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115 Vernon: The Writing Associates' Journal, Vol.1, No.4

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**115 VERNON:
THE WRITING ASSOCIATES' JOURNAL**

**PUBLISHED BY THE WRITING ASSOCIATES OF THE ALLAN K. SMITH
CENTER FOR WRITING AND RHETORIC
TRINITY COLLEGE**

**VOLUME 1
NUMBER 4
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An Editor's Note...

The theme for this year's edition of *115 Vernon* is called "reflections of self." The following selections express feelings about love, race, individual personalities, class, and more!

In an effort to pay homage to the late Fred Pfeil, Professor of English and faithful supporter the *Journal*, we have chosen to dedicate this year's edition to him—and create the "Fred Files."

We'd like to thank those of you in the Trinity community who contributed to this year's edition and we would also like to thank those of you who support the Trinity College Writing Center.

Best Wishes,
Sharre Brooks & David Brown
Head Tutors, 2005-2006

The Writing Center

115 Vernon Street

Trinity College

Individual Tutoring Sessions Available

HOURS:

Monday-Thursday
1-4 pm & 6:30-9:30 pm

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Sunday
10 pm-midnight in Peter B's

Drop in
or
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DO YOU LOVE WRITING?

The Writing Associates Program prepares highly talented undergraduate writers to supplement faculty efforts in the classroom and to expand the opportunities for helping writers on campus and in the community. Students are recommended by faculty and selected by a special committee composed of faculty and student representatives. Those students selected to be Writing Associates take English 302, Writing Theory and Practice, while serving as apprentice peer tutors in the Writing Center. In subsequent semesters, student Writing Associates work with faculty as teaching assistants in many different courses—ranging from First-Year Seminars to Senior Seminars—and work as writing tutors in the Writing Center, in residence halls, and in a number of other contexts.

We appreciate current Writing Associates' and faculty efforts in promoting and developing the program by encouraging suitable students to apply. Applications including a personal statement, writing samples, interview, and references are taken each February. Please stay posted for notices from Dr. Beverly Wall next fall!

Gombo Limbo

By Allison Eno (IDP '05)

Wanderlust: a strong or unconquerable longing for or impulse toward wandering.

I spent the last seven months in a 1986 Ford RV—23-feet in length, with a lunatic and a dog with bad breath (both meant with extreme affection). Rod, Calvin, and I visited 38 states and covered 19,000 miles of road. We made dozens of new friends, saw the Pacific Ocean for the first time, camped on the beach in Texas, walked across the border into Mexico, were chased by a wild-eyed buffalo in South Dakota, hiked and boated in the Montana Rockies, rode the Honda GoldWing through snow in August in Yellowstone, watched a grizzly mama with her cubs, went bowling with new friends in Seattle, explored the Mt. St. Helens blast zone and made it to the top of Mt. Rainier in the same day, searched for aliens in Roswell, New Mexico, spent Christmas Eve watching the fireworks at Epcot, and ended up at the Daytona 500 infield—sitting on top of the RV hoping Tony Stewart would win. An amazing dream fulfilled.

And it's good to be home. Traveling far away from loved ones is not easy. However, I still find myself being pulled back into planning the next adventure—the 2007 Daytona 500, a white-water rafting trip to Maine, or another month in the laid-back Keys—Why? Because I love being on the road. At 37-years-old, I've learned that I cannot and will not be tied down. I'm not quite ready to conform to society's expectations of me. Not everyone understands this, but I have accepted this about myself. I'm not nomadic; I find a great sense of peace in having a home base and being surrounded by people who love me. But it doesn't change the fact that every time I see an RV, I get a pang deep in my stomach....

Prior to this trip I'd spent the last 8 years in school working my butt off towards one goal—to teach. And I know I would be good at it, too. But I like the idea of having the outdoors as my classroom, taking people to the Blackfoot Indian Reservation to learn about Native American history, or to see Glacier National Park before the last of the glaciers do melt (in the next 20-30 years), or to Yellowstone to learn about the success of the wolf reintroduction program, and even to Key West to experience the lifestyle of a people who tried to secede from the U.S. in the 80's. I want to be the one to encourage people to see the places of their dreams—try things they've never done—hike a glacier, raft the Snake, fly-fish in Yellowstone—to expand their geographical horizons.

Yet here I am—back working part-time at the “Arch” in Hartford—a place I've left a dozen times only to return with an empty wallet in hand. Customers who have not seen me since last year ask what I've been up to. And I tell them. I'm not tired of relaying my adventures of the last 7 months—just the opposite. I love to see the look on their faces, knowing the comments and questions that are ready to explode from their lips—“What was the most amazing thing that happened?”—Where do I begin; “I've always dreamed of doing that.”—Just do it; “How did you afford it?”—How could I afford not to.

There are those who feel my priorities are a little out of whack—and I respect their opinions. This trip has actually helped me to value the whole concept of choice—*yours and mine*. And I've got a few more good years to make my own discovery. After all, I'm just living my life.

IMPACT By Sarah Jenkins

IT pours out of me as a clear column of water pervades the air in ITS descent. IT infiltrates until I cannot hide IT from myself. Where can IT go but out into the world, free of all restrictions, like a volcano dormant for all of ITS short life, eager to get out into the world and share ITS heat. However ineffectual I may be as a volcano, or really as any kind of destructive force, I still want to share IT with every one. Perhaps they will be scorched, though I have stayed here as long as the stars have, having to keep close that internal force. Will IT burn me when IT is out in the ether wreaking havoc and destruction in ITS path, desperate to make some kind of impact upon the Sahara, when IT will only be blown away as soon as the winds have recovered from their shock. Finally, am I a Hitler, a Stalin, a Caesar, an Alexander, to have IT? What if my great gift, at last, at ITS inception and introduction, turns out to be a monster laying quietly in my midst? Or, worse yet, what if IT is not IT at all? What if inside I am simply spent, poured out on the ocean having ITS fill of water? Is the sea thirsty? No. IT has had drink after drink until IT is full to bursting, swallows wood and earth, metal and fire alike.

The great contribution of my life may be simply to increase the amount of junk stored up, only a comparison by which to judge those more glorious and valiant, whose fire sputtered out in such an enigmatic fashion upon the water. Of course, that will be your fate as well. We all travel down the same path towards death, decaying slowly, but enjoying the beauty of the world as we melt into oblivion. When God said, “Fiat lux,” did all those angels watching wear tracks down their faces, knowing that there would be no more dark to hide behind? Finally they were unmasked, as I am in death, as you are in life, so the world shall take what we have done and continue turning, turning round, as the pyramids fade away to dust, eroded by their continual brush against the heavens. May we all suffer so in contrast, the triangle to the tower. Everything

is so much more extraordinary in life, I only hope I can be one of the words next to Henry VIII. A hundred years from now, they will read of Magellan's voyage: "and so Magellan sailed away." I would be content to be *so*, or *sailed*. Neither is truly preferable, as long as a small space is carved out for me. Without me, where would Napoleon stand? Rotting still on Corsica, happiness in one hand and my life in the other. Maybe I can't be great, or write with steel my initials upon the fragmentary diamonds of futurity. Much as I would like to think otherwise, the future is not so much written as known. I am going somewhere, I know, I just wish someone would bother to stop and tell me. Somewhere in between forgotten post-handshake and remembered in the annals of time, that's you. That's me, both extremes and moderation. Present, Future, Past, that's me now and then and then. You? I know your enigma, just as you know mine. Maybe, inside, I contain one atom of greatness, though not enough to overcome so many other instances of normalcy. Aristotle arose out of the ground and ocean, and back again he returned to create other extraordinary people. Perhaps God endowed life with only a small amount of divinity, lost in the Garden of Eden, far to the east, and when the animals and seeds dispersed throughout the world so that Man would not be completely lost, man would finally desecrate that sphere of perfection, in order to take some greatness for himself. Then again, perhaps God simply brushes some with his touch more than others, and in doing makes them mad and short lived, a Myrmidon for the other insects to follow along in the wake of the larger. I know I am not so lucky as to tread new places, or even the oldest. In the scheme of things, I am just significant enough to listen to for the course of this page, but no longer. A page is fine with me, and maybe when you stop, in just a few moments, you will linger for a second. A second of immortality is the most I can aspire to.

