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Skunk River Review Fall 1996, Vol 8

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Katie Jordison

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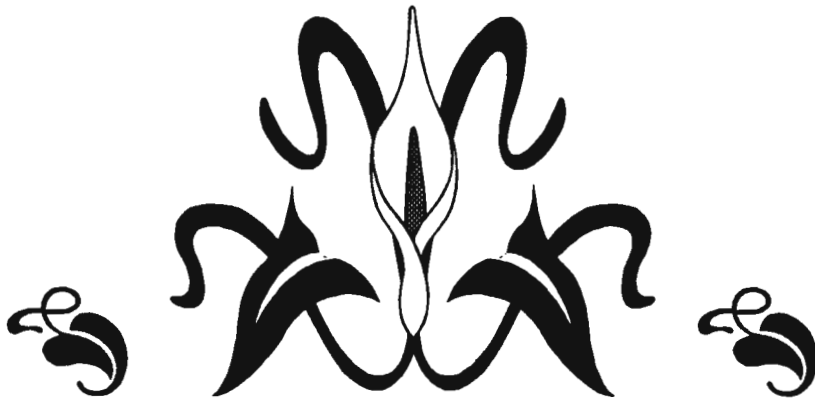
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Composition I



A Child's Voice



Janie Barnett

I couldn't imagine why the Girl's Vice Principal from O'Farrell Junior High would be at my house. I had overheard students in the hallways at school discussing that Mrs. Worth could really be nasty. She was tall and slightly built with graying hair. In fact, even her face seemed to be gray and always serious. As I decided if I should go in, I studied the living room scene through the window. Mom was sitting with a concerned frown on her face and nodding as Mrs. Worth talked. I hadn't attended O'Farrell long enough to get into any trouble, so why would she be in my house? I quietly entered the front door and walked quickly toward the kitchen, where I could eavesdrop. But of course my mother, always the eagle eye, yelled out, "Janie, come in here please."

I paused just out of her sight, "I have to go to the bathroom," I mumbled, hoping that this would get me out of joining the two of them.

"No, please come in here now!" I slowly sauntered into the living room. "Do you know Mrs. Worth?" I paused for a moment and looked from my mom to Mrs. Worth.

"No, I haven't met her." Mrs. Worth stood up and walked toward me.

"Jane, I am the Girl's Vice Principal at the junior high," she said with authority. Noting that she had used my formal name, the one on all of my records, I attempted a smile. I knew I must be in trouble.

She gave me a pointed stare and then said, "Do you know Kathy Moorehead?"

I nodded.

Mom snapped, "Janie, answer Mrs. Worth."

"Yes," I murmured.

"Have you been going to the 7-Eleven store after school with her?"

"Yes," I answered.

She frowned, "Have you taken anything from the store?"

I'm not sure why, but my face felt hot; I felt like I was going to be sick or cry. I choked out my answer, "No."

Mrs. Worth walked over toward my mom and sat down. I couldn't move. I looked at my Mom and saw her studying me like I was a bug under a microscope. Mom decided that she needed to ask the same question, for Mrs. Worth's benefit.

"Janie, did you or Kathy take anything from the 7-Eleven store?"

I quickly responded with a definite frog in my voice. "No!" As I said that word, I knew that I had wondered why Kathy always had things when we left the store. I remembered being envious that her parents gave her money and mine didn't even give me an allowance. Most of the days we stopped, she would tell me to wait and she would get us something. Sometimes I would eat it and sometimes I would pretend I didn't want anything. I also remembered seeing her put stuff quickly into her backpack.

Mrs. Worth stood up again. She walked toward me and put her hand on my shoulder, "Jane, I believe you. But you know, I think you know that Kathy has been taking things, and that you know where she has been keeping them."

I looked up at her and shook my head, "I'm sorry, I haven't seen her hide anything--maybe at her house?"

Mrs. Worth kept her cold hand on my shoulder. "No, we think she has been hiding things in her locker at school. I don't think you know anything about this, but I am asking you to open her locker for me. Some of the other seventh grade girls say that you two know each other's locker combinations."

I looked up at her, ready to argue that I wouldn't open Kathy's locker. I think Mom could tell because she quickly intervened, "Yes, she would be happy to help you."

