a reason for being here.





General Art-Second Place

Carl B. Harris



# Short Story



Cover Art-Third Place

Carlos Gonzalez

# Short Story-First Place

## Limits of Restraint

William H. Davis, Jr.

I should have known from the start that my problem with Harold would eventually lead to a violent physical confrontation. I could have saved myself almost four years of useless frustration if I had just slugged him in the beginning. But being committed to doing things differently than I had in the past, I was determined to use our system to deal with this rogue. This only compounded the original problem. Foolish as it was, I do not regret my efforts to use our system because I believe doing so is what separates us from the lower primates. But neither do I regret taking the course of action I finally took. I learned a very important lesson; sometimes our system just doesn't work, and you must be prepared to consider other, less conventional alternatives. Now some will say this represents a step backward, and indeed, in a way it does. But physical violence was used—as it must always be—as a last resort.

The details of what lead to the confrontation are many and varied. The main one I suspect is that Harold is a psyche patient, and I am a bit of one myself. That, and being Caucasian are the only similarities we share.

As the result of a stupid argument in March of 2001, Harold and I would be at each other's throats until the final finish in December 2004. During this time I made several peace offerings, which were either coldly spurned or accepted then later forgotten. The situation finally degenerated into a protracted psychological war of attrition, and countless dirty tricks were pulled...by both of us. I was at a major disadvantage; in that, I had a great deal to lose. Many times I would be waiting to see parole or waiting on an answer when Harold would try to provoke a fight. I would, in turn (being a master of the practical joke) do something to really piss him off. If he attacked me, I reasoned, I had a chance of explaining my actions. But as I came up for parole every year, Harold was presented with many

good opportunities to test me. But his best tries were reserved for when I was waiting on a marriage seminar—the most important event in here. If I maintained a good disciplinary record, I could attend every six months. My being happily married aggravated Harold’s insecurities, so my seminars became a natural target. He tried every manner of treachery and foul play to rob me of any peace of mind he could.

Knowing me as I do, I look back on this period with some amazement that I restrained my barbaric nature as long as I did. Often times I remembered the words of Thucydides, the 5th Century B.C. Greek general who said, “of all the manifestations of power, restraint most impresses men.” How true his words are. Except my restraint was missed by Harold, who continued to interpret it as weakness or fear. Another of his favorite tactics was to try to provoke a confrontation on my commissary day. As we lived in different dorm buildings we had different store days. It is much easier to take someone to jail with you on “their” store day. And so it was on a store day that he was able to provoke me to give him a shot at the title. It is customary to get the gatehouse officer’s signature on your commissary slip. To get to the gatehouse I had to walk past the weight machine. There at the weight machine were several big black inmates pumping iron and one medium sized white boy who I heard say, “That’s him there,” indicating me. I looked around and Harold had a stupid look on his face. No doubt he was slandering my good name again as he had done so often. (Another of his tactics.) What was it this time, I wondered...a clansman, a snitch, a child molester? I said loud enough for everyone at the weight machine to hear, that a “man” will speak to another man’s face. I walked past and was told by the gatehouse officer to return in ten minutes. Well, I had already made the decision for the hundredth time, enough is enough. I returned to my dorm, changed foot ware and stretched a few muscles. Then I sat on my bunk to pray a prayer I’ve prayed many times in my life, “Father let me avoid this violence, if not, let my aim be true.” I think by the time I was on my way back to the gatehouse, I could have



let the matter lie had fate not intervened. As it turned out, the commissary line had formed almost all the way back to the weight machines so further contact was inevitable.

I had some size on Harold, but I also had ten years of hard living on him as well. I had broken the 4th metacarpal of my left hand before, and the bone had not been set right and my hand healed up partially crippled, so my blinding left jab was no more. I've been into various forms of martial arts almost all my life. Despite my tattered physical condition and advanced age. I can still take care of myself. Harold was stout and hit the iron regularly. I had once seen him pull one of his own teeth. Not everyone can do that. I knew he didn't fear pain. And as he had made fun of the martial arts on many occasions, I intended to test his tolerance to pain and perhaps help him with another tooth.

When I got to the end of the line, another remark was made. I basically called him out, and to my surprise he stepped out. He walked right into a front kick to his groin. He jumped back telling me, "you kick like a girl," hoping, I think, to get it back on verbal level. Not to be, I was already in the mode, and I had thought of this moment for way too long. I threw a leading round-house kick at his head, which he barely ducked. He let me get too close, and I buried the toe of my brogan in his thigh, then again in his chest. He was backed to the weight machines where I slipped a good right cross through his defenses and landed a shot squarely on his jaw. Ah, the sound that made...music I tell you! Anyway he then grabbed me so I thumbed him in the eye, but he partially dodged it and pushed me back over the bench rest. I went all the way to the ground, but pulled him with me. I was pinned down, but was able to hold him in position and my free leg executed a Bedinski heel smash to his forehead, twice, which ended the conflict. By this time people were calling out, warning about the police. As we were breaking it up a Lieutenant walked by looking at us crazy, but said nothing. I got back in line and a friend looked at me and asked, "how did that feel...." I thought for a moment answered. "good, damn good."

Harold never bothered me again. He later told me he was being harassed by a “tuff” after learning he had made parole. Then much to my surprise he added, “I guess I got that coming.”

I then asked him if he had ever heard of Thucydides?





## Photography-Third Place

Alicia Rascoe



# Short Story-Second Place

“Easy” Eddie and “Ace” O’Hare

David Gillespie

Many years ago, Al Capone virtually owned Chicago. Capone wasn’t famous for anything heroic; he was notorious for enmeshing the Windy City in everything from bootlegged booze and prostitution to murder. Capone had a lawyer named “Easy Eddie.” He was a good lawyer for a very good reason. Easy Eddie was very good! In fact, Easy Eddie’s skill at maneuvering kept Big Al out of jail for a long time. To show his appreciation, Capone paid him very well. Not only was the money big, but Eddie got special dividends. For instance, he and his family occupied a fenced-in mansion with live-in help and all the conveniences of the day. The estate was so large that it fill an entire Chicago city block. Eddie lived the high life of the Chicago mob and gave little consideration to the atrocities that went on around him.

Eddie did have one soft spot, however. He had a young son that he loved dearly. Eddie saw to it that his young son had the best of everything: clothes, cars, and a good education. Nothing was withheld. Price was no object. And, despite his involvement with organized crime, Eddie couldn’t give his son a good name and a good example. One day, Easy Eddie reached a difficult decision. Easy Eddie wanted to rectify the wrongs he had done. He decided he would go to the authorities and tell the truth about Al “Scarface” Capone, clean up his tarnished name, and offer his son some semblance of integrity. To do this, he would have to testify against the mob, and he knew the cost would be great. So he testified.

Within a year, Easy Eddie’s life ended in a blaze of gunfire on a lonely Chicago street. But in his eyes, he had given his son the greatest gift he had to offer, at the greatest price he would ever pay.

World War II produced many heroes. One such man was Lieutenant Commander Butch O’Hare.

He was a fighter pilot assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Lexington in the South Pacific. One day his entire squadron was sent on a mission. After he was airborne he looked at his fuel gauge and realized that someone had forgotten to top off his fuel tank. He would not have enough fuel to complete his mission and get back to his ship. His flight commander told him to return to the carrier. Reluctantly, he dropped out of formation and headed back to the fleet.

As he was returning to the carrier he saw something that turned his blood cold. A squadron of Japanese aircraft was speeding its way toward the American fleet. The American fighters were gone on a sortie, and the fleet was all but defenseless. He couldn't reach his squadron and bring them back in time to save the fleet. Laying aside any thoughts of his personal safety, he dove into the formation of Japanese planes. His wing-mounted 50 calibers blazed as he charged in, attacking one plane and then another. Butch wove in and out of the now broken formation and fired at as many planes as possible until his ammunition was finally spent. Undaunted, he continued the assault. He dove at the planes, trying to clip a wing or a tail in hopes of damaging as many enemy planes as possible—rendering them unable to fly. Finally, the exasperated Japanese squadron took off in another direction. Deeply relieved, Butch O'Hare and his tattered fighter limped back to the carrier.

Upon arrival he reported in and related the events surrounding his return. The film from his gun camera mounted on his plane told the tale. It showed the extent of Butch's daring attempt to protect his fleet. He in fact had destroyed five enemy aircraft. This took place on February 20, 1942, and for that action Butch O'Hare became the first Naval Ace of WWII and won the first Congressional Medal of Honor. A year later Butch was killed in aerial combat at the age of 29.

His hometown would not allow the memory of the World War II hero to fade, and today, O'Hare International Airport in Chicago is named in tribute to the courage of this great man. So the next time you find yourself at O'Hare International, give some thought to visiting Butch's memorial displaying his

statue and his Medal of Honor. It's located between Terminals 1 and 2.  
Connection?

*Butch O'Hare was Easy Eddie's son.*



**General Art-Third Place**

Christina Buchanan

# Short Story-Third Place

## The Beat of Rita's Heart

Julio A. Marcos

The beeping from the machine keeps Mary in tune in tune to what may be the end. She glances at it every few minutes. The jumping lines going across the screen keep track of her grandmother Rita's heartbeat. She can see Rita's blood pressure as it rises or falls by the numbers on the screen. Lately it has been falling more and more. The machine show that it is 80/40 right now. The pulsing heart in the upper right corner of the screen keeps track of Rita's heartbeat.

"Is that really how it is beating at the moment?" Mary wonders.

Mary surveys the room that they are in. The walls are painted white. "Why white?" Mary wonders. "Rita always hated white. "too many fingerprints, smudges, and dirt to wipe off," she remembers Rita saying about white walls. "What would you think of this room? Would you ask them to repaint it? Maybe a nice beige like the walls of your apartment? If only you could talk, Grandma."

"Why white?", she thinks again. "Maybe it's to get you ready for when your number is up and you are at the check-out counter walking to the white light. Or, is it to see if any germs are present? Of course there are germs! This is a hospital after all. And aren't there sick people here with all types of germs? Why look at your germs when you are trying to get rid of them?" she wonders to herself.

The table next to the bed is big enough to hold a telephone, a brown plastic tray that holds a brown plastic jug, a brown plastic cup and a brown plastic spoon. And a bit of room for a book, and a pull out tray to lay a food tray on when it is meal time.

A big window looks to the street, three-paned but none of them can open. Off-white blinds and a brown curtain that reach all the way to the floor.

"Is that really sanitary?" Mary thinks.

Mary watches her grandmother as she lies upon the bed. A white sheet covers Rita up to her chest, and she is clothed in a white hospital gown. A clear plastic tube sends oxygen to her lungs through her nose. The tube is wrapped around her face with a plastic "T" inserted into her nostrils. An intravenous drip is inserted into the tip of her left hand. Mary sees the cords plugged into the machine are attached to Rita's body with suction cups underneath the gown.

Mary follows the cords from Rita's body to the machine. "Is Grandma's spirit only in her body or does it also flow into the machine? It does keep her heartbeat," she thinks.

Mary holds Rita's right hand in her right hand. With her thumb she rubs Rita's withered hand. Wrinkles and lines etched by time cover her hand. Each wrinkle a ripple in Rita's life.

Mary thinks of the many stories Rita has told her, like the time Rita went horseback riding by herself when she was only eight years old. The quarter-horse colt took off down the hills of the family farm to its favorite trail by the creek that runs through the property. Rita was thrown off and landed with her right arm out to brace her fall. When her arm hit the ground, it broke in two places. Rita knew she would get in trouble for riding the colt by herself so she didn't say anything to her parents. But at the dinner table that night it was hard to hide the wave in her arm.

Yes, she got her arm fixed and then got a spanking and punishment. She would have to clean the horse stalls every day for one month, even though that was her older brother Ray's job. And of course, she would still have to feed the chickens every morning and collect the eggs also.

Sitting in the chair beside the hospital bed Mary is rubbing her own left leg where she had broken it when she fell off her horse. "The Johnson girls and horses must not mix very well. Well, that isn't the only time I've broken a bone, so that may not be an accurate statement," she thinks to herself.



Mary glances out the window and thinks of her daughter Lucy. Lucy has broken more bones than all the Johnson girls put together. Her “Little Daredevil” Mary calls Lucy. Carmen, Mary’s mother, called Mary that too, and Rita called Carmen that.

Mary glances back at her grandmother and watches her labored breathing. Rita’s chest slowly rises and falls. It has become slower since this morning. Mary knows it is just a matter of time but she doesn’t want to let go of Rita yet. Mary traces Rita’s face with her fingertips. The lines of her face are also each a memory in time. Her fingers rise and fall with the creases of every wrinkle. This is the cheek that Grandpa Joe kissed everyday when he awoke and when he went to sleep. Mary can almost feel Joe’s kiss on Rita’s cheek. She passes her fingers over Rita’s lips. The lips Rita always kissed her with when she was a child and told her bedtime stories with. The lips that kissed Grandpa Joe.

Mary moves to Rita’s eyes and traces over her eyebrows. Eyes that have seen ninety-eight years of memories. All the things they must’ve seen. Some of those memories are probably sad, horrible, and scary. But in that time all the beauty, love and experiences they have also seen. Births, birthdays, tragedies and deaths. All experiences for a full life. Her face is colder than it has been.

Mary moves up to Rita’s hair and holds a curl in her fingers. Unconsciously she releases Rita’s hand and reaches for her own hair. She twirls her hair while she twirls Rita’s hair. Rita’s hair is gray now but it was the same brownish tint that Mary’s hair is.