Noted: The Keys to My Life

By David Sterling Brown

In South Norwalk life was baseball, basketball, football, or track for many children. A timid, little black eight-year-old from the Brown household, I did not want to swing a bat, shoot a ball, suit up, or run. I wanted to play—the *piano*. Music became my sport. I practiced running my fingers up and down the black and white keys. Eventually, one keyboard led to another. I soon learned that I could move as lightly across the computer keys as across the ivories. Now, writing and playing not only provide discipline and pleasure, they also give me an outlet for my emotions—the positive and negative. At each keyboard, my fingers converse with me—to help

me think, to help me create, to help me be free.

Sometimes I sit at my desk and free write. Sometimes I sit on the piano bench and improvise. Playing the compositions of others is a bit like reading someone else's text—satisfying but not always enough. Performing Scarlatti's *Sonata No. 10*, I am confined by his pianissimos and crescendos, by his staccatos and trills that bring *his* piece to life. However, when I compose—an essay, for example—I create the style. I choose to repeat certain phrases. The commas, semicolons are my own. Thus, I choose to use a semicolon here; I choose to begin a sentence with "because." Because I choose to sound like me.

Pickle Jar

By Jorge Amaral

He could have sworn she had looked in his direction as she held the phone close to her ear, but he couldn't be sure. Of course, at age seven, a look was still just a look, invested with none of the complex meanings that adulthood would eventually bring. Although he quickly glanced at Mrs. Woods as she hung up the phone and headed back to her desk, he didn't register the concern or confusion in her eyes. Happily, Noah went back to his box of Crayola crayons, trying to choose between goldenrod and macaroni & cheese for the color of the kite in his picture. He finally decided on the goldenrod because it seemed like a more appropriate color for something soaring through the sky. The thought of macaroni & cheese flying through the air seemed hilarious, but decidedly more messy and out of place.

Drawing time was the last activity of the school day and it was almost time to go home. He held the picture at arm's length. It had to be the best drawing he had ever made; a boy in a red shirt and blue pants with short, straight brown hair like his, running through a park on a sunny day with the kite flying above him. He had seen something just like it on TV; a group of kids, each with their own kites of all different colors, darting and dodging through the air, catching the sunlight and creating a dance of different shades and hues. He had immediately asked his mother if he could get a kite.

"Oh love, we don't have money for that kind of stuff...and this place isn't safe. You can't just go out to the park alone," she said, in her native Portuguese as she hugged him close. Angrily he had pushed away, wriggling out of her vice-like hug and running blindly towards the room he shared with his older sister. Burning tears began to sting his eyes as his vision blurred.

"Noah! No cry...." He heard his mother saying down the hall in her broken English, her thick Portuguese accent making her tongue feel thick as she struggled with the language that was still new to her, making it difficult for her mouth and lips to keep up with the thoughts firing inside her head.

Sitting at his desk in the classroom, Noah could almost feel the hot tears again. He wanted to come to school and have good stories to tell all the other kids of what he had done on the weekend. He didn't want to tell them that on Saturdays his mother took him and his sister to other people's houses where he quietly played in corners as his mother cleaned, carrying around baskets of laundry and scrubbing the floor on her knees. He hated it. He wanted a mother who spoke English and who would take him to soccer practice, or to the carousel inside the mall. Suddenly, Noah's thoughts were interrupted by the sound of Mrs. Woods' voice.

"Ok class, almost time to go home! Everybody clean-up and get ready!" If only his mother were more like Mrs. Woods, Noah thought. Today she was wearing a long skirt with little flowers on it and a pink sweater. She wore her auburn hair wrapped neatly in a bun, only a few strands hanging down in the front. Her hands were soft and she always smelled like shampoo, or soap, or something good, Noah thought. It was a huge contrast to his mother's rough and calloused hands, and clothes that always seemed to smell of bleach.

"Ok everyone, time to go! I'll see you all tomorrow!" Mrs. Woods announced in her light, cheery voice. A chorus of "Good-bye Mrs. Woods" arose as each student walked past her and out the classroom door.

"Noah, can you stay for a minute please?" Mrs. Woods said as Noah walked by her. "It will only take a minute, ok?" Mrs. Woods smiled. Noah nodded and headed back into the classroom, sitting at his desk. Noah didn't know what could be wrong. He hoped she hadn't

noticed that he took an extra graham cracker at snack time. She sat next to him, looking at him with her kind eyes.

"Noah, where do you live?"

"1-2-5 Arnold Avenue," he responded dutifully, his chest puffed out. He hoped Mrs. Woods would notice how quickly he had responded. He wanted her to know how smart he was.

"You still live at 125 Arnold Avenue?"

"Yep," he said smiling.

"And you haven't moved or anything?"

"No, Mrs. Woods."

She paused for a moment.

"And who do you live with?"

"It's just me, and my mommy, and my sister," Noah promptly answered again.

"And does your mommy come pick you up from school?"

"No, she's at work. My sister meets me outside and we walk home," Noah answered.

She paused again, not knowing where to go next with her questioning.

"O.k., Noah...o.k., that's all."

"I can tell you our phone number too, or the story about when my sister got her hand stuck in a pair of toy handcuffs at the store," he volunteered. Mrs. Woods laughed.

"No, Noah, that's not necessary. Maybe some other time. You better run along, we don't want to keep your sister waiting. Bye Noah."

"Bye Mrs. Woods," he said as he ran out to meet his sister.

Noah walked along the cracked sidewalk, following close behind his sister. His legs ached from the long walk, and he tried to pull his thin jacket closer around his body to keep

the frigid air out. They walked by house after house, each one dwindling in size and grandeur by the block. Eventually they came upon their neighborhood, apartment buildings and squat houses hunched closely together behind lawns that were mostly comprised of dirt and broken beer bottles. As they rounded the corner and approached the place they had called home for the past two and a half years, Noah noticed the familiar "5" "9" hanging above the front door. He had always puzzled over them. He had been told that their address was 125 Arnold Avenue, so he never understood why the numerals read 59 instead of 125, or why the signs at the top of the street read Sidney and Burr, but he often just assumed that the signs weren't there to indicate his address, but to serve some other purpose that wasn't really important. Once he had thought enough of it to ask his mother and sister. They told him that it was because they lived in an old neighborhood, and the street signs and numbers had never been changed.

"It's like when we finished that jar of pickles, and then I washed it out for you and you used it like a piggy bank. Don't you remember how I did that, and now it's on top of your bureau, with pennies and nickels and dimes inside," his mother had explained. "It still says pickles outside on the label, but those aren't pickles inside there any more, are they?"

"No...I guess not," Noah had answered.

"Of course not! Now just forget all about it. Someday they'll take down the old signs and put up new ones."

The explanation had been sufficient for him at the time. Of course, he thought, the street signs were old. The neighborhood was old. At some point a long time ago, someone else had lived in their apartment and their address had been 59 Burr Street. But that was a long time ago. Now he lived there, with his mother and his sister, and their address was 125 Arnold Avenue. They just hadn't changed the signs yet. Still, the earlier conversation with

Mrs. Woods now bothered him, and had Noah once again questioning why the signs did not match their address.

"Maria?" He said to his sister as they walked up to the front door.

"Ugg, what now?!" She snapped.

"Well, I was just wondering why it says 59 over our door if we live on 125 Arnold?

And why is the street sign wrong?"

"Mom already told you why."

"Because it's an old neighborhood?"

"Yes, because it's an old neighborhood. Geez."

"Oh." He stood silent for a while as Maria rummaged in her backpack for the key to the front door. "Cause today Mrs. Woods asked me to stay after everyone left...she wanted to know where we lived."