I stood there staring at the floor. Mom told me that I could be excused, and I ran from the room.

I could hear their voices as I closed my bedroom door. I knew that Mom was telling Mrs. Worth that if I had known, I would have told. I also knew that Mom was doing whatever the school thought was best; at our house the teacher was always right. I lay down on the bed and cried. I wanted to call Kathy and warn her that she was going to be

in big trouble. As I started remembering our trips to the store, I had to admit to myself that I had suspected she was stealing. But she had shared so many secrets with me that I knew why she had problems. Her parents divorced when she was in first grade and she had to go live with her mom.

She had said, "In divorces the mom always gets custody, even when she isn't good." I remember vividly the slumber party at my house when Kathy told me that when her mom got "too mad" she would hold her head in the toilet and flush it lots of times. But how could I describe this to my mom? Would she believe me? I decided not to say anything, guessing that she would think that it still "doesn't warrant stealing." I heard the front door close and my mom walk quickly down the hallway to my room.

She opened the door and walked in and stood beside my bed. "You will meet Mrs. Worth in her office one hour before school tomorrow and open that locker."

I looked up, "Yes, Mom." She said to come to the kitchen and help with dinner. I thought she might want to talk to me to see if she could get more information, but the subject was closed.

Knowing that I wanted time to think by myself, that night I went to bed early. I knew that Mom would discourage my friendship with Kathy. My mother believed in strict discipline and obedience. She wouldn't tolerate disrespect and she was seldom forgiving when mistakes were made. She would always tell us that this was how she was raised in England.

The next day I did open the locker as I was told, and Kathy did get in trouble. She didn't come to school for weeks. She was sent to a juvenile detention center. She had also been stealing from homes in her neighborhood. There were stolen items in her locker and in a closet in her basement. Eventually, Kathy returned to school, but no one wanted to associate with her. I talked to her in the hall to find out if she was mad at me. She wasn't angry because she knew that it wasn't my fault. She said she was glad because she was going to live with her father, if he wanted her. I never saw her after that week.

I had several nightmares after this happened. I couldn't always remember the details. I do recall waking up one night in my brother's room. My brother said that he turned on the light when the vacuum came to life. Mom came in and walked me to my

room. She said I was crying and murmuring to myself, while I was frantically vacuuming. I still can't believe that she didn't wonder why I was going through these nightmares. I know now that she didn't want to know.

I know that this event had an impact on my parenting, which is the toughest job I'll ever do. Children have a voice. Listening for that voice is the most important aspect of communicating with a child. I hope I am doing a better job of listening than the adults I remember from this experience.

Miracle Baby



Linda Shaw

"Gary, I think we'd better get to the hospital," I tell my husband as he walks in the door. I sit down to rest for a moment, and as I do, I feel another contraction start. It starts as a dull pain in my lower back, slowly moves toward the front of my body, and grows viciously tighter by the second. "They're only coming every ten minutes, but they *hurt!*"

It is seven o'clock Monday morning, and I've been having contractions for five hours. The pain is getting worse, and it's time to go to the hospital. My husband Gary frowns as he rubs my shoulders and back. "I'll finish packing, honey. You just relax."

Ten minutes later, I kiss my son good-bye. "Bye, honey. Be good. When you see me again, you'll have a new brother. I love you."

Gary opens the door for me, and as we walk out, my mother says, "Call me. And be careful out there. It's a blizzard."

As we walk out into the frigid morning air, we are blinded by the snow blowing in our faces. The wind whips at us, freezing us to the bone. We are almost to the car, but I stop as another contraction hits me. It doubles me over once again, and as it recedes, Gary helps me into the car. "You okay, honey?"

"Yeah. But I'm worried. The contractions are only ten minutes apart, and not getting any closer. But the pain is getting worse. It wasn't like this with Garin. Something's different."

The drive to the hospital is slow. We slip and slide on the icy roads, and our car rocks from the wind. Gary reaches over and grasps my hand; his fingers rub mine. He smiles a little, but his eyes are concerned, full of worry. "It'll be okay, honey. We'll make it."

"I know."

We are finally at the hospital, and I sit in a wheelchair as the nurse wheels me to my room. "Contractions bad?"