She remembers, as a little girl, she used to brush Rita’s hair when she would go to visit her at the ranch. Mary would braid Rita’s hair, and put it into ponytails and pigtails. Rita would do the same to Mary’s hair. One Halloween Mary and Rita dyed their hair orange to go to the Halloween carnival at the big barn in the town square where all the big parties and dances are held. Everyone was shocked to see Rita and Mary’s hair that color, especially Carmen when she saw the pair. But everyone had a huge laugh because they were dressed like a pair of

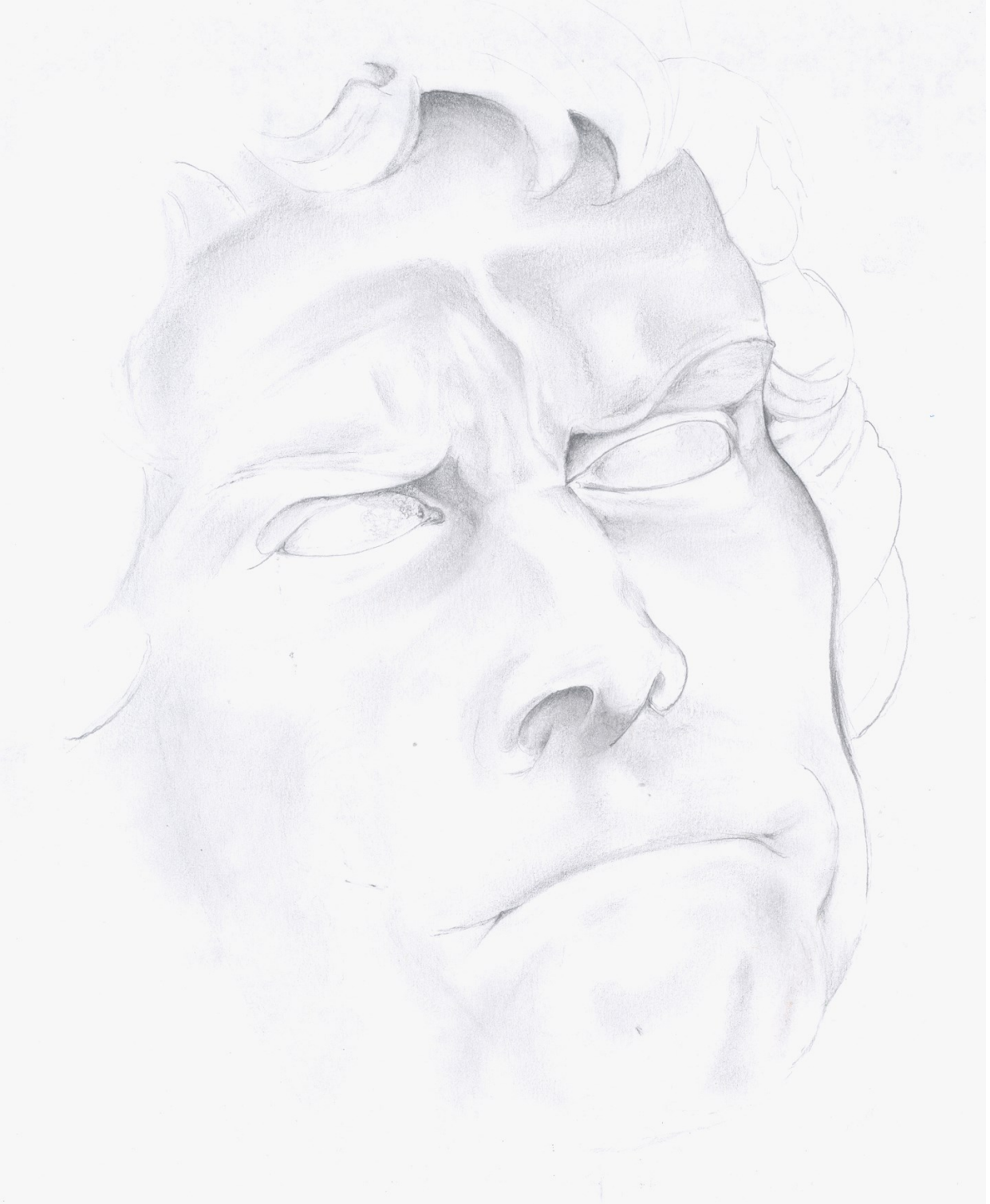
and above their orange hair were leaves to look like the stems of the pumpkins.

Mary sighs as she looks at her grandmother again.

“Oh Grandma, you’ve shown me so much. We’ve laughed over many things. Cried over many things. I’ve told you many times over but never enough, I love you. I love you. I love you.” Tears ran down her face.

Mary looks at the clock on the wall and it shows that it is 11:48 p.m. She lays her head down on the side of the bed next to Rita’s legs. Her heartbeat slows and she falls into a deep, exhaustive sleep.

Rita’s heartbeat slows also and the machine stops beeping.



**General Art-Honorable Mention**

Michael S. Beheler



# Poetry

*Expressions*



2009

Cover Art-Honorable Mention

Samuel King

# Poetry-First Place

The Vineyard  
William H. Davis, Jr.

We are bound by vines of sadness  
and your pain...is also mine,  
we press the grapes of sorrow  
and they yield a bitter wine.

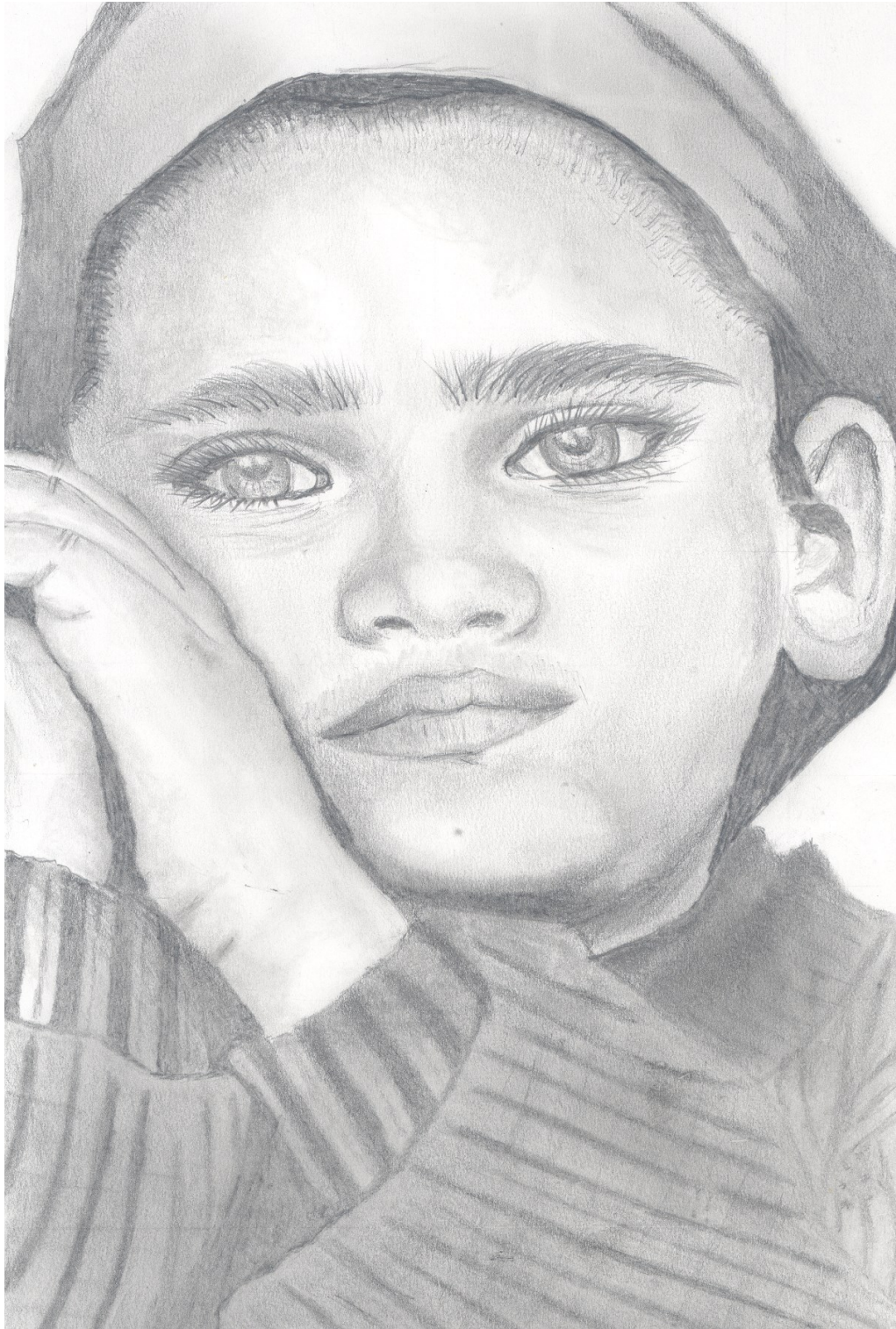
These grapes of sorrow flourish  
in this vineyard that we keep,  
as one, we drink this bitter wine  
from this harvest that we reap.

Feelings we do not understand  
that have lasted through the years,  
now obscured by tangled vines  
that are watered with our tears.

These tears...we cry together  
and it is said by all who know,  
we are tied by vines of sadness  
and our tears do make them grow.

So I pray to God in heaven  
as I write these simple lines,  
that He will stop our rain of tears  
and free us from these vines.





General Art-Honorable Mention

Eric Flores



# Poetry-Second Place

The Family We Choose

Rachel J. Scott

Friends...

The beauty of hope

Shoulders of strength

Warm embraces that soothes fears

The joys of laughter

Comforters of pain

Helpful hands that uplift during a fall

Angels in disguise

Love without despair

Plowers of the seeds of dreams

Everything pleasant in the world

Who continually make a better woman of me.



# Expressions 2009

Cover Art-Honorable Mention

Terence C. Prevost

# Poetry-Third Place

Eradication Day  
Clifford M. Nowell

He inherited the best  
Of an amazing childhood—  
A time full of joy!  
And toys made of wood.

He became a greatly  
Admired athlete of lore:  
Like the boy next door—  
With trophies and ribbons galore.

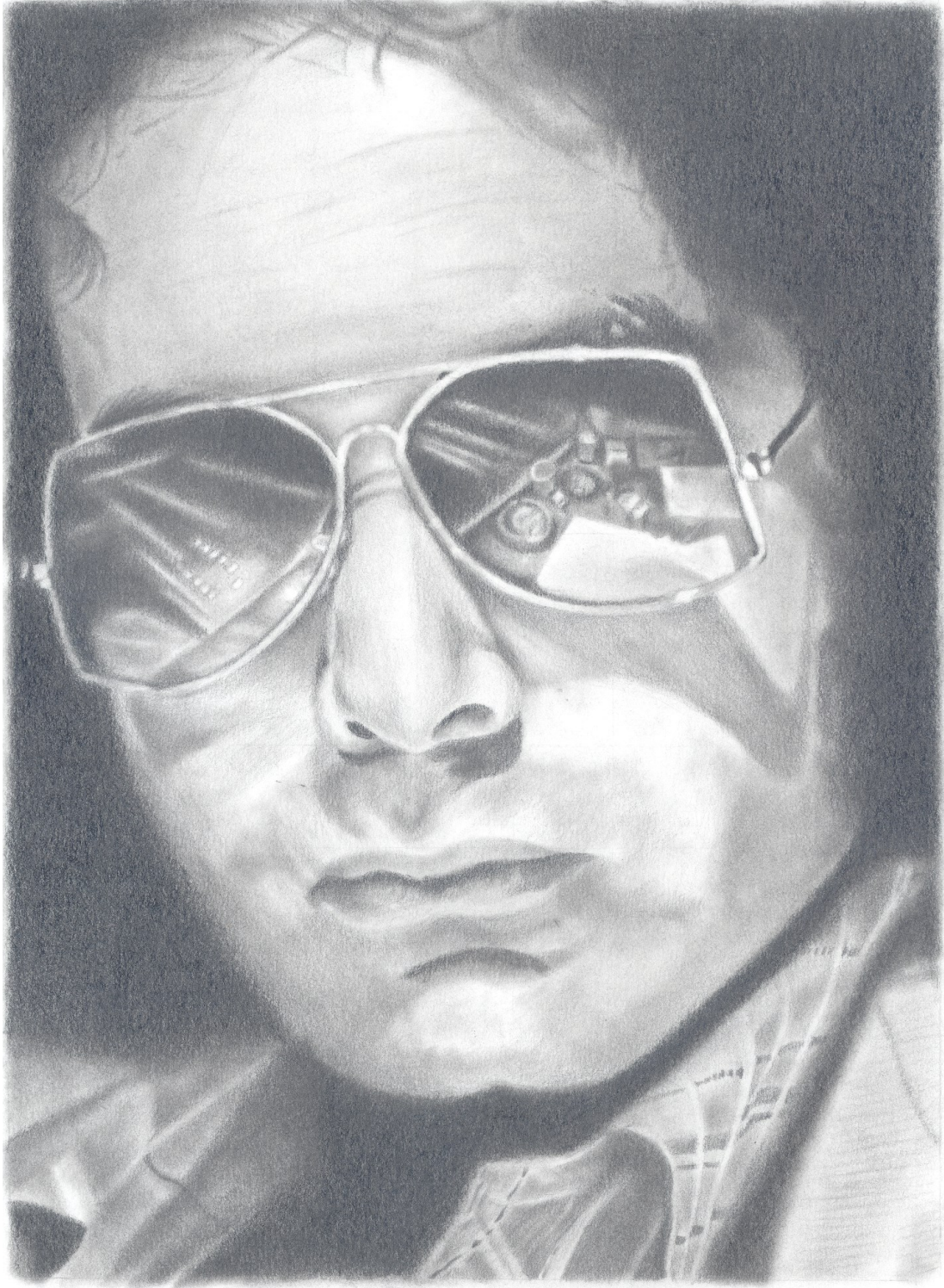
He had earned the life  
One full of glowing health  
And a business that provided  
His family with great wealth.

He surely had the touch—  
Rewards arriving every day.  
Then one day when he was going home...  
An accident happened on the way.

It was not his fault...  
That the blood was tainted—  
Not knowing the orderly drew it  
From a risky person who knew it.

Sure it's sad I admit  
Though not all lives end this way—  
But his family I had to tell:  
AIDS eradicated him today.





General Art-Honorable Mention

Samuel King

# Poetry-Honorable Mention

Higher

Norman Patterson

And so I reach higher.  
Higher than I ever thought I could.  
And in so doing, I lose my balance.