"She what?!" Maria screamed. He had never seen her pay so much attention to him so quickly.

"She, uh, she just asked me where we lived, that's all."

"And what did you tell her?!"

"I, I told her the truth! I told her we lived at 125 Arnold Avenue." She let out a huge breath, a look of relief coming over her face.

"Good...good. Did you tell her anything else?"

"No."

"Good, don't."

"I don't understand...why did she ask me? And what do you mean don't tell her anything else?"

Maria sighed heavily, rolling her eyes.

"Look..." She seemed to be searching her mind for the right words, but realizing that there was nothing there.

"Look, you can't let Mom know I told you this, but we don't live at 125 Arnold Avenue. Mom's friend, Mrs. Almeida does."

"...So Mrs. Almeida is my family?"

"Geez! No, you idiot! God, I wish, so I wouldn't have to deal with you all the time!" She sighed again. "We live here at 59 Burr Street but everyone thinks we live at 125 Arnold so you can go to the school you go to. We're outside their district. If they knew the truth they wouldn't let you go there. They'd make you go to Bucknell, where all the drug dealers and gang bangers hang out."

"Gang what?"

"Nothing, it's not important...bad people."

"So, Mom lied to me?" Noah felt his eyes well up with tears again and he wasn't even quite sure why. He knew his mother would never be a Mrs. Woods, but something about the way she had lovingly gazed at him while feeding him lies seemed upsetting.

"Come on, let's get inside," Maria snapped as she retrieved the key from her book bag. She noticed Noah staring dumbfounded into the street and quickly turned her head. A tall, slim woman and a portly man in a suit were getting out of a car, watching them.

"...It's Mrs. Woods and the principal," Noah managed to whisper.

Waking Up Alone

By Meghan Evans

A second bad dream about you bending your fingernails back
to your chest with the friction of skin and heat and denial
that the sun is out and you could tell the truth for once in your life
before all your rainy day excuses are repeats and I walk by
with mascara streaks pretending I don't recognize your apologetic voice
leaning over the red couch in the green papered basement while you're
sipping tears from my eyes and thinking I couldn't hurt as much as you,
willing yourself to double cross your spirits and holy ghosts as if
acceptance is about faith in the other person to fall flat.
You muttered an attempt at reasoning me over and smiled a crooked
shrug about the handle of our grasp on bleeding
hearts. How hard we loved. I raised my glass
to your imaginative backing away.
I'll have you know you were choking on words, complaining
life is hard to swallow and you looked bleary-eyed
with the effort of lying up for days to avoid saying goodbye.

Eight Little...Seven Little Indians

By Patti Maisch-Voerg (IDP '07)

The steady drone of Grampie Costello's riding lawn mower served as a soothing complement to the carefree sounds of children playing. Within the safety of the sprawling contained yard, the youngest of the family, the twins, Meg and Greg, giggled in the sandbox, feeding each other mouthfuls of the sterilized, smooth, grey gravel. Not far away, on a redistributed mountain of sand, equipped with an army of Tonka trucks, Kirk and Wayne "broom-broomed" their way through the construction of a new "highway detour." Roberta, or Bobby, as she was known in the family circle, was busy "setting up" a date between Barbie and Ken. "I'd love to go to the movies Saturday night, Ken," she said in a syrupy-sweet voice that deepened significantly as Ken replied, "Great Barbie, I'll pick you up at eight." At the opposite end of the patio Lori Louise kept her best friend, Mrs. Beasley, seated in the metal, doll-size high chair, yakking away each time she pulled her string—"I'm hungry, feed me"—"Don't leave me alone, I'm afraid"—"Let's play house" "Where's Mr. French?"—over and over again with annoying repetition. The *click-click* sound from Glen's new but presumably unloaded Red Ryder BB gun was muffled by the rest of the clatter in the yard. Even without ammunition he was trying to "pick off" his sister, Martha, as she stood riding on the back of the lawn mower, arms around her grandfather's neck—breaking the cardinal rule of never pointing a gun at anyone. "She's a girl," he said to himself, as he pulled the trigger over and over again, "She can't ride with Grampie—that's boy's stuff."

Suddenly the hum of the lawn mower ceased and a little girl's anguished cry resonated over the neighborhood din and brought an eerie hush to the yard. The small child stood at the rear of the lawn mower, her right hand covered in blood with spattered dots of red on her pale pink t-shirt and shorts. Grampie jumped from the driver's seat, snatched the white cotton handkerchief out of his back pocket, wrapped the tiny hand, and bellowed for his daughter, "DOLOR—DOLOR come out here!" Little Martha, in a state of shock, stopped crying as her grandfather

scooped her up into his arms and headed toward the car. It only took a minute before the flimsy hankie was soaked; dripping blood down her forearm and onto Grampie's grey flannel shirt and Martha started to cry again. Dolores never missed a beat as she bulleted out of the house. The keys dangled from her left hand, as she threw off her apron with her right, and jumped into the driver's seat. The seven small siblings, ranging from one to ten years of age, watched as the Pontiac Bonneville careened out the driveway and onto the street.

Although the younger ones did not comprehend the seriousness of the incident, nonetheless, they cried in empathy with their older siblings. The babies remained squatted down on their puffed-up diapers in the sandbox, but now their little cheeks were streaked with mud—the combination of sand and tears and the giggles were gone. Construction had halted on the “detour” as the two little heavy equipment drivers sniffled quietly, wiping their dirty little snotty noses on their shirt sleeves. Mrs. Beasley, Barbie and Ken were huddled together on the picnic table as the two sisters sobbed in each others' arms. The BB gun lay splintered in pieces on the ground. Glen was not crying but instead was industriously combing the area surrounding the mower. Just then a car pulled up in the driveway, the driver got out and everybody ran to greet him. “*Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!*” they shrieked. Tears streamed down the father's face as he heard each child recount their own version of the story. With a twin in each arm, and the rest of his family tethered to his pant legs, the man headed toward the young boy crawling about the area of the lawn mower. As they neared him, he rose to his feet. He had something clenched tightly in his fist. He looked up at his father with tears swelling in his eyes and opened his hand. Two tiny, bloody, fleshy appendages blended with the skin of his palm and with a trembling, hopeful voice he said, “*I'm sorry Daddy. I didn't mean it. But look—I found them, Daddy—do you think the doctors can put them back on?*” His father gently placed Meg and Greg on a thick unmowed patch of grass, as he took his oldest boy in his arms and said, “*We'll see what they can do, son.*”

Sentimentalism By Genevieve Gadenne

It's been a week.
I'm caught in the
sentimentalism of vodka and a
pack of Camels.

You didn't think about how I
would feel,
in a kitchen full of condolence
food
that's supposed to feed a
dropped-out stomach
and a heart that's just not there.

My skin feels raw
from all the people touching me
everywhere but where
I hurt.

And it's only been a week.

Two Worlds, One Sky By Elizabeth Stannard Gromisch

As I look through these slanted
glass panes,
Coated with soot from the years of
neglect —

The tinted orange sky
grasping for the last shades of blue
Blinking lights from the far
off buildings I cannot reach
Upon a landscape filled with
a life unseen.
With nameless faces moving
in the updraft
Lit up by the descended stars
bright in the darkness
That circle back up towards
the endless sky.

And yet with a simple turn of the
head,
Through a different angle of sight—

The quiet lucidity of the
emptied halls and fallen leaves
Amidst the wind sweeping
along the manicured lawn
Is a world that is set apart on
its own.
Unaware of what lies beyond
the walls
Of the screams, cries, and life
it will never hear
Both of pure joy and
disheartened misery.

And the one door that connects the
two...
Is locked from both sides.

"I Am Not My Hair"

By Sharre A. Brooks

For so many years it was the same

Flat, lifeless

Disguised as

What *they* said it should be

Gliding along smoothly

Unassumingly

Along the mainstream

Recently it's taken on

A new life

Newly rejuvenated roots

Cornrows, micros

Finally being what IT wants to be

It's *true* identity

A threat to some

A novelty to others

Often a conversation piece

Like the Mona Lis-

A

Re-Claiming of my ethnicity

Expression of afro-centricity

Happy to be...