"Yeah. But still ten minutes apart. I'm worried."

"We'll get you checked out and settled in." Her eyes are kind.

Ten minutes later, I lie in the hospital bed hooked up to a fetal monitor. I study the machine, and try to determine if everything is okay.

"The baby's okay, honey," says the nurse. "See? The heart rate is at one-twenty. Normal."

I close my eyes in relief and try to rest. Gary sits on the foot of the bed and looks at me, then the television, then back to me. Soon the nurse comes back. "Do you want to try and walk around for awhile? It may help your labor progress."

She unhooks the fetal monitor, then Gary and I begin to pace the hallways. They smell of disinfectants and medicines, blood and babies. The smell makes me feel drowsy. Every once in awhile I hear a woman scream, and I picture her lying in bed, sweat running down her face, bearing down and pushing. Every time she screams I feel just a bit nauseous, and a little jealous. I wish it were time for me to push, too.

At first it's fairly simple to move around, but as time goes by, it becomes more difficult. Every seven minutes or so we have to stop as a contraction creeps up, takes hold, and wraps around my midsection with cruel fingers.

"I need to rest. Take me back."

Once again, I lie in bed, the contractions stronger and more violent. A different nurse walks in. "Time to check you." Her mouth is grim, very different than the first nurse's. "Lay back, pull the covers down."

Trying to ignore the pain and relax my muscles, I close my eyes as she feels my cervix. "OW! Do you have to be so rough?"

"Just hang on. I'll be done in a minute. You want to know how much you're dilated, don't you?"

"At this point, I don't really care. The baby'll come when he comes."

"Okay, all done. You're at five centimeters. I'd say another two or three hours and you'll have that baby in your arms."

"Really? Is that all?" My voice is half sarcastic, half relieved. I feel like a bitch, but I don't care. She's not the one in pain. I am. Suddenly I dislike her. I don't care for the way her mouth is set: grim and prim. Her eyes aren't kind, like the other nurse's. And I want to hit her, really want to slug her hard for patronizing me.

She leaves.

"I hate her, Gary. She's not nice."

"You're just in pain, honey. It'll be over soon. I promise."

"How the hell do you know? Don't you patronize me either. Leave me alone."

Slowly, I roll to my side. It's not an easy task; I feel like a beached whale struggling to get back to the water.

"Gary, get over here! I need your hand, dammit!"

He rushes to my side, and as I look at the concern in his eyes, I love him more than ever. I also hate him. Why couldn't *he* go through this? Damn jerk.

Little by little, my fingers tighten on his hand. Won't this pain ever stop? I hear Gary gasp, as if my grip were hurting him.

"Am I hurting you?"

"No, it's okay." But his eyes tell me something different. I think I am hurting him. Good.

"Linda, look. Look at the monitor. Look at the heart rate!"

I crane my neck and squint at the monitor. "Oh... Gary! Eighty? It has to be wrong. Maybe the baby just moved."

We stare at the monitor for awhile. Instead of going up, the heart rate drops. Quickly. "Oh ... hurry. Get the nurse, Gary."

He sprints to the hallway, and a minute later the nurse (Miss Prim and Grim) is following him in the room. She looks bored, unhurried. "Look. Look here," Gary tells her. "See? I told you. Seventy-five. Just a minute ago, it was eighty."

Grim and Prim frowns at Gary, frowns at the monitor, and sniffs. "It's all right. The machine does that sometimes. The baby's fine; I'm sure the heart rate will go up soon."

"You're wrong," I manage to croak. The pain is tremendous now. I practice my breathing. "The baby's not okay. Something's wrong. I can tell."

"I've been doing this for ten years," she sniffs. "Nothing is wrong."

Suddenly I feel completely drained of energy, unable to talk. But I try. It comes out in a whisper, and no one hears me. Instead I hear Gary. "Listen. I know something's wrong! So does my wife! This isn't our first baby, and we learned in childbirth classes what the heart rate is supposed to be. I'm getting another nurse."

He stalks out of the room; the nurse follows him. Silently, I curse her. What an arrogant, awful woman! I close my eyes and do my breathing. I wait for Gary to come back with another nurse, preferably one who knows what to do.

"Here, see? Look at the monitor! Look! It's still dropping, and that nurse wouldn't do anything!"