My ideas and dreams of more,  
create infinite levels of less.

In trying to excel  
I have become pariah.

I will do my sentence here,  
but now in isolation  
and reflection.

In my attempt to be righteous,  
Have I done just the opposite?

Have I climbed, not the impossible hill,  
but the bodies of those I love?

It's futile to raise the bar,  
When I cut myself off at the knee.

And yet, a thought cuts through:  
"Stay the course, young soldier.  
For although you stumble,  
You do so in earnest."

And although, at times like these,  
I feel as though the sun  
scorches my desperate, outstretched fingers  
I will reach higher still.



Photography-Honorable Mention

Jessica Thompson

# Poetry-Honorable Mention

**DEAR**

Stephanie Hammell

Dear...

I dropped my pen and can't pick it up...

I don't know what to write...

I feel the pen dragging my burden  
and agony across the paper...

I felt it right to describe everything...

Dear...

I still cannot make words that  
Have meaning, I just know you  
won't care. I wish my pen could  
explain myself...I want this  
letter to make you understand  
everything...

Dear...

I feel like I've been robbed of my  
life I want it back...To own it  
again...I gave you my heart  
and love...I just wanted you  
to feel everything...

Dear...

Love changed me...you ruined  
Everything.





General Art-Honorable Mention

Carl B. Harris



# Poetry-Honorable Mention

Death to a Plant

Walter J. Williams

Through silted lids,  
Gentle ignorance bids,  
Calm, tranquil, quiet,  
Not dark, yet not light,  
Misty, smoky vapors mingle,  
Subtle sounds of water tingle,  
Senses drugged by endless needing  
Civilizations machineries gluttonous feeding,  
Half sleep, half wake,  
Semi-conscious blissful state,  
The species dominant, Humanity  
Oblivious to our insanity,  
Grey, smoky, carbon monoxide mist,  
Envelopes society with false bliss,  
Of infinite luxurious living  
Death to mother Earth we are giving,  
Polar caps are melting,  
Equatorial regions sweltering,  
Once teeming with life, oceans are dying,  
Tears of acid rain, the sky is crying,  
A skipped heartbeat, gasp before the fall,  
If we don't save our planet, death to us all.

# Poetry-Honorable Mention

Oh, oh, oh, oh Sweet Love of Mine

Abigail Vincent

I thank You for this love of mine

Personality sublime

Looks so fair, lips so sweet

He even sweeps me off my feet

A love so deep I've never known

He's ripped out my heart

and made it his own

Yes, thank You for this love of mine

A gift from You I can't deny.

# Poetry-Honorable Mention

## Conversations with Mom

Rachel J. Scott

A warm March morning a couple of decades ago  
A seven pound baby lay sleeping in the indention of arms never ready to let go  
The woman, four years shy of thirty, leaned down her head and said  
“My new best friend, I thank the Lord this day he has given you to me.”

Two blonde pigtails and the start of loose teeth  
A five-year old runs during the pull-up commercial and beams  
One, two, three  
“Mommy, stop what you do  
A big hug before the big kid gets through!”

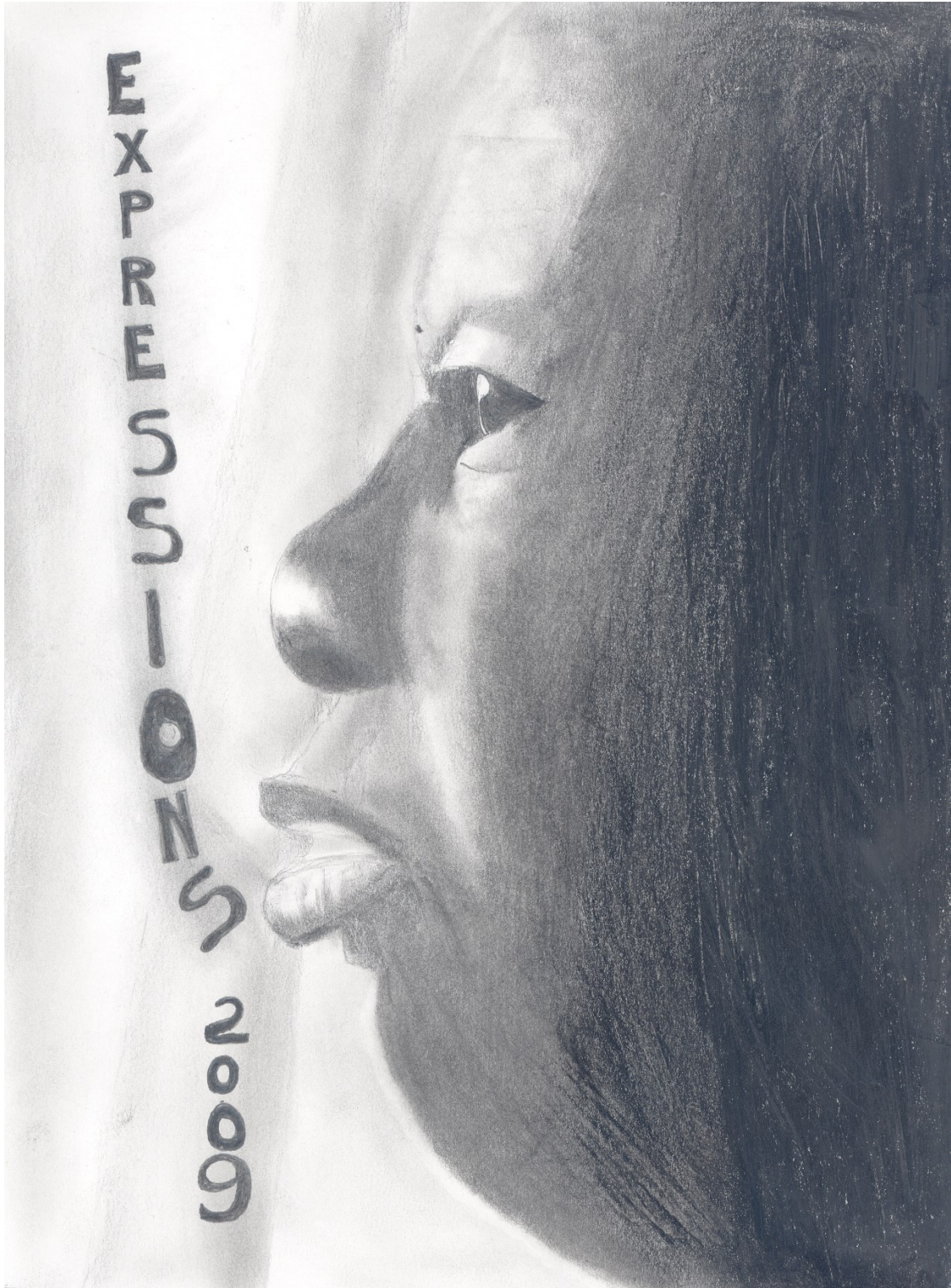
A blue sash with silver lettering  
“Friendliest Girl” is what the teachers told me  
Chest expanding wide I gripped dad’s hand and said  
“Look at my baby, lovely in a white dress at ten!”

A smirk on the face and a quick peck on the cheek  
A fifteen-year olds version of “bye Mom”  
as I watched the door slam in front of me  
They say twos are terrible, I dare disagree  
Parents of high school student  
You shall always find empathy coming from me.

Twenty-years-old, my God you have grown  
Belonging to an organization whose favorite phrase is “Good as Gold”  
Odessa to Brenham, Nashville in between  
Traveling to conferences  
Achieving your dreams  
From dawn to sunset, I wait for the moon  
When a phone call from Waco seems to brighten my mood  
“Hi Mom, I wanted to call and say I love you  
Give hugs to everyone from me  
See all of you when I get home  
Please pray for me.”



# Literary Critique



Cover Art-Honorable Mention

Adrian Oliver

# Literary Critique-First Place

## Everyman

William H. Davis, Jr.

Everyman, the play by John Skot (C. 1530) is an epic lesson in life and poignantly demonstrates man's mindset when faced with own mortality.

Everyman, the protagonist represented by a single character is engaged in worldly pleasures. God watches from above and sees the Everyman (mankind) has forgotten the sacrifice made by Jesus. And so He sends a messenger. The messenger, Death, calls on Everyman.

As is human nature, Everyman is not ready to face his physical demise. Realizing his unfinished business Everyman tries to bargain with Death. In line 122, Everyman offers a thousand pounds. Futile as this may seem, no doubt many would buy more time on earth if they could. A short time later (line 135), Everyman suggests that another twelve years would suffice to meet his needs. Of course, twelve years is a lot of time when the alternative is death in a few hours or days. Death will not be put off, but does give him a very short time to put his affairs in order. Just as in life, we are sometimes blessed with certain knowledge of our nearing death.

Everyman's knowledge-as he collected his thought-led him to take account of his life. He realizes after being abandoned by his worldly traits, that his good deeds were all that would live after him. But fear of death can be difficult to overcome. He doesn't accept the loss of Beauty, Strength, Discretion and his five senses without a fight.

After Fellowship-his fellow human beings-show themselves unable to accompany him on his journey, he one by one loses all the other things he had leaned on in life.

This presentation was very well displayed, as we do, in fact, lose our beauty, strength and physical senses as they weaken with age. Everyman was forced to

realize that there was very little of his life that could help his situation.

In the end wisdom and good deeds were all he had left. He was very alone in his journey to the grave. One of more meaningful dialogues is Everyman's talk with his "Riches". His Riches replied that they were not truly his, they were just on loan. This will strike at the heart of those who hope to take their riches to the grave with them.

Everyman if forced, as we all will be, to realize that even our knowledge will abandon us. All that will truly live on will be our good deeds. Only the good we do will be remembered by posterity. This lesson of "Everyman" and every man should take it to heart because death is the one inevitability we can all be certain of. As the Doctor-speaking of our youth-pronounces in line 906, "They all at last do Everyman forsake..." and indeed they do, so we all should prepare now with as many good deeds as possible.



# Literary Critique-Second Place

## O'Brien's Recipe for a Novel, a Review of Island of the World

Richard Hall

A good essay follows a fairly simple formula. It will consist of an opening, a body (the ideas behind the essay), and a conclusion. This is much like a hamburger, with layered ingredients between a sliced bun. Writing a novel is very different, much like making a stew. Every author, just as every cook, follows their own recipe when writing a new novel. If it worked before it should work again, so they add in the same elements changing names, places and sequence. The trick is to make each story unique and still end up with a stew. Michael D. O'Brien has once again served up a stew in Island of the World following the common recipe of his previous seven novels.

The first ingredient used in an O'Brien novel, sort of like the water for a stew, is basic to most writing. The element would be "write what you know". To demonstrate this would first be helpful to know a little about Mr. O'Brien. Living in Canada, "O'Brien, is a Roman Catholic author, artist, and frequent essayist and lecturer on faith and culture,...he is self-taught, without an academic background" (O'Brien pg. 1). O'Brien showcases his skills in many published genre; including, non-fiction, historical text and poetry. His recent book of poetry, Sleeping and Waking was named as a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Awards for poetry in February 2008. O'Brien has also served as an editor for Nazareth Journal magazine. His "articles and lectures tend to focus on his belief that western civilization is in severe decline as well as heading towards a "New Totalitarianism" (O'Brien pg. 2). Mr. O'Brien is not confined to written expression, he "is about an artist, painting in a neo-Byzantine style with a contemporary interpretation; his paintings often sell for upwards of \$10,000 USD. (His paintings are featured on the cover of all his books)" (O'Brien pg. 2).

Mr. O'Brien is not confined to written expressionism, he "is also an artist, painting in a neo-Byzantine style with a contemporary interpretation; his paintings often sell for upwards of \$10,000 USD. (His paintings are featured on the cover of all his books)" (O'Brien page 2).

In Island of the World readers are introduced to several "write what you know" elements. Josip Lasta, the main character is also a poet and a Catholic. He lives for many years under totalitarian governments, first under German and Italian forces during World War II and then under a communist regime left in their wake. In other novels, main characters have been artist, editors, playwrights and a Catholic monk. In fact, many of his characters are Catholic, however; some have been Jews, some Protestants, some Evangelicals, and even Atheist. The majority of his characters are based in Canada and have dealt with a neo-totalitarian government secretly taking over there. Others have lived in Poland, Italy and Israel. Josip Lasta is from Yugoslavia and spends time in Italy and New York before returning to Croatia after the civil war of the 1990's. The scenes portrayed in his novels are very vivid and detailed leading one to believe the author has indeed made pilgrimages to these lands as well as traveling throughout North America.

Now as the water comes to a boil a little meat needs to be added as this will take the longest to cook and will define our type of stew. In our writers case the meat will be some type of defining event that will shape the main character over his life into a person of interest. O'Brien's characters are usually their own antagonist along with those who oppose them from the outside O'Brien's recipe for this ingredient was some form of traumatic event in the characters adolescent years. In previous books, characters have suffered events such as a murdered father, sexual abuse, a wild bear attack and being hunted by Nazi soldiers after his family has been killed. In Island, O'Brien's character suffers the loss of his entire village, massacred by one of the factions fighting for control of Yugoslavia as the Germans and Italians are withdrawing from the country. In this

novel O'Brien relates Lasta's life in narrative form. In other novels the characters childhood trauma may be revealed in a flashback or brought to light in a previous novel of his Children of the Last Days series. Island deviates from the recipe in that O'Brien doubles this event, having the character go through a similar event as a young adult.

The next ingredient of our stew will be the potatoes. Potatoes take a while to cook also but when done break apart and travel throughout the broth. Similarly, our writer's next ingredient is much like our cooked potatoes. After the traumatic event, O'Brien sends his character on a journey of discovery. The character usually enters this journey as a broken person, sometimes the pieces are put right but most often the character ends up shutting down or placing the broken parts into a locked room in the mind and continues with a semi-normal life. This is never accomplished without the help of others as is also the case with Josip. But as you might have already guessed the reader of Island is allowed a double dose of this ingredient also.

