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Legacy

2019 Issue

Theme: Overcoming

Editor

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Sponsor

Clarise Nixon

Table of Contents:

Editor’s Note... 3

Poetry

Not One *by Avery Kroll*..... 5

Kiss the Thorns *by Destiny Cheyenne Wilson*... 8

Tame the Beast *by Saria Smith*..... 10

Waves *by Camryn Scott*... 12

Naturally Overcoming *by Jillian Mounce*..... 13

Short Stories

Wilma, after she left her husband *by Emma Winegardner*... 16

Aftermath of the Sacrifice *by Zachary Hagen*..... 20

Overcoming *by Zach Roberts*..... 22

Thoughts on a Cliff *by Marshely Registe*..... 27

Editor's Note

Nicole Dominguez, senior English Literature major

In choosing a theme for the Legacy Writing Contest, it is always important to choose one that is relevant to our times. Overcoming seemed the perfect theme, not only in our political and cultural climate, but in this phase in our lives as students. We are in the critical years: the years of growth, years of discovery, and years of development that allow us to become the people we are meant to be. But this is a parallel process. With that growth, that discovery, that development, comes confrontation with pain, doubt, and struggle. It is the human condition that we all must go through in order to get to the other side. Getting there means we must overcome. We must overcome those doubts that overwhelm us, those fears that cripple us, those storms that rage within us, and those past hurts that we believe define us. The overcoming process is a healing season that is painful, but always leads us to a better self with new beginnings that will forever remind us that with God's help, we are strong enough to Overcome.

POETRY

Not One

1st Place Winner

by Avery Kroll

By definition it is to rise

Create a level field

Stare down in the eyes

The words and things they say

Ascending spirits

The cry to fight

Today I become

Today I fly

On repeat within our minds

Muster inner strength where it may hide

Reignite some burning pride

While the words that are spoken

hold some truth

Do not listen

they are broken

Not unlike me and you

To conquer the impossible

Must one be greater than that they face

greater than our humanity

to win the race
Losing sanity
to see things in a different view
Become someone that isn't you
For that's how you got here in the first place
Is it not?
Over and over
You tried
Giving it all you've got
But it doesn't matter what you do
Failure is only found
What makes this time any different?
It's still just only you
The key is needing something more
something you did not have before
Look back
At the things you once saw tall
Look now those things and see how small
Now closer still
The bloody foot prints in the sand and stone
That stains the path from where you've come
are not your own
They are His

Blinded by pride

Who are we to claim victory over such as this.

Don't you see?

It was never you

And It was never supposed to

Nothing was done by you

Overcome was not ment for one

but two

Kiss the Thorns

2nd Place Winner

by Destiny Cheyenne Wilson

Cherish the weeds.

Admire the flies.

Taste the bitter saltiness of the sea.

Kiss the thorns.

Revel in tears.

Praise the rocks that trip you.

Remember the coarse ground scraping your paper skin.

Remember the sweat dribbling down your brow.

Remember the pungent Earth and dirt and scrub covering your hands.

For it is in these

Struggles we find triumph.

It is in these

Hardships we conquer.

We are flowers.

Reaching up through

Brambles and leaves,

To breakthrough,
To reach
The blessed sunshine.

We grow.
Taller, stronger,
Better.

These obstacles,
These burdens,
Only make us stronger.
Like carbon in scorching darkness,
Forms diamonds.
We need tribulation
To make us shine.

Tame The Beast

3rd Place Winner

by Saria Smith

To tame the beast will take sometime, but I cannot kill yours while I'm wrestling mine.

As you step onto the stage

You'll find you are trembling,

A distant curtain call

Ring in your ear.

With contemptuous aid

The boiling of blood

Immense pounding from an organ often called love.

The voice of reason whispers

As chaos twirls her net

Diverting your awareness

She hasn't lost it yet.

Breathe for some relief

To find your second chance

Turn your favor upwards

As discontentment rests.

The dancers contort, with growing apprehension

Even in such a throng, they cannot attain attention

Now, there in the clouds, the love they never mentioned.