The Fred Files
In loving memory of Fred Pfeil
Professor of English



By Elli Findly

My beloved Fred,

*To the world, you were a man with "a well-stocked mind,"
A man who "walked the walk" of political activism,
An "engaged" Buddhist, fully attentive to everyone present.*

To me, you were teacher, lover, and friend.

But to yourself, you said:

*Do not be a corpse for fame.
Do not be a storehouse of schemes.
Do not be a proprietor of knowledge.
Do not be responsible for affairs.*

And to me, you said:

Be well, and live with ease.

By Cheryl Greenberg

I first met Fred in 1986 through what we called our "revolutionary cell": an interdisciplinary minor called Studies in Progressive American Social Movements, or SPASM. And my most vivid early memory of him was during a student-sponsored discussion about men and feminism. I think it was organized by that wonderful alternative fraternity whose name I've forgotten – Cleo? Anyway, I remember Fred and many others of us were sitting (or lying) around on the floor and talking. Fred had such smart and thoughtful things to say. But it was hard to concentrate because I was sitting right behind him and this was the time when he had that beautiful, long hair – do you remember? – and all I could think about was, "Don't stroke it! Don't stroke it!" It was that combination of thought, activism, energy and charisma that has always most defined Fred for me.

Fred and I had many conversations in those last few months of his life, about the end. He was scared and angry. He gave me his collection of Kafka on which he had inscribed the comment of a critic:

The protagonist of Kafka's dream stories is not confronted with a choice he must intellectually consider; his whole *being* is caught in a situation in which it is impossible for him to live.

Still, he remained true to himself until the end. In September he was already finding it hard to walk. But, knowing my involvement in Arab-Israeli peace work, he asked me about the group "We Refuse to Be Enemies." He was thinking about what sort of political work to engage in next, and wondered whether this would be a good place to start.

Also that September, he organized an introductory meditation class, to be held every other week for eight sessions. At first, I doubted we would make it all the way through. By the fourth session, I knew we would. The seventh session was to be held the day he died.

About a week earlier, just before he went into the hospital, he dictated the material for that session to Dan, since he could no longer type. He described the layout he wanted and, two days before he died, he carefully proofread it from his hospital bed.

Fred and I had two ongoing conversations in the last few years. One was how to reconcile Buddhism's call for equanimity and acceptance with the call of social justice for active engagement in bringing change. And the second was why it was that so many of the people he admired and learned from, including Buddhists, were Jewish.

One answer came to me just after he died. According to Jewish mysticism, God created a perfect world, which was so fragile it shattered, scattering shards throughout the universe, and inside us all. Therefore it is the obligation of the righteous person to liberate those shards, or sparks, not by withdrawing into prayer or withdrawing from evil, but by performing acts of justice and loving kindness, by going to where people are, and bringing them along with him.

I think that was Fred. It is what his writing and his teaching, his Buddhist practice and his peace work, his reading, his activism, and his loving personal relationships with so many of us, were all about.

Fred went to where people were and he changed the world.

I am so profoundly grateful to have had this time with him and to be counted among his friends.

By Milla Riggio

I have known Fred Pfeil for 20 years. Indeed, I chaired both the committee and the department that brought Fred to Trinity. We shared obsessions—about film, Human Rights, nurturing students, making the Trinity we both loved into a more open and accepting community, over scheduling our lives. And yet, he left me marveling at the ways in which he merged his contrary gifts—his theories and his fiction: his passions and his rational judgments, his balancing the bitter and the sweet. He was the rarest of all individuals—an activist who read with the zeal of an intellectual recluse: How amidst the prisoners, the students, the man of Hartford, the mediators, the vigils did he read and remember all those books and films?

I have known Fred for twenty years, but I discovered him at that last remarkable week of his life—during princely audiences he held as one at a time we took the chair of privilege beside the bed of a man whose dignity the ravages of cancer could not touch: To paraphrase Shakespeare, “Nothing became Fred’s life so much as his leaving it.” Feisty Fred fought ferociously against death: He had not lived his full allotment of years. On his last Sunday, he was hoping that he would be privileged to meet Adrienne Rich again, praising her for her anger, the “piss ant” attitude with which she defied life. He was, I thought, talking about himself. When a lovely doctor told him that he was “looking remarkably well,” he answered “You don’t look so shabby yourself.” His last words to me were about Elli—“my pretty sweet,” as he called her, “the most special woman in the world.”

By Leslie Desmangles

On Behalf of the Department of Religion, we extend to you, Elli, your family and the Pfeil family, our deepest sympathy in your loss of your beloved Fred. Most of you may not know that we in the Religion Department know Elli as one of the most disciplined, organized persons on this planet, and we are astonished that she should choose to frequent such a rowdy, undisciplined horde of hooligans in the Religion Department. We want you to know, Elli, that in light of our mental ineptitude, the collective paucity of depth in our scholarly and creative enterprise, we admire your industry. We admire especially your attention to details both in your own scholarship and in your leadership as chair of the Department. We want you to know that we hold you in the highest respect and affection. Continue to think of us as your extended family.

We are so grateful to you Elli, for having occasioned our acquaintance with Fred in past years. His intermittent visits to McCook during the late afternoons were always occasions for engaging in intense dialogue about the world’s state of affairs. Fred had a passion for life that was contagious. He lived it intensely and wholly, perhaps even gutfully. He not only loved his own family and was committed to them, but he was also a dedicated teacher and a friend to his students. They held him in the highest esteem. His students became part of his extended family. He not only wished them to experience the world as fully as he did, but also shared with them his own natural gift of creative expression. He taught them to appreciate the vividness of the human imagination and to value the remarkable power of words. Just as he loved the accentuated rhythms of jazz music, he taught his students the syncopated harmony of ennobled language.

We remember Fred for his profound sense of social justice, his appreciation for quietude and his active involvement in the community. He participated in many programs that advocated non-violence. He worked assiduously to abolish capital punishment in this state, and stood vehemently against all violence. He possessed a profound empathy for the poor and the hungry, and campaigned actively against all organizations that subjugated the broken and demoralized.

By Nick Davis “R.I.P. Fred Pfeil” (excerpted)

My friend and recent mentor Fred Pfeil died today, nine months after suffering a massive seizure that was quickly diagnosed as an effect of already-metastasized brain cancer. Fred has been bravely fighting his disease and even more bravely withstanding the intensive treatments of radiation and chemotherapy that became such a dominating part of his last months of life. It’s a marvel that he never acted as though his life had been co-opted by illness, and he remained cheerful, funny, and warm even after he was inducted into hospice care in the days before Thanksgiving.

By Joan Morrison (extracted from a Trinity faculty email exchange before his death)

When I was a fairly new professor around here I was seeking others who could come visit my FY seminar. I wanted professors from areas outside the sciences so I could expose Trinity’s newest students to some of our best. When I asked around, everyone said—oh go see Fred Pfeil! I did and he came and generously spent his time with my group. We entertained one of the most fascinating and thought

provoking periods of that fall—certainly for me and probably for the students as well. Here is a thanks to Fred! Having known him even for a short time, I knew he was one of Trinity’s best.

By Maurice Wade (extracted from a Trinity faculty email exchange before his death)

On more than one occasion, I embarrassed Fred by telling him that he was my hero. While I admit that part of my motivation was to enjoy his stammering response to this cheeky affront to his humility, I have admired, do admire, and will continue to admire his stunning ability to be a person dedicated to social justice and life of spiritual meaning, to being a mentor and example to his students, to being the best friend that he could humanly be, and to being a productive artist and intellectual. How one person could do so much that is worth doing and do it so well amazes and humbles me.

By Beverly Wall (extracted from a Trinity faculty email exchange before his death)

Here's to Fred on Thanksgiving Day! I'm thinking of him year before last, when he generously spent an hour in the Writing Center talking about his writing for our "Writers on Writing" series. It was late afternoon and the room was full of students and faculty caught up in his passion for ideas and the very process of composing itself.