The next ingredient of our stew is the carrots. Like the potatoes the carrots are hard and take a while to cook. They also have a very bright color that adds variety to the meal. O'Brien uses his antagonistic totalitarian government as this ingredient. This always keeps the main character on the defensive, which adds that bit of intrigue and suspense we all crave in a good novel. It is also the cause of much suffering. In fact it could be said that if you have never wept with a character, you have never read an O'Brien novel. Somehow O'Brien is able to capture the reader and make him feel just a bit of the pain his character feels and of course he can do the same if his character has a moment of joy.

Now we add a little spice to our stew as O'Brien also adds small touches here and there to show we are not so alone. Under this ingredient would fall the helpful strangers, strange or preternatural occurrences such as dolphins aiding a drowning swimmer to shore. Then there is the strange and mysterious priest who seems to be there just for the main character to bring him back to a right

relationship with God. Again these are common elements in all of O'Brien's novels.

Now we let our stew simmer and develop into a meal, likewise our author leads us through a series of events and lets them develop and bring forth a tale. Unlike our essay where all the ingredients come together yet can still be distinguished one element from another, our author brings all the ingredients together so that one element combines with the others and melds so that the whole content is inseparable. Each element plays on another just as all elements are notable in each bite of a stew. Add into this a bit of O'Brien's own philosophy and pearls of wisdom such as, "Why do we in memory seek ourselves, when it is ourselves who shape the memories?" (page 10) or:

People always seem to fall in love with an image first, never the substance, for to know the substance of a man would spell the end of the human race within a generation (page 204).

Each of O'Brien's novels, even those in his series can stand on their own. Every one of them contains total human suffering, that is mind, body and spirit. Yet through all this the character seeks life and relationships. In Island of the World as in other O'Brien novels we come away with the knowledge that:

We are born, we eat, and learn, and die. We leave a tracery of of messages in the lives of others, a little shifting of the soil, a stone moved from here to there, a word uttered, a song, a poem left behind. I was here, each of there declare. I was here (page 10).

Henry Westen writes:

This book comes highly recommended by eminent authors and scholars; you won't, however, find it on the New York Times best seller's list. But to me, this lack of approval by the popular media and literary gurus is its highest recommendation, the magnificent, fascinating and life affirming story brings out facts and truths that are a challenge to our consciences and a spur to grow beyond our

often shallow and individualistic lifestyles.

I will add that this is a fair and accurate appraisal of this wonderful book. O'Brien has held to his recipe and once again produced a novel well worth reading.

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# Literary Critique-Third Place

## Castor's Disaster

Richard Hall

Earth Mine is the name of a geological project in Peter Andrew Castor's first murder mystery, Of Things Under the Earth. By taking a literal reading of certain Scriptural passages, Castor has weaved a tale of strange murders surrounding the employees of the Earth Mine project, a hole in the earth's crust.

Castor's style is very easy to follow and the concept is appealing, but his characters are superficial, scenes are loosely described and the demon fails to terrify anyone but Castor's characters. If you're looking for a scare, stick with Stephen King or Ann Rice because Castor just does not seem to be able to out do Fear Factor. The only part of the story that was well developed was the prologue with the story of Darla's bad luck and the silent stalker she knew was chasing her. The prologue is told from the third person point of view and the remainder of the novel told in the first person. I don't believe this switch in view is harmful but the story starts to suffer soon afterwards.

Basically the story is about a high school teacher on summer vacation to his wife's hometown. He feels out of place in his wife's hometown with all her friends. So, when a strange murder occurs, he seeks out the detective in charge and convinces him to allow him to tag along, so as to possibly write a book about the case. At this point, his wife and her surrogate parents are reduced to minor character status and the state detective becomes significant.

The story has more than its share of strange happenings like self activating computer screens, spook filled attics and odd deaths but the best part of the story is the interaction between the alcoholic detective and the former alcoholic school teacher. Things really take a twist to the supernatural side of things as the couple travel from Hogan, Arkansas, the place of the first murder, to New Orleans to meet with one of the geologist in control of the project, and fond

out what the hidden purpose of the project was:

“The purpose of the project was to dig deeper than anyone ever had before.”

“You’ve already said that, “Nick pointed out.

“Why?”

“We were trying to see if we could locate Hell,” the professor explained matter-of-factly (149).

It seems that Earth Mine has achieved its goal, at least for the purpose of Castor’s tale. The demon below has been turned loose on those who awoke him from his slumber. To put an end to the strange deaths of the Earth Mine employees, the complex must be destroyed. Will the Devil allow it? Check out the explosive ending if you don’t mind a wonderful plot destroyed by a mediocre writer.



# Special Category

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# Special Category

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The Paradox of Affluence: Choices, Challenges  
and Consequences

Tangible Consequences  
Steven C. Hatfield, I

Are the best things in life free or not? For that matter, what are the best things in life? Is any thing in life truly free? Looking at the world around you the answer to that question would appear to be a resounding “No!” Or is it?

Even a cursory look at advertising on television and other places will show that the term “free” is very deceptive. We’ve seen the commercials saying, “Buy one and get one free,” but, that’s only two at half price on a good day. It’s even less if the price was marked up before the sale began. We buy something for three easy payments of \$19.95 and receive something else that’s \$20 in value free. They aren’t going to lose money, which makes the “\$20 in value” questionable at least. The same is true for a sign saying, “Kids eat free.” No, it’s built into the price that *you* pay. What about a “Ladies drink free” special? Not only is someone paying but there is very often a hidden cost on a varying scale to be paid later, which could even come well after leaving. So much for the term “free.”

Obviously we cannot consider “free” things as the “best things,” so let’s look at some other things that are usually on the “best things” list, such as cars and homes. They are not free and are necessities in life but are very often used as status symbols as well. From a pick-up truck to a limousine, from a cabin on a lake to a penthouse suite, we risk total bankruptcy to have what we think will

make others see us as successful and upwardly mobile. This includes the latest styles of clothes, the newest computer/communications devices, and it crosses all social barriers. A family of very modest means considers a steak dinner at home as one of the “best things,” while a family with a hired staff will be driven to a restaurant and spend as much for a steak dinner as the first family spends for a week’s worth of groceries. It’s no different when each family buys a gold necklace. The first family might have to save to buy one of 14k gold and the other gives away 24k one with a diamond. Regardless of our status in life, all of us seem to want the best things in life. We may disagree over what “best” means in terms of things or quality; however, none of it is free.

If we go to another level, even air isn’t free. We pay for our homes or to get to wherever the air is that we’re breathing. We pay for bottled water and devices to purify both in our homes. Knowledge isn’t free either. Ask parent’s if they can send their children to twelve years of public schools and not spend any money. Yes, library cards and the public library are free, but getting there isn’t and is difficult for some. Many, if not most, private schools deliberately keep certain people out with their rates.

It seems that everything in life—let alone the “best things”—has a price even if it isn’t measured in monetary terms or realized until much later. For example, could someone have foreseen a one-hundred years flood that causes a huge increase in crime and skyrocketing insurance rates after buying a second care and a new home in a better neighborhood? Suddenly, in their effort to be upwardly mobile or achieve some of the “best things,” they’re worrying about their safety while eking out a living each month. They have no choice but to pay the rates because insurance for cars is required by law and for homes by contract.

All of this being said, maybe the important question is this: what are truly the best things in life? There are three of them. Few consider them things at all and yet, they are as real and fulfilling as anything. They belong to everyone, cannot be seen or touched, and are truly free. They cannot be bought nor taken from

anyone. They must be given up or sold out. They are, Faith, Hope and Love. We lose Faith or “sell our souls” for something that seems great. We give up Hope. We can sell ourselves for Love or marry for money. All of these are choices we make when these things are challenged. Yet, if these three things were all that humanity possessed, oh how different our world would be. But because we covet only what we can see and touch—what is tangible—and often at any cost, we are left with trying to use the tangible to gain the intangible—happiness. This means having to constantly seek more and, more over, whenever we get one of the so-called “best things” we see something else even better. Hence, there is never a “best” only a better.

We live in paradise but we cannot see it because it’s cluttered with all of our things. Maybe that’s why so many people who have almost nothing often seem to be the happiest. We’ve seen the mother in Brazil laughing and playing with her children while living in a shack with a dirt floor; or the children in South Africa playing games in a street that has sewage running down the middle of it; or the man in the United States enjoying a picnic with his family and friends after working for twelve hours in a field all the while living in a house with no indoor plumbing. And consider this: how many times have we seen the rich and famous from the wife of a president to a senator from spoiled little rich kids to those who made it big on their own, and many others in between, in trouble or prison, rehab or seeking psychiatric help, dead or forgotten due to the pressure to perform or stay one-up on the Jones’? All of those “poor people” are happy and seem to have the best things, but, this time, we cannot see them because we’re too busy looking at what they don’t have. It’s an enigma wrapped in a paradox.

So, are the best things in life free? Not if we only envision what is within our grasp. But if we allow Faith, Hope and Love to fill our Mind, Body and Soul—the only things they can fill—then we will see that they are the “best things” in life and our life then becomes free regardless of our affluence.



Faculty  
and  
Staff



Grace Megnet  
Faculty



## ODE TO BRICK

Oh, those eyes  
Big, brown, lashes to the moon!  
Penetrating in their stare.  
The thing I noticed first about you  
And then your auburn hair.

I had no idea how much pain you had endured  
I did not realize your capacity to forget, forgive  
And love again.  
Those eyes searched my face  
And you grinned that crooked grin.

My resolve melted, how else could I respond?  
We knew it in a moment, Brick Peterson, you were going  
To my home!

I signed my name and took your leash and we left  
That lobby!  
The Humane Shelter would not see you again.  
Together, whatever the weather, now and until...

Thanks, Katrina!

Monteel Copple  
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 grrrreat!

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



# La Tour Eiffle

Michelle Judice  
Faculty

## In Your Arms©

A vision,  
A blinding ray of light,  
a gift we were given;  
lost in each other's dreams &  
we lifted the weight with the  
strength for us to carry on...

Together,  
we paved the road to  
lead us to forever,  
until the rain washed it away,  
forgetting the vow of commitment  
when things go wrong...

Of all the lonely people,  
you're among the very few,  
if love comes even once in your life [time]...

Love is a hard lesson to learn...  
Keeping your fire lit to burn...  
but if you are willing to go on...  
I'll find a way back into your arms...

Why do we?  
Hurt the ones we love so dearly?  
Have we all forgotten how to love?  
If only, someone or something  
would help me understand?...

They warned him;  
he only looked away for a moment  
and found he lost the best he ever had;  
his vision fallen like water in clutching hands...

All you lonely people,  
[she] was among the very few,  
who was loved even more than a lifetime...

Love is a hard lesson to learn...  
Finding reasons to return...  
But if you feel you must move on...  
I'll find a way still into your arms...

True love is wonderful,  
it's magical but most of all,  
it's having something to call your own...  
But then one day you're lost,  
trying to find a way back home,  
to the only life you've ever known...

I still have so much to learn...  
About life's many twists and turns...  
The flame in my heart will carry one...  
lighting the way back into your arms...

I have to get back,  
I need to get back,  
...into your arms

I want to get back,  
I've gotta get back, baby,  
...into your arms

Damon Gaspard  
Staff



Michelle Judice  
Faculty

Together©

Now, while we're alone,  
I've grown the strength to tell  
you, I feel you here inside of me...

You, you're all I ever known,  
you possess such beauty,  
more than the eye will ever see...

How many roads must go by, before  
the path to you will be chosen?...  
listen to my heart speak from inside  
all the words unspoken...

Together in my heart,  
together we will be...  
even when you're gone,  
you'll be here with me...

...TOGETHER

Once, I woke up after  
dreaming you were gone;  
I cried and tried to find you.  
I begged the dream would fade  
And vanish from my memory...

The night has a way of controlling  
your heart, leaving you with no one to follow... and what I want more than today,  
is to know you'll love me still tomorrow...

Together in my life,  
together in my arms...  
I will not let one thing,  
ever bring you harm...

Together hand in hand,  
Together for all time...  
I'm a better man,  
with you in my life...

I'd always wished I'd be...  
for-e-ver yours...