Astounding yet familiar
Grasping your trembling hand
And soon you'll see you're saviour
The glorious I AM.

Waves

By Camryn Scott

With each crashing wave,

My soul tears apart

Out goes the tide,

And out goes my heart

The crashing is endless,

The pounding is fierce

Consistency lingers,

All hopes to pierce

What is life,

If pain never ends?

Is victory fable

Or is numbing to mend

The constant battle

Promised to us

As long as life continues

In sin, to dust?

There is assurance,

Tribulation will come

But sounds of the sea,
Bring peace to some
Who know in the end
HE has truly overcome

Naturally Overcoming

by Jillian Mounce

Oh, to be like a tree
To die all the time, every year
Death comes natural to thee
Living wholly absent of fear
The trees and plants they must always know
When death is nigh
Their time will come, and it will also go
But back again, just in time
Overcoming death is no big deal
When you live as a plant or tree
Knowing that again you'll feel
As alive as you and me
Death is not the end for us
Neither the tree nor I
For we have hope in Jesus
Who lived just to die

Oh, to be like a tree
Living without worry or woe
Wouldn't it just be
Nice if we lived like so

SHORT STORIES

Wilma, after she left her husband

1st Place Winner

by Emma Winegardner

The car crunched to a stop. Both women stepped out, leaving the man behind. Crystal stood tall and looked up, hands on hips, shoulders stretched back, lungs open and ready for the fresh air. She straightened and pulled a cigarette from her pocket, bending slightly to light it with her zippo, facing away from her sister, toward the valley that stretched down from the foothills the old car had been climbing for some time.

Crystal looked at her sister, whose hands were closed around the bamboo handle of her purse. The hands had been young and now the skin seemed clearer and thinner, but much the same. Crystal remembered the long fingers picking berries in the forest by the house when they were children, when her sister told her the red ones were magic and not to be eaten, ready to whisk you away in a moment to another world. You can feel them, she'd said. They vibrate, just a little, when they're ready. And Crystal had felt them pulsing gently in her hand.

"Come on, Wilma," she said. She began walking across the grass, toward the rocky overhang for which she had asked them to stop, for which Joe had pulled over wonderingly. "Look at all the graffiti." She was calling out an obvious fact and she knew it, but what else was there to say. Messages covered the face of the rock, names and dates, white and blue and black. As her sister joined her beneath the rock, Crystal looked up, eyes longing toward the apex where the rock gave way to sky. She smiled, broadly, at Wilma, who stood gently beside her, her eyes also led upward by the grandness of the rock.

"We should take a picture," Crystal said.

“Of what?” Wilma asked, looking back at the car and the man who was clearly not expecting to get out of it.

“Of us, silly,” Crystal said.

Crystal made eye contact with her husband and he looked hopefully back at her, ready to drive on. “Come here, Joe,” she called. “And bring the camera. We want a picture.” He pushed the car door open and climbed out heavily, standing for a moment on the other side as if to ask, with his body, if he was really to come all the way over.

Joe was a good man, if not what she had imagined for herself on the day that Wilma had married the gorgeous man from Atlanta. Bill was tall and clever and had swept Wilma right off her feet. Joe was, instead, a stubborn and steady worker, protective of his wife and children, and altogether uninterested in things like giant rocks. Even purchasing a camera had been her idea.

She supposed, as she watched him walk across the grass, that she ought to be especially grateful for him now. He’d accepted Wilma into their home so readily, so dutifully, just as he had accepted the children, without a look of blame or bother, stolid and kind like the day they were wed, in the little church whose pews Wilma and Crystal had crawled beneath to subvert the sermon with fantastic countries of the mind, and which seats her little family had occupied, swelled and dwindled in, until it was just the two of them again, she and Joe. He’d never leave her, she was sure, and he’d never raise a hand against her.

It was Bill instead who had used his fists, and she had not known it. In Crystal’s little selfishnesses, in her children, in her husband, in her sewing and her reducing classes, she had never thought to notice. She’d still seen the girl, just barely older than herself, cropped hair and lively fringe, clever smile. The girl who had taken so many

awful choices without Crystal's help at all.