By Meghan Evans

Let me give you half of my life
You'll use it better
You'll have more to do
I promise, you can have half
Take it, TAKE IT
It's for you to use
And I won't accomplish
Half of what you will
It's mine to give
Take it—
and live

(again).

By Irene Papoulis

I was in a writing group with Fred for a few years, and got to know him through his writing and his talking about writing. He was always generous and present, and had a way of letting us all know that he simultaneously 1.) had his own clear sense of what needed to be done to our story or poem, and 2.) respected us just as much if we ignored his advice. He always bustled around offering refreshments when we were at his house; often quite a few different exotic teas of our various choices

steeped in their own pots before we began work. Fred's spirit will be part of any future writing group I'm in, the spirit of seriousness, thoughtfulness, good listening, comfort, and fun.

By Sheila Fisher

In 2004, Fred, along with David Rosen, organized a centenary marathon reading of Joyce's entire *Ulysses*. As my husband, daughter, and I entered Gallows Hill to join this event, Fred was reading, pacing, barefoot, scratching his beard, delivering Joyce's text with his signature mix of passionate intensity and calm deliberativeness, as if every word was right where it should be, and thus delicious.

All afternoon, as we shared the primal pleasure of reading out loud, I realized just what magic Fred had made. He'd brought together a group of disparate people over a very hard book, and from them, for the moment, he'd forged a community. He did this on Diversity Day, at department meetings, in his classes, in prisons, in meditation groups, and in vigils. He did this all his life. And his magical ability to make us into a community is one of the things I miss the most as we join together in missing Fred.

By David S. Brown

Your smile was something
that I never had to ask you for
a given like death
yours
and mine
that will someday come
it was inevitable
when I saw you
or if you saw me First
I felt your smile

your warm smile
like the heat of the sun
warmed my sometimes cold days
here at Trinity
which I do hope
will not
freeze
now that you are
gone...

FOR YOU, FRED,

and how you cooked lunch:

casual-intense,
your voice a riff tremulous

(pasta.
pesto? marinara?)

in the steam,

your right hand handling the pot lid
as it tremored against the pot's lip,
and I, your lunch-and-poems guest

leaning
against the stove,

the muse of penne al dente,
all but rhyming my way to

(yes, pesto)—

I wasn't really

hungry, having fed for weeks
on the intense-casual
poems you had slow-simmered,

had heaved
molten

through some rift onto paper, a kind of
gardening on the edge: harvesting basil,
grit still clinging to it,

tough stems still
intact—

you'd take the green leaves of words
inside, and pestle them, bruise them

the way

(musicians say)

you've got to bruise the tune to get
living into the song. Fred, I learned
some of you by heart,
the beefsteak tomato part. Dense

juice-red light of your heart.
Even pouring past out, you were
hands and knees in the dirt,
listening
to the way things

talk as they push up through
into the sunlight-and-air part.
Fred,
just to report:

I'm still here, heating up, jittery
in this seismic sauce called Alive.
And I'd like to get your thoughts
on the garlic part: not easy

to get enough of, not easy
to separate from each rich breath.
Miniature earth-brain, burgeoning,
each clove cupped as if

to nest the core,
and wearing its lavender skin,
Fred, its
perennial skin.

—By Elizabeth Libbey

END OF FRED FILES

Safe By David Sterling Brown

It was my first time not going home after school
I was in the 6th grade and it was October
My friend's mother picked us up
And I felt safe because I wasn't going home to the city
To South Norwalk, on the school van
I was going to the suburbs of New York, Lewisboro
Riding in a white BMW
And I was excited because
My friend Michael had a big old house
And I had never been in a house so big
Except through the TV

He had a yard too, a big yard
Where deer would run through
As they pleased
And his mom let us run around outside
Up and down the drive
Because they lived on a cul-de-sac
Not a dead end street
And there was no gang violence
To worry about
Or homeless people running up to us
Asking for money
No cars driving through
Except for that of a neighbor or two
And when it got dark we
Went into the house through the garage

I was still having a good time
We ate dinner and then we had to go
And I was scared
We were all scared
About going on a haunted hayride and all
Besides, Halloween is a scary time
We got back in the BMW
And that was all I could think about
Riding around in an expensive car driving
Through the suburbs of New York
Back to our private school
In New Canaan, CT
A short drive
And soon we were on the bus
Off to ride in a wagon
Sitting on top of hay
And I got scared again

I soon calmed down
Because all the kids on the bus
Got rowdy, excited
You know, like kids do
And it took my mind off of the fear
People were throwing things
And stuff, singing songs
And playing games
With one another
And then someone threw something
At me and I got hit hard
It wasn't an accident
Nearly knocked the wind out of me
So hard that I turned around
And sat back down in my seat
Got real quiet
Because that's what kids do
Sometimes when they are hurt

My friends, Michael and Chris
My two white friends
Asked me if I was ok
And I said "yea" because
That is what kids do
When their friends are around
And they don't want to start anything
So, we eventually got off the bus
Went on our hayride
Got back *on* the bus
And *off* again
Back *into* the BMW
Where I wasn't so sure
I felt safe anymore
Because I was outnumbered
Michael's mom was driving
I just kept quiet until
We got to their home

For a little while
I played with my friends
As it would have been
Rude of me not to
But I wanted to go to sleep
I wanted to be sleep and then wake up
And be in my dad's pickup truck
Out of the suburbs
Driving back toward the city
Where the homeless people
Were distant friends
And none of the gangs' bullets

Had my name on them
Because on the bus
On the way to the hayride
A white boy
One who was just
A little older than me
And a little bigger
Threw something at me
That I couldn't catch
And that's why it nearly knocked the wind out of me
Because I missed it

He called me a *black piece of shit*
And when I finally got home
I didn't tell my parents
Because I somehow thought
That it was my fault
And they would get mad at me
For *letting* someone call me that
For not *doing* anything about it
But I didn't immediately
Recognize his words
As a racial insult
Because I was born black
And I just thought he was
Being real specific
Simply describing the type of
Piece of shit that he thought I was

It's Human Nature Not to Appreciate a Beautiful Death, Taken Slowly
By Meghan Evans

I am tired the way the sun is tired
and goes slouching off to bed
earlier and earlier, sick of the
monotony of *this is how we will live*
forever talk in the classroom where I sit,
and on porches where, beyond, the
leaves darken
and die. Frost settles, brimming sharp,
into the window's iron corner so that
thought
slows way down
like cold water, like breathing,
like a tree's reaching roots in dry times.
And I am giving up on warmth
the way the leaves hang themselves
on Winter's breath, the way

animals won't search for food any
longer.
Coming are the months of skeletons—
anorexic trees, naked earth,
shivering pines and hurling snow.
Behind me, in class, someone coughs
and I get up.
I cross the rock-gray file to the exit,
I cross the swollen, mud-wrecked field
in the tearing wind,
and I stand on the choking hill
and pour kool-aid on the grave of
summer
as an offering
for life.

On Sympathy By Noah Simcoff

My first few days at Trinity worried me. Maybe it was just the people that I was meeting, but I did not like, more fairly, I did not look forward to four years of relationships with the people I encountered. Granted, I was nervous about what they were thinking of me. I was nervous that I'd lose their respect and forever be exiled from social life. It took awhile for me to find friends, friends that I was confident would be great companions on the continuous quest for knowledge. Unfortunately, most of them live on the other side of campus and I must make the arduous walk through wind and snow everyday to see them. But it's worth it. They understand me better. I can be myself around them and not have to worry about their perceptions of me. When I compare them to the first set of people I met, I ask myself, "Why can't we all just get along?"

It's unfortunate to say, we can't all just get along. There are fundamental differences too intertwined in our minds and souls that we cannot reconcile with our enemies. It's ironic that Israel and the Arab nations should fight with such hatred, when they share such similar languages. Language is the best way that we have to understand each other. It is the best way to peer into another's heart and understand his feelings. It is the only way we can communicate; it is the best means for sympathy.