...you and me together

Damon Gaspard  
Staff





Make You Feel©

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

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

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

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

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

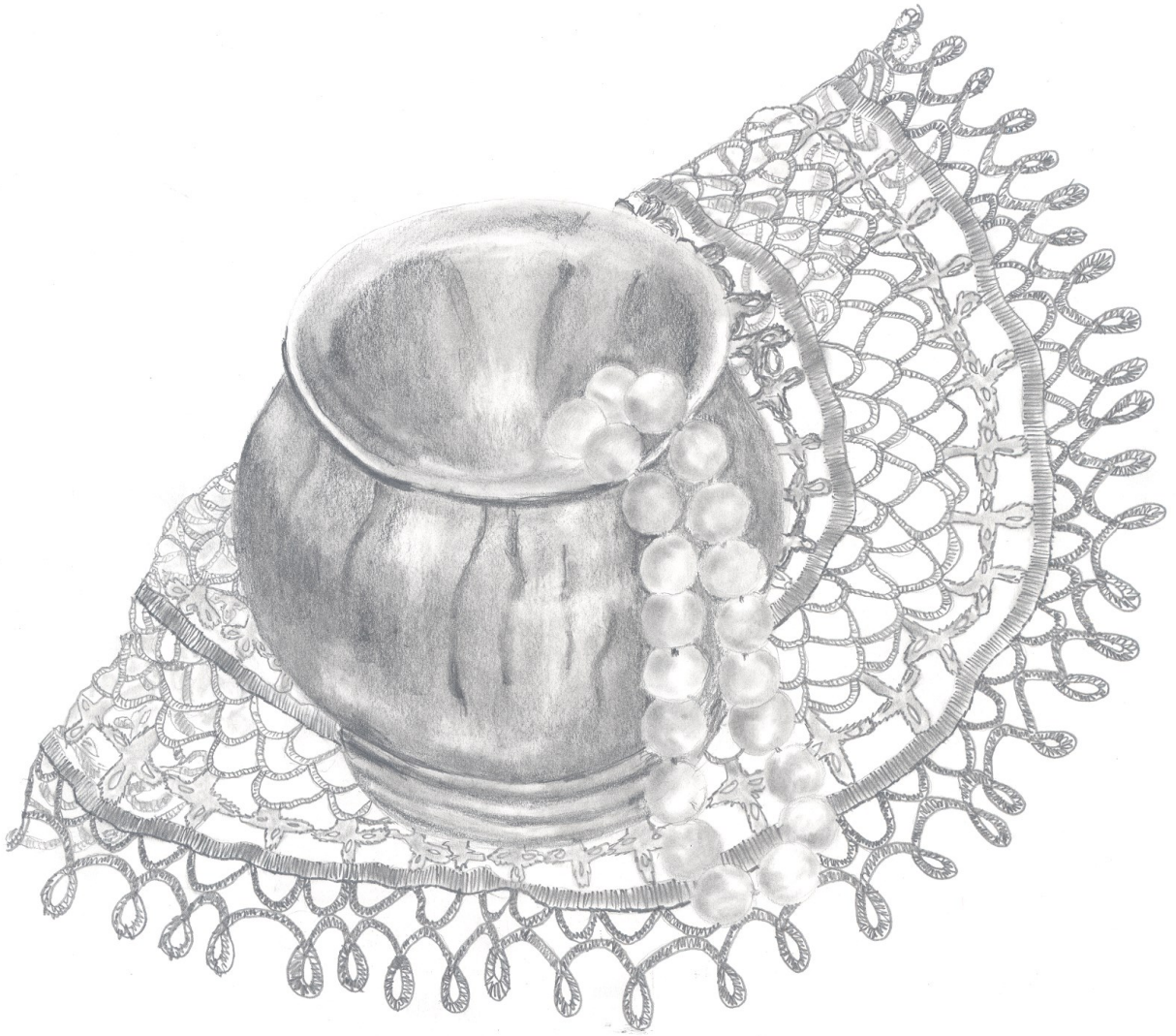
Every start has it's end...  
but our paths will cross again...

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

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

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

Damon Gaspard-Staff



Grace Megnet  
Faculty



# Bayou Beauty

Dr. David Sorrells  
Faculty

If you never get married

If you never marry  
You cannot know  
The common, uniting driving force  
Known by the swinging singles as divorce.

Yes, how can you go to a bar seeking cheer  
Sit there and morosely cry in your beer  
Looking for someone who'll sympathize  
And hate the ex-wife you so greatly despise.

You can't use the time-honored line of hoo--  
How your neurotic ex-wife didn't "get" you.  
So, if you've never had one of these wifely treasures.  
Go get one, so you, too, can have bar-room pleasures.

Sally Byrd  
Faculty





# Fire Eater at the Renaissance Festival

Dr. David Sorrells  
Faculty

## Lauren and Baby Hannah

Baby Hannah sits all day  
While the other cousins go out to play  
She sits by the window in her jump seat and bounces  
And her weight is still figured in pound and ounces.

Baby Hannah drinks milk from a small plastic bottle  
And what she's thinking is hard to follow  
She oos and goos and makes baby sounds  
That makes all the old folks come stand around.

She wears tiny dresses and tinier socks  
And her mama puts bows in her dark raven locks.  
But if I spit up on my mama like she does all the time  
My mama would be paddling me on the behind.

She gets all the attention from every one who visits  
And they go on all day about how she's so exquisite.  
My mama says that people talked the same way about me  
I don't remember it at all, so-- ho hum, fiddle de dee.

They bring her the neatest presents in the prettiest gift wrap  
Which she can't even open—she just sits in any lap.  
I want to grab the presents and keep them all for me  
After all, I'm prettiest, smartest one in my class, you see.

Mama says that we'll be such good friends some fine day--  
I don't think it'll happen until she's old and gray.  
But sometimes when she goos at me and gives that toothless grin  
I think it might be fun to have baby Hannah for a friend.

Sally Byrd  
Faculty





# Multnomah Falls, Oregon

Janet G. Polk-Staff



## 7:45 a.m. Commute

The cab of her truck is filled with the haunting lyrical soundtrack of “*Shakespeare in Love*” the notes rise and fall, gathering momentum for a passionate lover’s embrace, mournful when love is denied. Musical balance is struck between the giddy and the sorrowful when reason returns. The melody envelopes her as she focuses on driving.

Captured in a micro-second between her straight-on and peripheral vision, separated by a concrete barrier going opposite directions at commuter speeds, a man on a motorcycle; he is striking among the other vehicular clutter.

Confidently astride a monstrous beast, clad in black and fluorescent green gear, his features are protected by a helmet with a darkened visor. His gloved right hand on the handlebar controls the cycle, while his left rests comfortably high on his thigh, tucked into the fold of his leg and torso. His arm and shoulder form a cocky triangle; he is breathlessly masculine.

It all makes her smile. It is 7:46 a.m.

Janet G. Polk  
Staff





*A Member of The Texas State University System*

# Early Expressions

Spring 2009

Volume X

Early Expressions  
Faculty Advisor-Editor  
Peggy Gene Knight

Description:  
Person



# Description: Person-First Place

Hero

Tiffany Fowler

Don't be intimidated by his big fierce green eyes; they are just a cover for what is really deep down inside. Behind those eyes comes a deep caring person willing to do anything for anyone, someone who will never back down, give-up or let go. His smile will light up my world when there is nothing but darkness surrounding. His compassion and determination to get through something that no one else can, will make me go weak in the knees. His muscles are just a shield to protect him from harm. His ears might be a little small but they are there to listen, when no one else will. Always playful and kind but never boring, rarely sad, always smiling, he has the personality of a puppy. The strength he has is nothing but an advantage to him, something he worked hard at. His two-tone skin is from his tan-lines from working out in the sun all day. The uniform he wears will show everyone that he is willing to fight and die for his country. His fingernails are always shiny, only because he gets manicures. The roughness of his hands aren't because he is rough, it's because of the hard work and labor he does for his family. The love and kindness he has in his heart, is what the world needs today. Don't think his shortness an indicator on how high he can reach and jump. He made over one-hundred and forty-five dunks in basketball in high school. His dark brown shaved little head represents the marine corp. His ability to run really fast and keep up in the marines, he can thank his football coaches for that, all those late night practices. He received the honor of "Lt. Corporal" out of all his fellow brothers in his division. The person I just described is like a brother, hero, best friend to me. His name is "PFC (Private First Class) Lt. Corporal Christopher Dean Welch." He passed away on September 27, 2006. He will always be remembered as a hero, a brother, and a best friend to everyone among his family and friends.





# Description: Person-Second Place

Raven Christine Stephenson

Kelli Jo Allen

The most important person in my life is also the one that demands my attention every minute of the day. Her name is Raven, and she will soon be a bouncy three year old. She has been the center of my world since the first time I saw her big brown eyes, and her cute little dimples. Since then every day she surprises me on what she has learned. She now knows her ABCs and 123s, and even full songs like “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”. Just last week she finally mastered swinging all by herself. The look on her face was priceless. “Look Momma I’m ah swinging!” She screamed with glee. She just wouldn’t give up until she could do it all on her own. I have never met such a independent little girl.

Her tiny hands match mine, and always seem to get her into trouble. Sometimes I feel that she will never learn what “no” really means. Or that toilet paper is not used for decorating the bathroom floor, and that the walls are not her personal canvas. I tell everyone to beware of her constant mood swings. She may be small but she has earned herself the nickname Raging Raven. She is not always in trouble though. She knows just how to get on my good side. She can be very helpful when it comes to cleaning, and always helps pick up her toys after a long day of playing.

Her new favorite thing to do is go to school. She comes home and tells me all about her day, and about her new friends. Being an only child I don’t think she ever realized that there were others her size, and the world wasn’t just full of adults. Her teachers all tell me how smart she is for her age, and even say she might be ready for the four year old room. If she wasn’t so short I might consider putting her in a older class, but until she grows a inch or two I think she is fine in

the two and three room.

She has never met a stranger. She likes to greet everyone she meets. "Hi, my name is Raven!" Sometimes when people do not acknowledge her, she will yell at them, "Hey you over there, I said my name is Raven!" It can get very embarrassing at times, but I know she means well. Most people do however say hello, and comment something back to her. I know it makes her feel special that everyone seems to notice her, but she can also be quite shy sometimes. I don't really know why she just seems to be shy around random people every once in awhile.

No matter what she does, good or bad, I could not see my life without her. She needs me, and I need her. She fills my days with laughter and joy, and I hope she never grows up.

# Description: Person-Third Place

Lorena  
Lorena Sanchez

Waking up to the eloquent sounds of Mozart, seeing the beautiful art drawings of Picasso on my walls, I smell the ocean breeze as the wonderful winds blow right into my open windows. Feeling the Egyptian cotton from my covers and my pillows, I reach out for a book written by Alice Hoffman, titled Here on Earth. How I enjoy reading her books. They are son interesting in so many ways.

As I get out of bed I am tended to as if I were a beautiful princess from India. Just enjoying the wonderful life as a gorgeous princess, and not having to worry about anything, I see my 250,000 dollar car parked in the driveway, as I walk to my front porch looking at the sunrise. All I have on mind are all positive things and how easy life is with such a better job, and a better future, and greater things coming to me. This life of mine seemed just too real to be true. Unfortunately, I actually woke up from this dream, which brought so many thoughts and so many strange feelings to me.

I realized everything was just a dream, and how my reality was the complete opposite of this wonderful dream I was having. Everything was brought back to me, and made me know and understand that life isn't easy as it may seem or may look. This dream also made me realize that I will have to work for what I want.



# Description: Person-Honorable Mention

Who Is That Man?

Casey Guillot

Every heartfelt emotion pours out from his luminous gaze. His keen brown eyes show troubles of the past and tribulations of today, but he hides this all behind dark shades. His flowing locks glow behind his graceful steps, deeper into the blistering sun of the beach. His dusky goatee traces his delicate face and his defined cheekbones light up his distressed features. His voice is mellow and full of wisdom. Similarly, his tranquil breathing flows like velvet. His ankles sink deeper with each lunge into the icy blue water, standing stern with his hands on his creamy hips as he breaths in the salty air. The colorful necklaces drape carelessly over his sweaty chest and bounce with each forward strut. Sentimental black ink wraps around his rugged arm, leaving a marker of his past. Each smile on this man's lips is like a breath of fresh air, and every laugh could make all worries dissipate. His swagger intimidates men, and his pleasant aroma of sandalwood could make any women swoon. When he swanks into a bar, his beautiful appearance unintentionally draws all gazes. People gawk and whisper of his beauty when Johnny Depp strolls into the room.



# Description: Person-Honorable Mention

Yvonne Howard

Jacovin Buckner

My aunt is a kind woman who can walk in a room, and it lights up. She is also a woman who knows how to put a smile on my face whether I am sad or mad; a woman who can help me no matter what kind of problem I have. She is a person who never lets me down and always comes around when I am feeling low. She brightens up my day. Aunt Yvonne is a nurse who helps others who are in need.

She travels back and forth to Haiti to help those in need who have nothing but the clothes on their backs. As soon as she lands, the poor children smile and run up to her with looks of joy and happiness toward her. She embraces them with open arms, love, and laughter. Yvonne treats them like they are her own. It almost seems as if she gave birth to each and every one of them. Only in her arms do they feel safe and loved.

Everywhere she goes the people stop to speak and admire her presence. They say things like “How are you, Mrs. Howard?” and she would smile at them and respond by saying, “Fine, and you?” “What a great woman!” people would say as she walked by. My aunt is great at many things, but her passion is being a minister at First Sixth Street Baptist Church in Port Arthur, Texas. She preaches on Sundays filling everyone with the word of God and bringing joy and happiness to everyone’s soul filling it with the Holy Spirit. After church she greets everyone with a handshake and thanks them for attending the service. They would tell her how good her sermon was, and she would tell them, “Thank you and may God bless you.”

In addition to being a minister she sings in the choir and helps the youth. She is always busy helping others and never giving up. When I see her she puts a

smile on my face and brightens up my day. Whenever I see her I would say, “That’s my nanny, the loving, caring, and God-fearing woman.” My nanny is the glue that holds our family together by any means necessary. May God continue to bless her because she is gifted with such a sweet spirit.



Description:  
Place



# Description: Place-First Place

The Jamin' Kitchen

Kyle Hales

Many years ago, my crazy friends and I would hang out, party, and play music at my friend Jimmy's house in Bridge City, Texas. We had our own little jam house in the back that would get packed with people every weekend. As the nights came to an end, only a few of us were still surviving, and we were starving. We tried to quietly sneak in his parent's house, but that never worked out very well. We could not be quiet. Then we finally made to the kitchen.

We had so many memories in that kitchen; whether it was band meetings, lectures from his mom, or just dinner, it was good times. It was a small kitchen, but it was awesome. There was a big countertop table in the center with two barstools that everyone fought over. Everyone else just leaned against the counters that went around the room. Someone always hit his head on one of Jimmy's mom's pots hanging from the ceiling over the table. Food was always being prepared in the kitchen. Sometimes it was home cooked meals, or it was something like our bass player putting ice cream on pot roast at five in the morning. We always left a huge mess on the table. We would just raid the kitchen, eat food, and leave any trash lying around.

Now that same kitchen I'll never forget is ruined from Hurricane Ike. It had about six feet of water and mud up to the middle of the walls. The whole town we grew up in is torn to pieces, but we'll keep our chins up and continue to play music and party.



# Description: Place-Second Place

## A Night and Morning

Jared Romine

Coming in after the light has disappeared and all sounds of life have faded, I make my way through the dark toward the faint sounds of rest. The closer I get to my room which I share with my brother the louder the sound of rest (his snoring) gets, and I wonder if I will ever fall asleep. That fear is short lived as I doze off.