Now, though Wilma left Bill, he would not leave Wilma. Every night in the dark Crystal heard the creak of bedsprings in the room next to her own, and she knew it was another nightmare that would assert itself into another day. Every night she went into the room and touched her, held her close, and wondered what to do as Wilma sobbed into her shoulder. Yet it was somehow not Wilma, as if someone had substituted a refugee of the war, strange and trapped in a pain that somehow Crystal could not touch. Wilma had been the strong one, the knowing one. She'd taught Crystal how to grow house plants and clean a toilet and about the birds and the bees. It was she who asked every time they talked why she hadn't stopped smoking, told her it was destroying her lungs. She realized now that Wilma had asked her even on days he'd hurt her, on days she needed to be asked herself. Even now it was Wilma who would try to comfort Crystal as the tears came to both of them. "Why didn't you ever tell me?" she'd asked. But the answer was tears unburdened by words: Crystal could not understand. Wilma, self-contained, suffered alone.

There must have been countless times she could have stopped it. They did not visit each other, Crystal and Wilma, because Bill did not like visitors, Wilma said, and he did not want her using her valuable time chattering away like a ninny. But there had been the Christmases and Easters, family reunions, when she might have pulled her to the side. She might have asked her if she was all right. When Bill was cross and stormed out of the room, as often happened, Wilma would follow with a grim assurance, a look on her face that seemed to declare to all the world the universal truth of predestination, the determinacy of lives, and Crystal might have caught her by the arm and asked the

question. But it had been their business, Bill's and Wilma's, and who was she to pry? Even that day in the dress shop when Wilma wore her plain dress and Crystal her canary yellow one, drawn in at the waist with a sash, Wilma had held a satin pink cloth between her palms and wept. Crystal had stood apart, thinking how awkward she felt. She had turned her eye to the brooches under the glass.

And now she looked at Wilma and saw what she had been too stupid to see: a tired woman whose years had not flown by with little cares and aches like Crystal's but had growled on day after day, unbearably, like the old car up the steady hill to this rock.

Crystal recalled the night Wilma had come, without warning, to their front door, a carpetbag in her hands. "I've left him," she'd said, "I've left him." She had tried to reveal the truth to her sister in a stack of stutters. Then she had collapsed to her knees on the linoleum in the entry way and begun to wail. Crystal was aghast—her eyes had been screwed shut, her mouth open wide, her breath choked with sobs. She had dropped down next to her, not knowing what to do. She'd pulled the gracious head into her arms and held it there, her forehead touching Wilma's temple. "Darling," she'd said. "Darling." Wilma had curled around her arm, drawing her knees in close to her chest on the sticky floor. "Darling. You're safe now." The worlds of childhood had crumbled long ago and she had not known it. And she'd felt a pressure rise inside her chest.

Joe stood far off with the camera and motioned them to move closer to the rock. Crystal waited, her hand draped over her purse. She glanced to the right as she flicked her cigarette away and saw Wilma smiling. Crystal followed her gaze. Just past Joe, across the little road, a berry bush bloomed red.

Aftermath of the Sacrifice

2nd Place Winner

by Zachary Hagen

“It is finished!” Thunder rolled over the Earth below as Jesus cried out His last words. The Father, Yahweh, watched on as the Breath of Life left dying Son. The entire host of Heaven broke out in wailing and sobbing. Chaos erupted in Jerusalem for the Darling of Heaven who hung dead on the cross.

When it all died down in a microcosm of eternity later, a single tear fell from Yahweh’s eye as it started raining below Him.

The Holy Spirit took form beside Yahweh. “He knew what the plan was. He didn’t go in blind.”

“I know, but all the same, I could feel everything He felt as He died. He couldn’t see what we see.”

“It’s true. Eternity was veiled from Him. The sacrifice would have meant nothing if He knew exactly how it work out.” The Spirit’s shifting form flashed seemed to straighten. “We know how it will end. We already see the day when Jesus’ work as the Savior will truly be finished.”