But why is sympathy so important and what does it have to do with the notion of self? To answer this question, let us imagine that I (Noah) am sitting in a room with two friends. My goal for the evening is to interact with them and not do anything that would annoy them. Therefore, I must burden myself with trivial concerns: my posture, my tone of voice, and my conversation topics. I am plagued by this social malaise. It's a feeling in the back of my head, like pulling putty. The harder I try to pull, the more resistant it becomes. It snaps if I pull too hard. It becomes stringy if I pull too lightly. There is no middle path, no satisfying completion in my actions. When trying to appease the demands of these friends, I can never be at ease because I can never know what they are thinking of me. There is no way to be truly happy.

Now let us take a step back and examine the situation in its entirety, or at least the entirety that is available to Noah. When he sits in the room with two friends, let us imagine that there are now three Noahs in the room: Friend 1's and Friend 2's respective perceptions of Noah. These could be anything. They could range from idol-like admiration to a death wish. It is up to Noah to interpret what they really think of him. He needs to because it dictates his attitude and actions. We act differently around strangers than we do around our closest friends. Moreover, we act differently around our friends than ourselves. I believe that when I am alone, I am most truly myself because I don't have to worry about anyone judging my actions. Also, I don't have to worry about miscommunications or the social malaise.

But back to the overall picture of the room situation. The three Noahs in the room could be very similar, or very different. Noah can never be truly sure what his friends' perceptions are, and this is the origin of Noah's trouble. Now, rather than there being only three Noahs, there are now five. The three original Noahs, but now Noah's guess at Friend 1's perception, and

Noah's guess at Friend 2's perception. So many Noahs of which to keep track. For simplicity's sake, the real Noah, the Noah that I am when I'm alone will be called Super Noah (I like the name). The Friends' perceptions will be called Gold Noah or Silver Noah (I like precious metals), and Super Noah's guesses at Gold Noah or Silver Noah will be called Super Gold Noah or Super Silver Noah.

Let us concentrate on Super Silver Noah (cool name eh?). This is the source of a lot of conflict. Super Silver Noah can be, and usually is, completely different from Super Noah and Silver Noah. If Noah and Friend #2 are friends, then we can assume that they wish no harm on each other. If they really are friends, there should be no need for the social malaise because Noah would know that his actions would not be interpreted incorrectly. Our actions often betray our intentions, as do our body language and language itself. These misrepresentations of our intentions convey the wrong message to those around us. But if they are friends, they can look past the actions to the intention and see that there is no desire for harm on the other. If this understanding between friends, this sameness of feelings (sympathos), exists, then there is no need for Super Silver Noah. Let him burn up in smoke.

If Super Silver Noah vaporizes away, we are back to only Super Noah and Silver Noah. In this scenario, Super Noah no longer cares about Silver Noah because he knows that Friend #2 does not interpret his actions incorrectly. Your friends look past your actions, into your very soul, and can never find a need for conflict, as there is none. This is a huge leap of faith because it requires such a degree of trust and understanding; however, let us consider our actions. If someone is offended or irritated by our actions, we must try to understand why. To do this we must examine the intention behind our actions. If I can look at an action without bias, I can judge its purity. Is it intended to inflict pain? Is it intended to cause harm? Between sympathetic friends, only pure intentions exist so there is no desire to inflict any pain or cause any harm.

Now let us imagine the final scenario, a scenario where there exists no misunderstanding, so therefore, no conflict or hate. A scenario without the social malaise or the petty concerns of trivial burdens. A scenario where only Super Noah exists. He no longer cares about Silver Noah because he knows that Silver Noah and Super Noah are the same Noah. What if everyone shared this degree of sympathy? What if Noah did not have to worry about other people's perceptions of him? Would there be any need for image? Would there be any need for my body, the earthly representation of my intentions? On the personal level, this means that my friends could better understand me. On the national level, this means no war or racism. But that's impossible. We already established that we can't all just get along.

Really? How hard is it to ignore actions and understand that other people don't mean to annoy or irritate you? How hard is it to examine your intentions and judge them as pure or impure and act accordingly? Is it that impossible to be so sympathetic with others and so honest with myself? Can I do this for the rest of my life and ignore the social malaise? The beauty of this problem lies in the simplicity of the cure. It is very possible to do this. If only there was a magic dragon we could talk to, or an attic we could escape to, or a fee of 35 dollars to pay to finally understand, actions don't matter. Sympathy is so very possible and it would make absolutely everything, so much better.

Snorkel This By Patti Maisch-Voerg (IDP '07)

The road out of Cancun was totally obscured by the sandy haze trailing from the treadless tires of the rust-dimpled tour bus in front of us. We were exasperated beneficiaries of that perpetual haze of grit that rose up off the highway, traveling through the wedged-open windows of the yellow chassis, settling onto our bodies and seeping into the cavities of our heads. It was hard to decide which was worse; the endless stream of fine gravel glazing our skin or the sun's unyielding "ultra-violence" emanating through the holes of the rotted metal roof adding a bright red tinge to that gray dermal surface. No—you know what? I don't think it was either of those things—it was definitely the fact that each time the bald tires made contact with the countless crater-like potholes, the deteriorated yellow vinyl seat covers were notching out serious grooves in my tender, sunburned thighs and simultaneously biting a raw spot into Greg's already aching backbone.

"Gimme a towel before I start bleedin' all over this seat. I can't believe this—first the donkey, then the glass, and now this—some vacation this is! Did you bring the Visine?"

"No, it never crossed my mind," I said. But I continued to think, "Do I *really* have to bring everything for a full grown man that I would for a little baby?"

"Well, just look at it out there! Jesus Christ, I knew it was dry out this way but this is ridiculous! You gotta bandana or somethin' For cryin' out loud, babe—I'll be flossin' the God-damn sand out of my molars all night after this trip."

"They told us to pack light and I can't remember everything." Once again I thought to myself, "Why can't *you* remember something once in a while—and oh yeah—I forgot the floss anyway."

"Oh, forget it—we *have* to be there soon—RIGHT? How much longer do we have to ride in this death trap?"

I had to agree with his mind-set on this. "*Dos horas*" the Mexican tour guide promised for travel time and he was already off-schedule by forty-five minutes. His name was Jose and his reliability was already questionable. He was the one who implored us to pose for the obligatory *turista*-on-the-burro pictures—a seemingly harmless sightseer practice. But just as we were both about to straddle the poor equine a man came shrieking out of a nearby shed—"Demasiado grande—You are much too beeg, señor!" The donkey survived but his master nearly had a heart attack. And it was just yesterday, on Jose's recommendation, that we stopped for homemade ice cream in San Simeone—it seems those crunchy morsels in Gary's bowl weren't chunks of ice crystal, after all, but rather small shards of clear glass well-hidden in the frozen concoction. Accidents—well—most likely yes. But the black cloud of misfortune had been hovering over the two of us since we first met up with this guy. Now—as if all of this weren't enough—Jose was driving the lead bus of our traveling caravan—inadvertently dowsing us with dust every *kilometro* of the way—serving as a constant reminder that he was close by. Greg was one dirty, sweaty, sunburned unhappy gringo.

"Do you know if our insurance covers out-of-country trips to the hospital?" Do they even *have* hospitals way out here? Here's the map—where are we anyway? You know I can't read in a moving vehicle—next thing you know I'll be puking my guts up."

I never answered any of those questions but I thought to myself, "And *I* will be the one who has to clean it up."

Greg shoved the map onto my lap. I picked it up and turned it every which way until I thought it faced west—the direction of Cozumel. In the process I somehow slid the edge of the chart across both my thighs and in doing so, albeit through a substantial layer of dirt, I, somehow or another, succeeded in slicing a significant paper cut clear across the top of both dust-encrusted, sunburned, vinyl-chafed legs, which slowly revealed a slight pink ooze but immediately stung with severity. What's next? I remained stoic, took a few deep breaths, set

the map down and opened one of the two Wet-Naps I had pocketed after lunching on mussels the day before.