The morning is never alone as it creeps in my room. It is accompanied by the sounds and smells of a beautiful 27th of the month that does not tell of a beautiful day but of a less than average morning. My mind is awakened first by the thoughts of what is due on this day, the stress of rent, bills and homework that should have had would have been done last night if I was a bit more self disciplined. The sense of touch then arrives as it communicates to my brain that the warmth of my cover is too much, and the pores beneath my arms are beginning to open.

My nose receives a greeting from the smell of burning pancakes as I enter the hall that leads from my room. It is not a shy aroma, and it only grows bolder as I approach the source which is not burning pancakes as I had earlier thought but burning toast. The color of this toast made even the dark brown, stained, hardwood floors in my kitchen looks pale, and my stomach feels weak. I am almost nauseous enough to lose my appetite, but the golden brown pancakes sitting on the black stove that matches the black refrigerator that has been in my kitchen since change my mind. It would have been a shame to let a food so delicious go to waste and for the first and most likely last time this week, I leave for school with a full stomach.



# Description: Place-Third Place

## The Sweetest Memory

Albertha Welch

Thinking back to my childhood always brings a smile to my face, when I would smell the good Louisiana home cooking, thinking there would always be something made in the kitchen just for me. You see, I was the only child. My grandmother had a lot of grandchildren, but I was the one with the pleasure of living with her. My days of coming home from school were a delight. She (my grandmother) would either be making a pot of homemade gumbo, frying fish, or shrimp. We even did popcorn in a kettle, or rise crispy treats. That was our after school time for her and me. These are my memories of my beautiful grandmother. She loved cooking, and I loved eating and spending all my time with her. We once lived in a large house located in Sherwood Forest, in the city of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Our kitchen to me back then seem have everything a person could want in a kitchen, a beautiful large opening with an island to do all our preparing. The kitchen was equipped with hide away garbage that I found fun to play with. I could pull the door open toward me and the can, to me seemed to magically appear; it was connected to the cabinets and, all the deserts and sweets a child's heart could desire.

We moved to a three bed room apartment, but my kitchen adventures never changed. I still had the wonderful smells coming through the door, and my nose still wondered what was this she was making? Opening the door to discover a bread pudding, I guess I finally found something I didn't like coming from her kitchen. Most of the meals or deserts I surely liked. Now that I am older, I try to pass this on to my own children, but they are boys, and I feel like they just like to eat. Never mind the smells to them; "Just give it to me," as they say, or "can I have it?" Grammy's kitchen.

Boys are different, but I sometimes wonder if my grandmother was still alive would they react the same as they do with me, or would they behave as I did when I was a child in my Grammy's kitchen.



# Description: Place-Honorable Mention

Childhood Kitchen

Kelli Jo Allen

If I had to choose a place where all my childhood memories collide, it would have to be my grandmother's kitchen. My grandmother has lived in the same place for as long as I can remember. We always seemed to gather in her kitchen to laugh, argue, and even sometimes cry. It has always been warm and inviting to me.

My grandmother always stood behind the counter and mixed, and prepared the food. Behind her was the stove where all the magic happened. Everything that came off that stove was delicious, and savory. On the days that she kept us kids she would whip up some of her chocolate chip cookies. We would all stand around the other side of the bar, and watch. After all the cookies were safely in the gas oven, she would take the bowl that the cookies were mixed in, and hand each of us our own spoon. We would then take turns scraping the bowl for the left over dough, and then lick our spoons clean again. Nothing beats homemade cookie dough.

Her kitchen was not always full of cooking sounds. Sometimes it was full of laughter. All the women of the family would gather and sit at the kitchen table across from the bar talking, and laugh about the men standing just outside on the back porch. Other times the kitchen was full of people. On big holidays we would all stand in line waiting to get our plate of food, laughing and talking as we went. The smell of all the homemade dishes filled the room, and seemed to melt away the world outside the big French doors.

The kitchen has been through many changes through the years. The cabinets are no longer plain pine wood colors, but are now white so they match the walls. The linoleum floors were long ago replaced with oak flooring, and the counter

top has been replaced with light blue granite. No matter how drastic the changes get, I still feel right at home there. To this day most of our family gathers there to converse or just meet up to go shopping. My grandmother's kitchen still has a big role in my family's life, and hopefully that will never change.

# Description: Place-Honorable Mention

## Grandma's Kitchen

Antonia Mansfield

As a young girl I would love to stay in the beautiful traditional kitchen that was my grandmother's. There was something about that kitchen; as the sun rose to a warm and settled morning of the great outdoors, grandma would push her tall round windows out towards the scenery. She then sat in her wooden chair at the table, enjoying her coffee and the freshness of the air flowing in the traditional kitchen. When I walked into her kitchen every morning I would smell good old home cooked biscuits, the swell smell of freshly squeezed orange juice, and my most favorite, her scrambled eggs that would make me say: "yum yum." However, the food was not the biggest aspect of the kitchen; it was how she had everything set up in her kitchen so laid back and cozy. As for me, her kitchen looked so huge to me. I guess I was so tiny and felt like a midget that could not look above and see things. Everything around in the kitchen was kept neat in a certain place. When I first walked in grandma's kitchen, I would see an amazing painting on her wall. This painting could soothe my mind, body, and soul. A young child, I would have to be careful not to destroy her valuable things in the kitchen. You know how it is when you're young, you can't really stay still, and you would just get into everything. Not my grandma's kitchen! That was the one thing I could never try to destroy. It was like a rewarding place for her to be at to treasure and enjoy her special meals. My grandma's kitchen was the ultimate place for me to indulge in, have home cooked meals, and just lay back enjoying life as a young child.



Description:  
Thing



# Description: Thing-First Place

## Green Lawn Resting Place

April Coleman

Tomorrow is my birthday, and I will be fifteen years old. I wonder if my friends will come to my party. I told Edward, Metoyer, and Kelly about the party. They have been my neighbors since they moved in. Edward lives next to me, Kelly lives in the next space, and Metoyer across the way. We keep our area pretty clean, we play together, and we welcome newcomers to God's Heaven.

During the day we play games, we pick four leaf clovers, and play name that flower. We also count cars as they pass on the main road. At night we count the stars, guess the size of the moon, and listen for the planes that fly over our heads. We also can hear wild animals like wolves. I can remember when my mother came to visit, a wolf was in the woods not far away.

Before the hurricane a ball drifted, and we had a new game to play in the spring, but it floated away during the high winds and flood. It is fun to see when people come to visit. They bring new flowers, toys, and sometimes even balloons. I think the new girl's name is Sharon and she has a balloon with a heart on it. It's funny how we can tell when the seasons change by the colors of the leaves on the trees. When the colors change to orange, yellow, and brown, I know that Santa will be coming soon. We get new toys and flowers.

I have a big day tomorrow; my mommy will be coming. She gave me a blanket when I moved here for the night time. I hope you can come to my party; if not come see me sometime. Here is my address.

Jalen Re'Mon Coleman

22 Peaceful Lane

PearlyGates, Heaven 021194





# Description: Thing-Second Place

Tombstone

Jalisa Delafoisse

“Where, where could it be?” I said to myself as I walk in circles trying to find my late aunt’s tombstone. As I continued to stroll through the graveyard, I could hear the noise underneath my shoes from the soft mud and wet rocks. The scent of the fresh air filled the air, leaving the ground very moist. I noticed how each tombstone was different in its own way. Some tombstones had flowers while others did not. Some belonged to the old while some belonged to the young. Most of the tombstones had sunk into the ground after being there for so many years. By being on the graveyard site, I sensed a peaceful feeling while the cool wind blew, shaking the tree branches side to side. Then finally my search was over I found my aunt’s tombstone. The first thing that caught my eyes was its position; it lay in the ground as one side of the tombstone had dirt everywhere as if someone had been digging in the ground. I crouched over and thrust some of the dirt off so her name and the dates could be visible. Then I touched the thirty-eight year old tombstone, it felt very giddy and rough. I wondered to myself what she looked like as her nine year old body lay there with a bullet hole through it. Back in 1971, her stepbrother was playing with her father’s gun and accidentally the gun went off, shooting her dead. I stood in front of the tombstone and watched as the flowers fought with the high blowing wind to stay upward. As I turned around to walk back to my car, I glanced across the graveyard and saw hundreds and hundreds of tombstones of all different people. They all died of different causes, but they ended up in unity as they slept peacefully in their graves.



# Description: Thing-Third Place

## Gravestone

Raul Lopez

As I walked through the deserted cemetery I saw countless gravestones. Some of them were decorated with flowers and some of them were not. While I was reading some of the epitaphs, I learned about people's lives that were buried there.

I came across the gravestone of a couple, and it caught my attention because it had their pictures. The pictures were black and white, and they showed two smiling faces full of life. It was hard to believe that the lifeless remnants of their bodies were six feet underground. The gravestone was made of marble, and it was about five feet wide and two feet high. In the middle of the gravestone was an empty vase and on each side of the vase was a carved book with their names. Their last name was engraved with large capital letters on the gravestone's bottom. It did not have any epitaph. Although it seemed as just one more gravestone among the thousands in the cemetery, it was erected to remember the life of two unique persons.

I left the cemetery thinking about the fragility and timelessness of life. When everything is said and done, all of our actions, good or bad, will be summarized in two dates.



# Description: Thing-Honorable Mention

A Remembrance in Oak Bluff Memorial Park

Christina Powell

I once had the honor and privilege to know a wonderful woman who was very giving, loving, and hard working. Her name was Velma Marie Powell. She was born on August 1, 1948. She was sixty years old when she passed. She lived a short but great life.

Ms. Velma loved to be with her children and grandchildren every chance she could. She had three children, one girl, and two boys. She married, had her children, and then divorced. She tried to raise them the best way she knew how. Being a single mother was extra hard. She worked all of the time to make sure her children were not without things they needed and sometimes what they wanted. She did her best and her three children turned out great. Then her children were having babies of their own. She was thrilled to be a grandmother, and she would help out as much as she could with the grandchildren. She had five grandchildren total, four girls and a boy. You could always tell that each one of them held a special place in her heart. Ever since I've known her she loved to bake. Every holiday and birthday she would bake for her children their favorite cake or pie. The cake or pie was for them to take home. For the grandchildren she made her famous teacake cookies. She would make their own special bags. When she made the teacake cookies for each holiday, she would color the cookies for that particular holiday, red for Christmas and green for St. Patrick's Day or Easter. That was her way of letting the children know their grandma loved them.

She attended church every Sunday and would volunteer to bake for the bake sales for the church or any activities she joined. She worked Monday through Friday and hardly missed a day. Another thing she loved to do was to go

to garage sales and estate sales. I have never known a person to go to as many garage and estate sales in my life. She was a firm believer in saving money and would say that someone's trash is someone else's treasure. She lived on a semi-fixed income, and her budget was limited. However, she had just enough in case she found something. There was a time I'll never forget, when she invited me to go with her. She picked me up one bright and warm Friday morning. She had her newspaper all ready to go. She was showing me all the areas she wanted to go. Most of them were in Beaumont. We arrived at the first garage sale and started looking around. I could tell by the look on her face she really enjoyed this. We didn't find anything and headed to the next one on her list. We arrived at an estate sale. I had never been to one, so Ms. Velma let me into the house. She started looking through the cabinets, in the closets, and in each of the rooms. I felt very uncomfortable, and thought it was wrong being in a house that someone once lived in. People were just sifting through their things like nothing happened, and their families were standing around in the house. She did find some things that she liked and purchased them. Then it was time to go to the next one. This was truly an experience for me and one I'll never forget. There were times when she took the grandchildren with her. I think it was that they knew that they would get something from one of their stops.

She lived in an old house trailer next to her daughter, but after Hurricane Rita came in 2007, her trailer was not fixable, and she had to live in a FEMA trailer that the government let her use. I knew in my heart she had her own little dream, to live in a house, and it would be her own. Her youngest son had a house behind her trailer. It was just sitting, and he was not doing anything with it. He told Ms. Velma and the rest of the family that he was giving the house to her. After the hurricane, they started working on the house right away. She was so excited and just could not wait to move in. She wanted to move in when it was all finished, but the government took back the FEMA trailer where she was staying.

Ms. Velma had to move in her unfinished house, and it still needed a lot more work to be done. It didn't bother her that much. All that mattered to her was that she was living in her house. She had so many plans and ideas for the house, and she was not able to do all of them. However, I know that at least one of her dreams did come true. She was able to live in her own house. That is what meant more to her than anything else.

She never smoked, nor did she drink. She did not like it. She would say both of them were bad . She had some health problems that were just starting to bother her. She was complaining to her daughter and made an appointment to see her doctor. Then Hurricane Gustof was looking to come our way. She evacuated with two of her children and their families. She became ill and had to go to an out of town hospital. That was when she and the family found out that she had cancer. The cancer spread everywhere, and she was hurting in her stomach. The doctors gave her a few weeks to live. In a matter of days she was declining, and died on September 7, 2008, at St. Elizabeth hospital in Beaumont, Texas. The funeral services had to be pushed up a few days earlier because Hurricane Ike was in the Gulf, and it looked like it was heading towards us. The funeral was on September 9, 2008, and held at Livingston's funeral home in Groves, Texas. Then Ms. Velma was laid to rest in Port Neches, Texas, at Oak Bluff Memorial Park.

Now, she is in heaven and at peace. Her family and friends are staying strong for each other. My children, a boy, and a girl were her grandchildren. I was married to her oldest son. Her death was so sudden and overwhelming to my children but they are strong. There is not a day that goes by that my children and the rest of the family and I do not think of her. I'm truly blessed to have been a part of her family and to have been close to her as long as I was.





# Description: Thing-Honorable Mention

## Stanton's Headstone LaQuinta Vonner

One thing I have admiration for about graveyards are the headstones on the gravesites. Headstones tell the history of a person by giving his full name, date of birth, date of death, sometimes his photo, and what role he played to someone or in life. Headstones convey family feelings toward their loved ones by giving a chance for last words to be inscribed.