Yahweh nodded. “We see the day when those who will accept this gift will walk in through our gates to live forever with us. Our children will all be home.”

Warmth and light radiated from the Spirit. “And in three days time, Jesus will see those things too. We will call our third part from beyond life’s edge, our redemption of humanity will be complete. Jesus will rejoin the Godhead in Heaven, and I will descend to comfort and guide the church until the end of days.”

Yahweh’s shoulders relaxed. “Soon, sin and death will be overcome. Still, it was

the most painful thing I could ever have imagined. I watched Him die and could do nothing to save Him or our plan would have fallen apart. I felt every blow of the whip as they flogged Him. I felt the nails driven into His hands. I—“ He gasped and fell to one knee. “I felt it as the breath left His lungs and He ceased to be!” Yahweh sobbed there on His knee overlooking the Earth as time passed below.

The Spirit enveloped Yahweh. It was a long time before the Spirit spoke. “It was a hard battle, but when Jesus emerges from that tomb, both the battle and the war will be won. Satan will have no real power any more. Jesus will have redeemed the Earth and any who choose to love Him.”

“You speak truth and comfort.” Yahweh looked down at the tomb where Jesus lay buried. Soldiers stood guarding it. Three days had passed and it was time. “Go with select angels to revive Him. Now it is truly finished.”

The Spirit departed and the Father made preparations to welcome His Son, the Overcomer of Death and Sin, back home.

Overcoming

3rd Place Winner

by Zach Roberts

Andy looked up from the floor. His parents continued looking at the ground. No one said anything for a long time. Silence was palpable. Finally, a voice rang out. “Do you want to go over the options now?” It was the doctor. His voice was soft and friendly, but at the time it pierced the air with such sharpness that it was painful to hear. Andy’s mom sighed and nodded, but neither she nor Andy’s father said a word. The doctor calmly outlined the options. Chemo, chemo and more chemo then maybe surgery, if Andy was lucky. He had just been diagnosed with stage three bone cancer. At the young age of 16, Andy still hadn’t even been to school. He hadn’t met his wife, moved out, gotten a real job, had kids or a house or anything. The only thing he could think was,

“Why?” and that word pulsed through his mind over and over. The entire 25-minute car ride was silent. No music, no talking. As a result, Andy’s thoughts played loudly in his head. When they rolled into the driveway, the dog immediately ran over and greeted them. Even the ever-smiling dog could tell something wasn’t right. Andy slowly sauntered into his room and flopped onto his bed. He lay still for a long time, breathing ever so slowly.

Some time later, Andy’s mother knocked on the door. Suddenly, Andy was alert and sat up. He came to the door and nodded when his mother told him dinner was ready. He wandered into the kitchen but had no intention of eating. He poked his food with a fork for half an hour before giving up and heading back to his room. It was Sunday night, which meant school tomorrow. The thought of sitting in school all day

made Andy very anxious. He thought and thought and cried a little as the hours dragged on. His alarm went off, which meant it was 7:00am; time to get up for school. He hadn't slept a wink, literally. He rolled out of bed, as he did every morning for school, and moved toward the shower. He was moving considerably slower this time. He stayed in the shower for a long time, thoughts running through his head at the same pace the water was running down his body. He finally got out, grabbed his bags and got on the bus. His friends were in their usual seats and when he saw them, he stopped. He wondered if he should tell them, or how to tell them, or how to hide it. He was dying and he didn't know how to tell his best friends. He decided not to tell them, for now. He went about the rest of his school day as normally as he could. No one seemed to notice anything different though. Andy repeated this daily routine for the next several weeks before chemo began. Chemotherapy was set to start the next day, a Tuesday, and he still hadn't told anyone. How could he? He wondered if he'd even be able to tell himself he was dying. He didn't feel sick, but he knew he was. He couldn't figure out what would be worse: feeling deathly ill, or not feeling a thing but knowing death is near. Chemo started, and he still didn't tell his friends. Weeks went by, hair fell out, but he didn't get any better. The outlook was as grim as ever, and it felt like there was nowhere to turn for Andy. He couldn't go to his friends. He was an only child. He knew his parents were devastated and he didn't feel like talking to them would help. He felt alone.