"What are you doing with that wipe? We're gonna need that later—God knows this place is a breeding ground for germs—how could it not be—there's not even any water around to wash up with!"

That was it! I felt bad about the ice cream debacle so I had tried to remain unruffled as long as possible but damn it—I'm bleeding now!

"OKAY HOWARD!" I said sternly. That was my referential name for Greg, the germaphobe who, when he acted like this, reminded me of the millionaire Howard Hughes—a man whose late-in-life eccentricities included a severe psychotic aversion to the very *thought* of bacteria—much like Greg.

"This trip hasn't exactly been a bowl of cherries for me—but I'd like your permission to clean the dirt out of the paper cuts that I think you might have had something to do with me getting to begin with."

I could withstand his myriad idiosyncrasies but the O.C.D. stuff was more than I could handle. It was always fuel for an argument and although I knew it wasn't his fault I just couldn't empathize—so I had little or no compassion in this arena. I could understand his frustration about the dust, the ice cream and the poorly-planned E.T.A. on the part of the tour bus drivers—but I could not comprehend his compulsion to wash his hands over and over, his incessant questioning as to whether or not I had washed mine before I could touch his and why the four-second rule of picking up a dropped food item in one's own house was unacceptable for him. Nor did I understand his aversion toward changing the kitty litter—after all, does he think I actually *like* to do it. And now—this selfishness about the Wet-Nap. I see this O.C.D. stuff as a sign of weakness. I know it's an unfair assessment because I truly love Greg and I know it is one of his self-admitted character defects but sometimes, like my

grandmother used to say—"Some things just stick in your craw." There is so much more to life if you "seize the moment" and "just do it" but this is a flaw that hinders him from doing just that in many instances.

He doesn't particularly like being linked to a lunatic millionaire like Howard Hughes so rather than argue with me in front of a busload of tourist he chose to sit back and shut up. A good move on his part, since I will usually get over myself as long as I'm not egged on. The rest of the trip was complaint-free and, after all the commotion, that one little Wet-Nap only succeeded in making a muddy mess and I had two conspicuous white patches which, I am sure, would soon turn into glowing red circles on my thigh fronts. What a mess!

Not long after my outburst I noticed that the air had changed. My olfactory senses were, to a great extent, dulled by the sand clogging up my nasal passages but the fresh tang of salt water was wafting strongly through the open windows and I just knew we were close to our seaside destination. I nudged Greg who had surrendered to the elements and closed his eyes. Not me—I thought that they might not open if I closed them—that the sand would harden between my lids like the crusty goop that gets in your eyes when you have a cold—besides I can't sleep—I don't want to miss a thing.

"Whaaaa—whaaat?" he snorted.

"We're here—we're here!"

The bus pulled into a make-shift parking lot and I stood to stretch my legs and to scope out any untattered seats that might be available for the return trip. I thought if I had the same foresight earlier today I might have alleviated at least *some* of the uncomfortability. But, actually, I would expect to be numbly exhausted by the time we board for the evening departure so my seat choice should be of little consequence.

Jose is outside the two buses playing tour director. With a megaphone and a clipboard he calls off the names,

"Meester and Meesus Sheeaa?"

"We're here."

"Mees Gaarreeson?"

"Here."

"Mees Smeheet?"

"Here."

"Meester Joordan?"

"Yo—right here man."

The names get more difficult as he goes down the list but he struggles through and finally—all *turistas* are present and accounted for. I can see the beach from our vantage point between the buses. I can't wait to hit the water. It is impossible to touch anything to my body without causing an abrasive reaction—even the simple task of removing my shirt becomes a tortuous act, like a bone-dry loofah sponge, the shirt rips at my sunburned flesh. The sand has permeated my most private parts and I need to flush it out and feel the cool water on my skin. But the tour itinerary calls for a day of snorkeling in Cozumel and that's what we are here for. Instructions first—then we can take to the clear blue-green tropical waters. I've never actually *been* snorkeling but how hard can it be? Just show me how to do it so I can get out there.

"Grab a snorkel set; tube, goggles, flippers and mouthpiece and meet me at the pavilion," announces the suitably tanned, exceptionally buff, Speedo-clad diving instructor.

I'm anxious to get out onto the reef—I grab the four items and head toward the little grass shack and the hunky instructor. Greg lingers behind.

"What is it? Come on, Bub!"

He latches onto my forearm.

"Hey you're hurting me!"

All of a sudden his dirty, sunburned face turns sallow—"Mouthpiece! Where do you think those things have been before today? This is Mexico—there are no laws protecting us from unsanitary snorkeling equipment. How do you suppose they clean these things—if they clean them at all, that is? I can't do this—no fuckin' way!"

Anyone else would think this is a joke—but I know he is serious—dead serious. I think about it—I look at him. He is in perilous panic stage. This is an acute anxiety attack just waiting to ignite itself. This is not an "Aw come on, Howard—just do it" situation. At this very moment I am afraid for him.

"Come on—sit down here. I'll see what I can find out about this equipment."

I am not usually the patronizing wife but this calls for significant self-control and I say, "You might be right, this isn't the States and they may not clean these things properly at all. You just stay here, I'll find out just what goes on. Don't worry. Relax, I'll get you a Coke, somewhere. You must be thirsty, Bub. Hey—I love you."

The brawny instructor is entertaining a group of college girls when I interrupt him, "Hi—I know this might sound weird but could you please tell me just exactly what you guys use to clean the snorkel sets? My husband is highly allergic to some detergents."

Okay, so I lie—but this Howard Hughes—OCD thing is between Greg and me—it's nobody else's business. I love him too much to embarrass him—but when we get alone tonight—well—let's just say I will not let him live *this* one down.

"Up the path there's a tent—that's where they clean up the equipment. I couldn't say for sure just what they use—sorry but I'm sure they can help you out."

"Thanks."

Right where he said it was—there's this big open tent. At first glance the sterilization process looks to be quite primitive. But at closer inspection I see that there are four huge vats of water. I ask about the procedure and before anyone begins to explain, my nose furnishes me

with the information I need. It's bleach! I smell bleach! That's always a good thing in the sterilization process. So—the procedure goes as follows, soap, rinse, bleach, rinse. I'm satisfied. Greg is at ease. He smiles. We kiss and head for the instructional forum—but not before I tweak his nose and say:

“Are you happy now my little Howard Hughes?”

He takes it well and gives me a smile.

We get procedural instruction from the hunky guy. It sounds simple enough. Basically—just breath through your mouth.

“Hurry up, Bub.”

Greg dives in—he's underwater. He pops his head up.

“Now *you* come on sweetie pie—you are gonna love this! The fish—the coral—amazing!! This is your kind of thing!”

“Okay—here I come. I'm wet—I'm going under.”

“Hey/sweetie—what's wrong?”

*By Sarah Jenkins
Martyrdom*

Occasionally some unseen glory
Flies before me, reverberations
Rippling unto my body hoary.
As of yet I see just condemnations
Thrust into my lap, forcing me to kneel;
Present my curved nape, that gilded death
Above, my face down turned but lax. Sharp peal,
You pierce my peace, abrupt this in his *beth*.
But grateful I am for the history
Eddies around this place, telling all naught.
It matters not that all is mystery
To me of how fiercely the minute fought.
Compassion disturbs my silence. I dare
Not disturb it, not even for to care.

Roland Grant

A Tale of Two People

There are many moments in my life where my tenacity and aggressiveness are on display. You can find a sighting of this usually while I'm playing sports, in particular, soccer, which is my passion. The fact that sports involve a battle of brawn and wit is the reason why they allow my true personality to flourish. It's the arrogance and the refusal to let anyone be superior to me that makes sports so appealing. It's the fact that since I've been a child, I've been naturally athletic and thus, very good in sports. Whether it was kickball, soccer, or just running, I was often superior to my peers. Ah, that's it. It's the inner confidence I have in myself when I'm playing sports. Since I know that I'm good, I am confident in my own abilities and therefore, will refuse to let anyone be better than me. I should try applying that “inner confidence” to my daily life. If I did, I would probably be a completely different person.