Green Lawn Memorial Cemetery has a variety of fashionable, expressive headstones. One beautiful headstone that caught my eye was a child's gravesite. It belonged to an eight year old boy named Tailefer Fountain Stanton. Sadness came over me as I analyzed it, and questions roamed in my head; how did he die? Why did he have to die so young? The face of my eight year son even appeared before me, which made me more emotional. Stanton's headstone was tall, gray granite, triangular shaped at the top with a cross in the top center. Below the cross was a photo of him with a bright smile, and on the upper side of the photo engraved is a little boy riding his bicycle. Stanton must have been an adventurous kid who liked riding his bike. Underneath the photo was a large bordered rectangular box with his history in script, and below it read "Always Remembered and Loved." Those words illustrate he had a family that cherished him. At the bottom of Stanton's headstone was a little scripture of a pavilion. It was also triangular shaped with a massive cross engraved. On the front top half of it read "Jesus Loves You" and separating the halves were thick pillars. On the bottom half it read "I Love Jesus, Jesus Is My Anchor In The Storm." In front of those words there was a small vase filled with incense sticks on the platform. Between the two halves was a surface filled with white pebble rocks where visitors laid flowers, mini balls, and even a football. Each side of the structure

has four mounted vases with vibrant colorful plastic flowers.

Overall, my thoughts of Stanton's gravesite were affecting. The fine art work of the headstone relayed a glorious expression of the family's feelings toward their loved one.

# Description: Thing-Honorable Mention

## Cemetery

Stephanie Gray

The cemetery is a place of peace. We all have a loved one that's resting in the cemetery. It has been almost two and half years since my step-dad passed away. I wished I could visit his grave more often, but lately I haven't had time because of my busy schedule. I remember a time when I was feeling upset and depressed, I went to the cemetery so I could cry and talk to my step-dad. I can't explain what was going on with me; I think I just had a lot on my mind and to top it off I was missing my step-dad. He came into our lives, my siblings and I, when we were very young. There was one word to describe him and that was "Wonderful." He was so good to us he treated us like we were his biological kids. I know that he really loved us; and he didn't hide that. We miss him so much, and not a day goes by that I do not wish he was back with us. I know that God knows best, and he loved him more. He is in a better place now because he was a very sick person. I remember one night when he was life-flighted to Herman Memorial Hospital in Houston, Texas. He had congested heart failure and also a diabetic. Believe it or not, that didn't stop him from doing what he wanted to do or eat what he wanted to eat. I am just grateful that he was part of our lives. I never thought that I would ever get the courage just to go and visit the graveyard. The older I got the more comfortable I got about going to the cemetery. Maybe it is because I finally understand that our loved ones would never do anything to hurt us.



# Fiction: Love Story



# Fiction: Love Story-First Place

Cameran and Derrick  
Ashley Vaughn

Cameran

There I stood alone at the altar. He walked out on me. I saw this coming, and now I can feel my heart breaking. I don't care if they see me cry. He is exactly who I thought he was. Nobody touch me! If it's okay, I just want to stand here alone. I am the victim of a broken heart, so what comes next? I am left here shattered and the broken pieces pierce me from every angle. I wish I could tell you I am going to be okay, but I don't think I will. I thought this was love. He was perfect. I don't understand how he could be transformed like that. I saw signs, but pretended the problem was me. I thought he loved me....

Two days before we were to be married, Derrick called me. I could hear that he wasn't okay. "What's wrong?" I asked him. He didn't respond right away. Finally he said, "Nothing." I knew it was something. His voice was cold and sent chills through my body. I felt myself crying after that conversation, praying that he would not do the one thing that would rob me of my faith. I should have trusted myself and talked to him. I should have known four years ago that he wasn't the one. He has never been able to fully commit to me. I have always had bits and pieces of him. When I asked myself why I even loved him the way I do, I thought of nothing. That same nothing is what I felt when he left me standing there. He did not even say he was sorry. I deserved an explanation.

There is something about love that causes this one emotion that creates a depressed state. There is something about a broken heart that makes death seem appealing. I am nothing. I feel nothing. I feel the one thing that is impossible. This feeling of nothing is something so strong that it makes a person numb. He has ruined me, and I do not know why. I am consumed with memories

of him. He left me there before God and our families! The embarrassment was nothing compared to everything that I felt. How could love change me, spoil me and then leave me? What did I do so wrong? I just want him to love me again. I will do anything. I will give anything to rid myself of the emptiness I feel inside. I just want to be in love again.

Derrick

I wish I was man enough to call her and tell her. I love her too much to ever hurt her in this way. Not showing up at the church was my way of protecting her. Cameran is a great woman. She was there when I had nothing, when I was nothing. My old man died shortly after I met her, and she was there for me. I saw the wife in her then, and couldn't break the news to her. I am gay. Jonathan and I have been together since high school. I love Cameran, but I can't leave Jonathan to fight alone. He needs me. I could have told her that night I called, but I had this image of her in a beautiful gown, and didn't want to ruin her. I guess a broken heart was inevitable in this situation.

Jonathan knew of Cameran. He knew I loved her, but he also knew she was my trophy to flaunt in public. Let's be honest, a gay man is unacceptable in the black community. I couldn't let my dad go to his grave knowing his only son was in love with another man. I hurt her and there is nothing I can say to possibly justify that. I am no good. I gave Jonathan that horrible disease. Cameran is a virgin, and I was glad because I couldn't infect her. I hate the man I am. If my daddy saw me now, he'd be disgusted and ashamed.

Cameran

Here I am five years later standing in front of the man who once hurt me. He called and asked me to go to the funeral of a close friend of his. He said Jonathan



was there for him through the years, even though I never knew about him. I agreed to come and be his rock, as I was after his father died. I guess it is safe to say I am love's fool, but for Derrick, I will gladly play the fool. I still love him.



# Fiction: Love Story-Second Place

With Me at the Altar

Ashley Vaughn

The room appeared to be silent and still as I stood blinded by the tears that formed in my eyes. I was deaf to my surroundings, and nearly paralyzed, but I made my way down the aisle. My mind was occupied with thoughts concerning my past. I was hurting, and at the lowest point in my life, I went to church and found God. The preacher called for those wanting to have a relationship with Christ, and I battled myself on whether I should go to the altar. They looked at me like I didn't deserve to be in His presence, but they didn't understand why I needed Him. I had nothing to lose anymore. I got to the center of the aisle and stopped. I felt my heart breaking in that place and couldn't move. I thought I was making a mistake. Why would God forgive someone like me? I am not worthy of mercy anymore; after all, I did buy my ticket to hell.

I wish this decision were an easy one. Giving my life to God would mean giving up my will for His. I would have to change myself, and let go of a lot of people. I convinced myself that I couldn't do it, so I decided to turn around. I fell to the floor, and at that moment every morsel of my human existence poured out on that floor through my tears. I felt alone because it was me against the world. I had no army to fight with, and no armor to protect me from what they were saying. I needed God himself to descend and rescue me. I needed help, but in a church filled with Christians, only one came to my rescue. He was an angel. Wrapping his arms around me, helping me off the floor, he said, "You're safe now," and that was the first time I have ever believed what someone was saying to me.

He held my hand as he led me to the altar. He told me to give it over to God, so I did. I cleansed my soul with my tears. This angel named Kevin, prayed for me. He talked to God on my behalf. I wanted to tell God that I was sorry for all I had

done that was not of Him. I wanted Him to forgive me for being everything he created me not to be. I needed God to love me just as I loved Him. Kevin asked me a question that changed my life. He said, "Do you want to be saved?" That question provoked something in me, and before I could think, I said "more than anything" Kevin smiled at me and told me that God had forgiven me. All the tears of sorrow became tears of joy and triumph.

From that day forward, I had the desire in my heart to love for God and do what was right according to His plans for me. I can look back at the person I once was and laugh because God has brought me so far in three years. I made up my mind that day that God was the only way I would survive this life here on earth. I made the decision to Give Him my life and there is no looking back. No longer am I a suicidal, depressed and anorexic little girl, but I am soldier in an army of millions. I am protected by angels and will continue to live this life according to Him. The day I found Him was the day my life changed forever. I will never be the same, thanks to Him. "Thank you."

# Fiction: Love Story-Third Place

Gone Fishin'

Heather Holt

When I was younger my father would take me out on the boat just to get away. We went so far out that no one could ever find us. Our spot was perfect in every way I could dream of. We had all the fish to catch, no loud noises, and there was never a cloud in the sky. I knew the night before if we were having one of our get away days, so I would pack our lunches and snacks ahead of time. I could never sleep the night just knowing how much fun we were going to have the next day. In the morning dad would be hooking up the boat, and I would be picking out the best smelly worms from the Texas Bait Shop down the road. The bayou felt so warm, as I caught my first fish of the day. I always hated taking the hook out, so I made dad do all the dirty work. Around noon he and I would sit at the end of the dock, and enjoy the lunches I had packed, listening to the smooth tunes on the radio, while the fish kept jumping in and out of the water. I was never gloomy when we had to leave our favorite spot because we went home to cook what we gained that afternoon. Dad and I don't go to our favorite spot anymore because he sold his boat, but I will never forget our special memories and good times we used to have on it.



# Fiction: Love Story-Honorable Mention

## Skating or Dying

Chris Kelley

Skating is something I used to do all the time, when I was younger. I always had time to skate, that's what I loved to do. I didn't have a job to take away from skating, and I didn't care about school. Skating was me, my life, it was who I was. I was really good at it. I entered competitions all the time, placing in 1<sup>st</sup>, or 2<sup>nd</sup>.

My friends and I would go around usually on Sundays skating. We skated on Sundays because a lot of stores are closed or close early, so we wouldn't get kicked out or the cops called on us. For some reason no one ever wanted us around skating. We skated all the time though, and would just move around if we got kicked out from one spot. We started getting really good and doing harder things. We would skate at skate parks or just go street skating. We would grind on hand rails or ledges.

After a while we all started getting really good, and we could see who was better than each other also. When we saw the twenty stairs with hand rails on the side of it, we all knew who was going to either jump the gap or grind the rails. We all walked up to it and checked it out. It was the biggest gap I have ever done. I thought to myself "There is no way I can jump that, but if I can grind it, then I should be able to jump it, right?" I was in way over my head.

As we start to put our skates on, I noticed there are only three of us putting our skates on. Everyone else said, "No, I'm not doing that, or "that's too big." I continued to lace up my skates. Then we started to grind the rails going down the side of the stairs. This gap was about twelve feet long, so we were grinding down those rails for a long time. The gap would launch me about eighteen to twenty feet in the air and a distance of twelve or more feet. It was so insanely crazy. The landing from just grinding the rails going down the wide hurt my ankles.

When I was finally about to jump it, I rolled up to the end of the gap to check it out and make sure it was all good one last time. Most my friends said, "Oh, you are not going to do it, just get down." Then I took off. I could feel the sweat dripping off of me, and my speed getting faster and faster. Next I launched off the end of the stair gap and started spinning in to my 540, that's a full circle and a half, but then I realized that I was way too high in the air. I started to panic and freak out. I honestly thought the impact was going to kill me. I felt like I was in the air forever. Then I hit the ground hard and broke my skates and hurt my ankle. It was so horrible. I eventually got over that fear, jumped it again a few weeks later, and landed it .



# Fiction: Love Story-Honorable Mention

Arkansas

Felecia Londo

The most frightening moment of my life was in Arkansas where I grew up. Every summer I go back to Arkansas to visit with my grandparents. I would always spend the entire summer. During that time there were not any street lights. The only thing we had were flashlights.

My grandparents did not live far from a graveyard. As kids we would always make up stories about dead people coming from their graves. That particular summer, my cousins decided that they were going to come over and spend the night. As we got ready for bed my grandparents turned off all of the lights. It was pitch dark outside. If there was reason we had to go to the bathroom, we had to go outside with a flashlight. Let me tell you how scary that was. Owls would be sitting in the trees staring at us while we ran to the bathroom. During the month of July we had a family reunion. We were outside just playing around and getting all sweaty. After the reunion was over it was time for us to get ready for bed. We had to get up and go to church the next morning. My aunt Mattie decided to tell us a bedtime story. Of course the story was about dead people coming up from the grave. As she started to tell the story, my cousins and I were in bed with the covers pulled up to our eyes. When my aunt Mattie started to tell the story, just as she was in the middle of the story, a man walked up on the porch and stood there staring in the door at us. My aunt Mattie's back was toward the door. She had no idea the man was there. We all started screaming loud and crying. My aunt Mattie asked "why are you all screaming?" We told her there was a man standing in the door looking at us. The man never made a sound. He was tall and white and looked like a ghost. My aunt Mattie turned around said to him "Get away from here old man and go back to your grave!" Morning could not get here

enough. We heard all kinds of scary sounds during the night. We heard foot steps outside of our bedroom window. We started yelling for my grandpa. Grandpa went outside with the flashlight, but didn't find anything. The dogs were barking non stop. Again we heard something underneath the house. We yelled for grandpa again. Grandpa went underneath again with his flashlight. This time he found a possum. What a big relief for us! We finally got some sleep after all of that.

# Fiction: Fear



# Fiction: Fear-First Place

## Home Alone

ShaLondrya Porter

It was a dark and stormy night around eight o'clock. It had been raining, thundering, and hailing for about thirty minutes. I was home alone in a two story house with wooden floors, cemented walls, and high ceilings. As a person walked she could hear every step as if the floor was cracking. I'd never forget that day. As the hail was hitting the window, it sounded as if someone was beating at the window.