In that loneliness, Andy found himself drowning in his own thoughts. It's one thing to wonder what will happen to the people around you if you died. Andy wondered what would happen to those around him when he died. He wondered if anyone would care. Sure, it's a relatively small town, but how long would it be before he faded out of

people's memory? Surely not that long. He couldn't even remember the last time someone died in this town, signifying just how insignificant people's lives seemed to be. The days seemed to drag by. With each passing chemo session, he wondered why he even bothered. "What is this even doing for me?" he mumbled to himself. He said it loud enough that his parents driving could have heard. In fact, he sort of hoped they would. Silence. It was so quiet in the car; you could hear the tires rolling. Andy got home and took a shower before bed. He spent an inordinate time in the shower these days, as one is wont to do when things are, well, not going so well. He found himself studying each of the items in the shower to distract himself. He could almost recite the ingredients for the shampoo at this point. He noticed a new item, however. A razor. He picked it up and peered at it, water running over his hands and the razor. He turned it over and looked at the blade. He studied it for what seemed like an eternity, thinking first about how he wasn't going to reach the age where he would consistently need one. As the time went on, the thoughts got darker. "What's the point? I'm dying anyway and my life is generally bad. Chemo is killing me, metaphorically, and cancer is, literally." He stayed in the shower for a long time. Andy's parents, concerned after hearing the water running for an unusual amount of time, rushed upstairs and knocked on the door and called Andy. No answer. They knocked again. Nothing. They tried the door. Locked. They began to get worried. The water shut off and the curtain was pulled back. Andy came out and went to his bed and went to sleep thinking, "Maybe another day." The days went by. They turned into weeks. Months. Andy got weaker and weaker with each passing moment. The chemo didn't seem to be doing anything. The family was all driving to the doctor for their bi-monthly update. Andy knew what it would entail. The tumor hadn't

gotten smaller, but it hadn't gotten bigger, so more chemo was in order. They walked in to the meeting, and the air was filled with an eerie joy. The doctor had a slight grin.

"The tumor has reduced by 6%. If this continues we'll be able to do surgery by this time next month." Now, this was a feeling Andy and his parents hadn't felt in quite some time. "I knew you'd overcome this, Andy. I didn't raise a quitter!" exclaimed Andy's father. The days once again passed. They turned to weeks. Andy began to feel a little stronger, albeit possibly a placebo effect of sorts. The weeks turned into a month.

Friends, family, neighbors were all gathered together. "We're gathered here today, not to mourn, but to celebrate the life of Andy Bennett." Andy's parents burst into tears in the front row. The reverend went on. "I don't know God's plan. I don't. I wish I did, it would make this job quite a bit easier." He paused and looked around. The church was nearly filled to the brim. "I would be able to sit and tell mourning family members that it would be ok, and I could tell them exactly how. Unfortunately, that's not how this works. Andy Bennett was strong, he fought for a long time. He went to battle with a cold-blooded killer, one that claims over 500,000 lives yearly, and nearly won. I know it's made even harder based on the fact that Andy had turned the corner. Healing was right around the corner. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, Andy was probably going to have surgery just a few days from now. He was on the mend, he was coming back. And then, almost inexplicably, cancer claimed his life. His family, friends, all gathered here today- me included- thought he would overcome it. The doctors initially gave him three months to live. It's been five months since the diagnosis. I wish I could tell a tale of true overcoming. Actually, I wish Andy could tell you. I can't," sighed the reverend. His voice broke and he stopped talking. He looked around again. Misty eyes filled the room. It was

very clear to him how important Andy was to them; there had to be at least 250 people in the room. “I can’t express to you how much I wish Andy were here. To complete his comeback. But maybe that’s not the point. Maybe the overcoming wasn’t meant to be completed by Andy? What if the real overcoming is how we, those left searching for answers, survive this? What if it’s us just healing? Life can’t and won’t ever be the same, that much is true. But we don’t have to allow this to destroy us. The enemy wants to use this to destroy our lives, our happiness. God intends to use this to strengthen us through it. It’s my genuine prayer that years from now, we won’t have forgotten, but we’ll be stronger. We’ll enjoy our lives again. It’s truly what Andy would have wanted.”