My soccer personality needs to interconnect with my off-the field personality. If I exhibited that same confidence and tenacity, I would be a different but more importantly, better person. Soccer is my passion that makes me most happy. Either playing it or watching it just brings chills down my spine. The confidence I have on the field is second to none. When I'm there, I'm in my own universe. There are no rules or boundaries and my imagination is left to run wild. Whether it is a defensive or offensive play, many times I am able to see things before they happen or find ways to create things from what appears to be the impossible. Maybe that's where all my pent up aggression goes. I might be passive in the classroom but on the soccer field I'm a recognizable person. You better not come in my area because you will feel my presence. Ah! It felt good to say that one. It's like a completely new demeanor takes control of my body and therefore, I have this extremely aggressive personality that's just waiting to come out. When I'm on the soccer field, I feel free from the

chains of oppression that our society creates: dressing, talking, or acting a certain way or completing actions that are deemed "politically correct." When I'm on the field, I'm in complete control of my universe. I call the shots and can do whatever I please. Instead of my aggressiveness being shunned and looked down upon by society, it is praised and encouraged by my coach and teammates. When I step on the field, "nice Roland" is left back at the locker room while the "confident and aggressive Roland" takes charge.

However, little do my soccer fans realize that behind the aggressive, confident, and passionate me dwells a shy and passive person. I like to "feel out" my surroundings before displaying my true personality. I want to understand and have a certain sense of familiarity with people before I show them my personality. Moreover, I often put labels on people so that I'm mentally aware of the type of person that they are. I'm a cerebral person as well. Although I don't say much, or at least speak until I'm comfortable with my surroundings, I often take "mental notes" and analyze people as well as their personalities. I look at their personal tendencies and mentally "scoop up" the bits of information that they spew. I even ask myself if I could be friends with them. The initial weeks at Trinity were both physically and mentally tough with the balancing of soccer, school, and attempting to have a social life. These weeks were a complete culture shock. I saw and met new people; I gained new teammates, and began to notice the abundance of money that Trinity students seemed to have. My culture shock might not be a valid excuse for some, but for me, it's been the excuse of my life to justify being shy. I've always accepted my role of shyness instead of facing my demons head on. I'm not a hermit. I have many friends and they know the real person that habitually hides behind his mask. It is so hard for me to act similarly toward strangers.

My experience at Trinity is an example of this. Initially, I went to preseason and saw a bunch of strangers, who I would later call my teammates and friends. I hardly knew anything about these people. I didn't know their names let alone their attitudes and personal

characteristics. Furthermore, when I went to all of my classes for the first time, every single face was new and foreign. Therefore, I had to learn and adapt to my new surroundings but so far I've been slacking a bit. My shyness is a factor that has held me back from a lot of great opportunities such as friendships. It's something that I definitely plan to work on and improve in college.

My shy personality has made me who I am. It has defined my existence. Being shy has stolen opportunities to meet new people, establish relationships, etc. Why do I let this occur? I know that it could ruin my life yet I continue to let it define me. I can't seem to come out of my cocoon and open up to the world or at least until I'm very comfortable with my surroundings. Letting my shyness define me is just as bad as being addicted to cigarettes. They both cause harm, one physically and the other mentally, yet people can't seem to extricate it out of their lives. When dealing with shyness, I have gone through various stages, which began with denial and are currently at acceptance. I have accepted that I have a fault but am still working on a resolution. No. Shyness does not define Roland Grant! I refuse to let this disease persist.

My younger brother would agree with everything I've said. He knows me better than anyone else in this world, as I do him. He knows that I'm extremely shy and constantly asks me why I act so differently towards strangers. He knows my true personality, the one that dwells inside of me that is just waiting to explode and surface to the "real world." He knows and sees the "very passionate Roland" on a daily basis. Moreover, my brother knows how passionate I am towards soccer. He has seen the time and dedication that I've exhibited, whether it be timing my long distance runs, in which I would return dripping with perspiration, or sneaking into a gym during the middle of the day. He's also seen me shouting at the television and acting like a complete lunatic when I'm watching the U.S. Men's National Soccer Team or the English Premier League, particularly Manchester United. This

is the side that is unseen to the naked eye of the public. Why? I'm insecure about my own personality. I'm scared of what people might think. I know that I'm a "good guy" but showing my personality is like showing a private part of me. Showing this side of myself to complete strangers makes me feel self-conscious and nervous.

Where are all of these pent-up feelings of my shyness coming from? Deep down inside, I've always felt this way, but why haven't I been able to verbally say it? Maybe it's my own fear catching up with me. But what is the origin of this fear? It's the fear of admitting and acknowledging my own personal faults. No one wants to take notice of and proclaim his faults. In fact, everyone wants to portray a great and vivacious image of the person that they perceive themselves to be toward other people. When we all came to Trinity College, most of us were seeing foreign faces and meeting new people. Many were able to make acquaintances and establish relationships but my shyness once again overcame me. All of the unflattering characteristics that have plagued my life surfaced. I was timid, hesitant, quiet, passive, nervous, etc. I was weak. Acknowledging my shyness and still letting it ruin my life is like conjuring up one's greatest faults and then crawling into that dark corner in one's room.

What I've realized is that I am not perfect. I have faults that have had an impact on my life, to a degree, and have affected who I am. By acknowledging and conscientiously working to improve these faults, I can change the person I am today and will be in the future. I realize that my inner confidence on the field needs to move beyond the field but I am still working on it. Moreover, I have already attempted to make a diligent effort to "open up" and show the world who I truly am. My personality has already hindered my life; why let it continue? Obviously, there is more to me than just playing soccer and my ever-changing personality, but for now, I am satisfied, proud, and confident in the person I am now and the person I could be in the future. Ultimately, I chose to be the person I am today. So far, I have

lived my life the way I have seen fit and abided by my own code of ethics. Now that I am in college, I am truly independent. There aren't additional voices telling me the difference between wrong and right. I make my own choices that I see fit and similarly, I've made and will continue to make choices that have determined the person you see before your eyes and the person I will be in the future. I don't know the path my life will lead me on, all I know is that it will be the right path because I chose it. I've noticed that my soccer personality has begun to flourish and surface to the "real world." As I'm writing, the contemplation and acknowledgment of my greatest mistakes has been somewhat therapeutic. By recognizing and accepting them now, I might still have an opportunity to rectify my "personality defects," which have plagued my life for eighteen years.

Youth Our Vice By Meghan Evans

Guitars, alcohol, jump tight bodies,
pub scene social addiction. Strike a
match made in seven minutes eternal
Minting every word for fresh
Deep breaths when—sharp intake—
This is love, love continental.

Dark eyes masking all the—
Drum beat tequila shot freak freak—
innocence.

This is simple: our sleeves
saturated in blood—hearts out—
from sunrise phone calls whispering
Please change beds and sheets.
Rehearsing everything we've learned
about love in the shh silence sincerity
saying God, you're beautiful and just hold
-(Just hold) the pause-
my hand, love line cradling sweat
dripping fast as the term is over
for us healing the scarred
past.

This double edged medication:
Dance floors finding harmony
In two sets of feet tripping
toward the River after last call
clear water, honest view. What you see
is—
Sugar it's yours. Till morning soaking
sunshine in through cheeks, catching
Lips by the throat, sucking them dry
as bones in the closet crumbling
ashes to ashes, dust forgotten, Goodbye.

Life sinking back in—into
black hot rooms in basements.
Acid realization pinkredyellowblue,
A story in her irises or his, or a song
Springgrowflowersbloomingbirthpurplepu
pils
Pathsdivergingfaceeachotherrun run run!

Protected by a gentleman taking hits
of traffic for love and her belief,
open the door, that there will always be
second chances and this inner outer
adrenaline charged peace

The Back Page

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