I was laying in my bed watching an episode of Moesha on The N. Every light in the hall was on because it was so dark in the house. My room light, the hall light, bathroom, and closet light were on. I suddenly got a little hungry, but I was scared to get out of bed. I grabbed my cell phone off the charger and called my friend, so I wouldn't be so scared. When my friend picked up I got out of bed and headed to the kitchen downstairs. As I walked to the kitchen, I was turning every light switch on. When I got to the kitchen I realized that the dishes weren't washed, and I was supposed to wash them every night. I ran some water in the sink so that I could wash them. As I ran the water I was fixing something to eat. While I was talking and fixing my food I heard a squeak coming from behind me. I looked back and there was nothing there, so I continued what I was doing. When I finished washing the dishes, I grabbed my food and headed back to my room. I thought I would leave all the lights on because I was kind of scared. When I got to my room I put my food on my dresser and closed the door. When I closed my door, I heard another door slam; but I didn't think anything of it. As I sat on my bed to eat, I was hearing a weird cracking noise as if someone was walking in the house, but I didn't want to get up. I finally got off the phone with my friend and decided to call my mom. I thought she might have come home from work

early or was on her lunch break because she works the night shift at the hospital. When I called she told me that she was at work. When my mom told me that, my mouth dropped, and my heart started beating fast because we're the only ones with a key to our house. I didn't have any other relatives or siblings living with us, so I got kind of scared. My mom told me to make sure all the doors were locked. After we hung up, I heard someone yelling, so I looked towards my window and didn't see anything because it was so dark outside. I began flipping through the channels so that I could find something to watch. I kept hearing someone yelling at the top of their lungs, and it started to scare me. Then they continued, and I heard my name "LONNIE." I grabbed my phone because I felt like it was security for me. As they were yelling I heard, "LONNIE, OPEN THE DOOR," and I looked toward my window, because the voice sounded kind of familiar. I got up out of my bed and looked out the window, and it was my sister trying to get in the house. I ran downstairs, opened the door, and she was telling me how she had been outside for thirty minutes trying to get in. Her cell phone had died, so she couldn't call me. I asked her why she was outside while it was hailing; and she told me it wasn't hailing. She was throwing rocks at the window. I felt kind of bad because my sister was outside in the rain, and throwing rocks trying to get my attention, and the whole time I thought it was hailing outside.

# Fiction: Fear-Second Place

Friday the Thirteenth

Jacoby Joseph

On Friday October thirteenth 2006, after a very long day of school basketball practices, my teammates thought up one of the craziest ideas I have ever heard of. They all wanted to go to the graveyard and play hide-and-go-seek. At this time I was only in the tenth grade. I knew if I would have told my mother where I was going to go, she would not let me go. I told her that the team and I were all going to the movies and just have fun that night. She did not have any problem with that, so she let me go. About 8:00 that night some of my teammates picked me up, and then we all met up at head start school because there is a graveyard right behind it. There were a lot of people out there, basically all of the sports programs like the volleyball team, softball, football and so on. Everyone parked their cars by a girl's house who lived not too far from the graveyard. It was walking distance but not too close to bring attention to us from the cops or anyone else. We all arrived, everyone looking a little nervous because everyone knew this is Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>. We picked who was going to be "it", and he started to count while everyone else started hiding. It was one of the craziest feelings that I ever had, it just felt like it was wrong, running over people's graves while they were supposed to be resting in peace. However still I'm playing the game. I found a hiding spot behind a tree not that far from base; my friend Britten was hiding with me. We were waiting to make a run for base; but right before I was about to take a step, I saw someone running at me. I looked, and it was a group of people jumping out from behind some stones, jumping from trees, and from everywhere with knives and chainsaws. Everyone ran out of their hiding spots running and trying to get out of the gate. When we got to the gate, someone had locked it with a big master lock. People were screaming at the top of their lungs,

just going crazy. No one knew what to do. When they ran upon us, they took off their masks and smiled at us. It was the people who worked there. That was the wildest experience ever.



# Fiction: Fear-Third Place

## The Doghouse Beast

Ra'shad Balloue

Once upon a time there lived a massive Dalmatian, whose eyes were as black as cannonballs, and pupils which grew red in the darkest of nights. Its teeth were sharp as razors, and he had long rabid nails. Now the dog was seldom seen and would rarely come out, except to eat. He always had a crazed rabid look that had his eyes always cocked and locked on you as if you were the very meal that was in his bowl. Now no one knew how he got to be so big or for that matter was it even possible for it to be as big as it was. Some say "He was genetically engineered in a lab somewhere in upstate New York." I was walking down the street with my friends , when all of sudden, we heard a thunderous clap. The doghouse started shaking as if it were an earthquake on the inside, and dirt was powdering the air from all the action from inside the house. My whole life, I've always been an adventurous kid so when I saw that was going on. I had to check it out. I crept up to the dog house and I called the dog, whistling, clapping my hands doing anything to get the dog out of the house. As I moved closer, I began throwing rocks, and sticks inside. Once I began doing that, the shaking stopped for about fifteen seconds. All of the sudden the dog lunged out at me snarling, drooling all on the top of my chest, but I got him by the ears, holding him back from ripping me to shreds. Finally my friends began to throw rocks and sticks at the dog to get him off of me. If they had not been there, I shutter to think what could have happened.



# Fiction: Fear-Honorable Mention

## My Brush with Death

Ron Collins

Walking down a dark street, the only thing to guide me is the moonlight; a dark figure approached me walking on the same side of the road as me. As the gap grew smaller and smaller, the dark figure seemed to have an all in one hoody and was keeping a steady pace forward like a power walker. Then as it brushed my shoulder, I fainted. I awoke as the sun arose, lying on the side of the road; no bruises, no cuts, and I still had my wallet. All that was left was a note that read, "Lucky you get a second chance."

My cousin and I were sitting at home bored on a hot summer day just thinking of something to help us cool down from all the heat. Then my mom came home, and she asked us did we want to go swimming at the YMCA. We yelled, "Yes! Anything but this hot house." When we got to the YMCA, there were a lot of children already in the pool jumping off the diving board into the deep-end of the pool. I knew not to ever pass five feet because I could not swim for anything in the world.

As my cousin and I got into the pool, we discovered the water was at a comfortable temperature, not too cold or warm. Mainly I stayed in the shallow-end, but my cousin often went into the deep-end because he was a good swimmer. He was pressuring me to go to the deep-end because he said that it was more fun, but I wasn't budging past that five foot mark. After a few hours, I was getting bored swimming alone in the shallow end, and what was when my cousin came towards me one last time to convince me to go to the deep-end. I swallowed my ninety-nine percent of fear and told him with my one percent confidence, "Yeah, I'll go."

I told him I wasn't jumping in nor was I swimming to it. I just hung on the wall the whole way. Moving along the wall until I reached twelve feet, it felt like the pool had no bottom, and my feet were just swinging in the water. One of the boys that my cousin and I knew was trying to pull me out into the water, but I kicked and yelled at him that I couldn't swim. Kids in those days like to take things as jokes until someone gets hurt. Finally he left me alone, and I didn't want anyone else trying to pull me off the wall, so I climbed up. However, my hand slipped, and I plunged in the water like a submarine. At that point, I knew I was as good as dead. My eyes were closed, and my nose was inhaling water. My hands were above my head as I sank down. Then my hand caught a metal pole. My eyes opened, and it was the ladder. I had no idea I was that close to it. I grabbed it with a tight grip and quickly climbed myself out of the pool and laid on the side of the pool like a fresh caught fish spitting out water. I got up, grabbed my things, and waited in the locker until my cousin finished swimming for the rest of the day. I had never been so close to dying then when I almost drowned. I thank God that he saved me from that tragedy.

# Fiction: Revenge



# Fiction: Revenge-First Place

## A Story of Revenge

Kristy Johnson

It was New Years Eve of 2002; my boyfriend called and told me he could not go to the party with me because he was sick. I asked him to stay awake and call me when the ball dropped, so we could wish each other a Happy New Year. At 12:00 my phone did not ring, so I called him instead. He did not answer, so I just thought he had fallen asleep. I decided to drop by on my way home to see if he was okay, only to find him not home. The moron left the door unlocked, so I went in.

I decided to invade his privacy since he lied to me. A girl named Amanda left a message asking him if they were still meeting at Mike's apartment. I was so mad that I stole an entire case of beer out of his fridge and about \$200 worth of DVD's. I threw his porch chairs off his balcony and broke all of them. I did not talk to him after that except when he called me and told me that someone had broken into his apartment. I just calmly suggested that maybe Amanda had done it and hung up the phone. Too bad I did not know where Mike lived...I would have put his car up on cinder blocks and sold his tires to someone more deserving.





# Fiction: Revenge-Second Place

## Neighborhood Revenge

Chris Varela

At age eleven for my birthday, my parents bought me the Evil Knievel racetrack. Our house was on Hays street in Groves, Texas. There were plenty of kids on the block. One month after receiving this gift, one of the evil seeds struck. Talmage was his name. His family had moved to the neighborhood; I thought the father was prejudice for the first couple of years I knew him. It was after school, when reality hit me like a Mack truck. Talmage was in Mr. Roger's garage, playing with an evil Knievel racetrack. At first the anger grew in me quickly, because he was a spoiled brat. Immediately I ran inside, but before I could reach the backdoor, I slipped, and hit my head on the washing machine. There was soap everywhere in the washroom. Someone had put all the soap in the washing machine. I jumped up, and carefully made my way through the backdoor. My room looked hollow to me without the track in the middle of the room. I ran out the front door of the house. I saw Evil Knievel smashing into the concrete. Talmage saw me coming and ran for his house. Running as fast as I could, I caught up, and punched this kid in the back of the head. Unfortunately Mr. Becker pulled up, and ruined what would have been a beating. Mr. Becker did not want to hear what I had to say. I headed back towards the house. My father pulled up minutes later. I explained the situation to him thoroughly. Talmage's father came running to the house screaming at my father. My father stayed calm, but I could tell he was ready for battle. Mr. Becker saw that my father was intimidated. My father explained to him about the washing machine and my racetrack. He left for home. I knew at this moment his son was in serious trouble; and for a brief second, I felt for him. Many years later, Talmage was in a contest where he could win different prizes. He had to sell cookies. I admit he worked

hard. He won a skateboard. He bragged about his skateboard all the time, but one day he was careless and left it out. I picked it up and threw it into a vacant field. The field was full of tall weeds. It was only a matter of time before the tractors came. I waited in anticipation for that day. Five days later the bus dropped me off from school. The fields were cut. I ran to see the outcome. The skateboard had been shredded; justice had been served. Talmage was crushed when he saw his destroyed board. Just when I thought everything was fine, I slipped up and told my neighbor Chris, and he ratted me out. I had to give up my skateboard to Talmage or suffer great consequences. I learned from that day on to let God take care of the punishments.

# Fiction: Revenge-Third Place

## A Tale of Revenge

Nathan Nguyen

When I was young, I got jumped by numerous people. I had no choice, but to fight one of the guys and beat him until he could not walk. They jumped me because I was from a different group of friends, a different gang, and I happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. I was badly hurt, but I managed to get into my car and run. A man is not supposed to run from his enemy, but stay there and stand his ground. That's what I've been taught from my family. I ran though; that was what made me think back and feel so angry at myself, and I felt so low. That is how my anger built up; now it was time for a plan of revenge.

My first option was grabbing a gun and shooting up their house. However if I did that, I would have been caught eventually. My second plan was to gather up my friends and do to them what they did to me, but a hundred times worst, along with all their friends. We went looking for them, but could never find the people who beat me up. I was running out of options; I needed a plan. Then I thought to myself, if I could just talk to God, and ask him to give me the strength and courage I needed to forgive and forget. The best revenge would be to let them know I have forgiven them. I hope that they would be shocked and would not know what to do, but let it end peacefully. Then I would have won the battle with love and peace, and everything in life should revolve around love and peace in God's way.

I hope that I can tell this story to other people in life that I go through much worst things in life. My message to them would be there are better ways to win battles then violence and weapons. If they were to ask how, I would say love and peace, and with your mind. If I had done what I intended to do, I would have hurt their families, and I would eventually have hurt myself through isolation in

prison for life. Life is greater than staying behind bars. There are so many more beautiful things in the world; why waste what God has given to us by committing crimes and staying behind bars.

# Fiction: Revenge-Honorable Mention

Revenge

Kyle Hales

About fifteen years ago in Port Arthur Texas, Bob Halford and his wife Sylvia moved into a quiet little neighborhood. They had both recently retired and decided to sell the house they had lived in for over forty years and buy a new home. Bob had worked at Gulf Oil Company for about thirty- five years. He enjoyed fishing and golf in his spare time. Sylvia mostly worked around the house and kept it nice and clean. They really enjoyed the new neighborhood and their new neighbors, except for the obnoxious old lady next door named Glenda. She would have to have everything the way she wanted. She didn't care for anyone else in the neighborhood. Her husband, George, was the complete opposite. He was very quiet and calm about everything.

One day Bob decided he needed to get a dump truck to back into his yard and dump a pile of dirt. He needed the dirt to fill in some of the low spots in his yard. There was a big problem. The grumpy old lady next door had to put her mailbox in front of the Halford's lot, and there was no room for a truck to back into the lot. After realizing the neighbor's mailbox was in front of his property, Mr. Halford went to complain about the inconvenience. At first George agreed to remove the mailbox and place it elsewhere, but his wife Glenda refused to have it moved from its location. After the argument, Bob went to the local post office to see if they could help him out, but they told him they couldn't do anything about it. Next, he went to the police department, and again he didn't get any assistance. With no results from local authorities, he became furious. So he decided to take on the situation himself. Mr. Halford went out to his shed and got his old chainsaw. He then marched over to the neighbor's mailbox and began to take it down himself with his chainsaw. After removing it by sawing it off at the

bottom, Mr. Halford was pleased. He finally had his justice. The next day the Halford's woke up early to eat breakfast. Bob went out to look at his accomplishment, but what he saw pushed him over the edge. The next door neighbors were out in front of his yard, putting their mailbox back into the ground where it was. Bob had never been so enraged in his life. He wanted to get his revenge. He ran back into his house and grabbed his pistol from under the bed. Bob ran back outside and opened fire on his next door neighbors, leaving George dead. That little quiet neighborhood would never be the same.

Bob Halford spent a year in prison before he died, leaving his wife Sylvia alone by herself next to Glenda. A year after Bob died, Sylvia passed away herself. Then a week later, Glenda died. In the end Mr. Halford's revenge caught up to him. Bob's sweet revenge was definitely not sweet at all.

The  
End

Thank You,  
to all of the  
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The editorial staff of EXPRESSIONS 2009 would like to thank all of the students who submitted work for consideration to EXPRESSIONS 2009 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 2009 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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