Four years later, the ministers wish partially came true. Yes, the town still mourned, but they hadn’t forgotten. October 26th became Andy Bennett day. Today’s date read October 25th. Andy’s parents weren’t in town, though. As a matter of fact, they were in the hospital. Andy’s mom was in labor. The clock struck midnight, and a few minutes later, a baby boy was born. Dustin Andrew. Dustin meaning fighter and Andrew after Andy. Andy’s parents looked at each other with tears in their eyes. Normalcy could never return fully, and there would always be a hole that was vacated four years ago today. But things were beginning to look up. The Bennett family felt like they had begun to overcome.

Thoughts on a Cliff

by Marshley Registe

There it was again, majestic and forbidding. Mangled rock, dark and gray, dirty and brown, mixed with mosses and greens, climbing until it had no rival for miles around it. This was the place. This cliff was where my road always ended. It stood erect and jagged against a darkening sky.

Tonight, there were no stars and there wouldn't be. Any light the sky would offer tonight would come in the form of streaks. Each bolt, painted differently, lashed out as webbed fire across a sky that could only receive the abuse it was dealt. The air here was electrified. It always was. No one knew like I did, however, that it wasn't simply electricity causing sparks to fly here.

The air here was charged with anger and frustration. It was loaded with my indecision and the grief I'd felt for too long over a decision I made too long ago. Here, I sat. On the edge of this cliff, in the middle of a thunderstorm and I watched. I watched the world as it stood its ground against the howling winds and the booming thunder. I watched the strongest trees bend to the will of forces stronger than them and creatures run for shelter in submission to the surrounding danger. For miles around, all life succumbed to the will of the storm.

This scene was not new to me. I'd seen it over and over again. By now, I'd named every lightning bolt and waited patiently for each to make an appearance and greet me. And I thought. I contemplated my decisions and my choices. I thought of my beginning and my ending, of every living thing I'd come into contact with. When one has all of eternity to think, it becomes easy to identify the avoidable mistakes and lost friendships.

You see the dead dreams and living successes. You see every road for more than what it was while it was being travelled. They become fizzled possibilities and missed opportunities.

Then you reach the end and there is only this. The electricity of frustration and disappointment. These are the very reasons I get stuck here. I have seen this storm many times before, always a spectator. My legs dangle from the edge of the cliff, hands folded in my lap politely as I watch and think.

I've come to realize in my time here how many people do this. They watch the storms in their lives and see the destruction. They look at the lives around them bending to the winds and surviving. They see the fires and hear the thunder, and fear sets in. Sometimes, louder than anything, the thunder claps, and we hear, "What if I don't make it this time?"

It gets scary up here on this cliff, surrounded by destruction and some of us... Well, some of us don't make it. Some of us, instead of waiting it out like the forests and animals do, want to finally have control of something up here on this cliff, where there is so little control to be had. So, we jump.

Here's the truly tragic part, however. It's not the storm, or the destruction, or even the jump. It's that moment after the jump, where you've either got time or lost it all, that you see the storm end and realize the you could've made it. The top of the cliff suddenly doesn't look so bad once you've seen the other side of the storm, right?

I watched patiently as the storm began to subside. The fire in the sky began to die away and the embers sizzled slightly but wouldn't reignite until the storm decided on a repeat performance. The rains and winds departed silently, easing away from the mess

they'd made. I listened as the growling in the sky melted into a purr, then rested in silence. My conclusion this time was the same conclusion I came to every time. As I thought of what could be my own remains, my own lifeless body laying at the base of this cliff, my heart would always whisper in all its brokenness, "I could make it."

And I did. My final view of the base of this cliff, the place my mind goes to when it races in any direction without me, was from the top. If my time on this cliff has taught me anything, it's that strength and courage are not in the leap, but the ability to walk away from the edge.