The new nurse looks at the monitor and her eyes widen. She rushes out of the room, and I hear her saying, "Page Dr. Zelnick! Get him now!"

Tears fill my eyes. I am overwhelmed with sadness and terror. My baby, what will happen to him?

Gary rushes in with the doctor and several nurses. "Get an internal in her, now!" the doctor barks. It takes only seconds.

"Still reads the same, doctor."

"Get oxygen!" He walks over to me, looking down at me. His expression fills me with terror. "Listen to me now, Linda. I know you're in a lot of pain, but you need to do what I tell you. We need to get the heartbeat up again; it's down to fifty now. I want you to roll to your side, and keep rolling back and forth. You can't stop until I tell you. Keep this oxygen on and breathe it deeply. Don't try to talk."

The nurses roll me to the right, then to the left. Back to the right, then the left. Over and over. They demand that I do this quickly, without question. The pain is coming in blinding waves. I can't see Gary or the nurses clearly, and their voices are muddled,

blurred. There must be seven faces looking down at me, frowning. The oxygen is making me sick, but I continue to inhale deeply as I roll back and forth.

"Come on, Linda. You have to keep moving; don't slow down. The movement might increase the heart rate."

Roll, roll, roll. I bite down on my lip under the oxygen mask and try to bite back the pain and nausea. I try to do as they say as fast as they want me to do it. My baby's life depends on me. I have to keep moving.

"Just, just get him out. He's dying," I gasp, but no one hears me. Am I even talking? I try again. "Listen to me! Listen! Just cut me open! He'll die!"

I am screaming, but nothing is coming out. I am trying to run under water. Terror and frustration merge. "Won't anybody listen? Cut ... me ... open!"

"Get her into O. R., now! We've got to prep her. Gary, you have to leave, make room for us. It's going to be a C-section."

Suddenly, they are wheeling me down the hall, half-walking, half-running. I look for Gary and see him by one of the nurses. "You have to stay out here," a nurse says to Gary. They are about to wheel me into the O.R., and they are telling him he must stay behind.

"I want to be with her."

"Sorry, you can't. This is an emergency. There's no time left."

Gary looks at me; his eyes are wide with fear. "You'll both be okay, honey. I love you."

My heart breaks as they wheel me away from him. He looks so alone, so scared. And there's nothing left for him to do now but wait.

As they prep me for surgery, the contractions come hard, fast. There's little time between them now, and as each one hits me, I imagine the umbilical cord tightening a little more around my baby's neck. I close my eyes and pray, pray, pray--the only thing I can do. The pain overrides everything, especially my ability to deal with it. No more breathing for me. I am half whimpering, half screaming.

It seems it's taking them forever to prep me. I want to scream, "Just get it done!" Maybe I did, because the doctor is saying, "Hang in there; we're almost ready."

I look up at the ceiling through tears. I am waiting, waiting, waiting. Then a man in green is looking down at me, directly over my face. "Who are you?" I ask.

"Your anesthesiologist."

"Will my baby live?" I know this is not the person to ask, but I know he will say what I want to hear. Besides, his eyes are so nice, so full of empathy.

"Yes, your baby will live. He'll be one of the healthiest babies ever born."

"You think so?"

"I know so. Are you ready?"

"Hell, yes. Put me under. You're right. He will live. I can feel it."

He smiles at me first with his mouth, then with his eyes. At this moment, I think I love him. He says a strange thing under the circumstances. "You have beautiful eyes."

Gently he puts the mask over my mouth and nose. It takes maybe half a second. Then, blackness.

Pain. Horrible, wrenching pain, shooting through my abdomen. A million tiny, sharp knives cutting through me. Red-hot fire eating at me.

I open my eyes.

"...baby. A baby boy, Linda. And he's healthy."

"What?" My throat is on fire. I am dreadfully thirsty.

"Our baby, honey. Kaleb. He made it, and he weighs eight pounds, three ounces."

"Kaleb? He's okay?" Tears are streaming down my face again, a salty mixture of love, relief, and pain.

"Do you want to hold him? He's right here."

"Yes. I want my baby. I need to hold him. And he's okay? Are you sure?" I want to believe Gary more than anything, but I'm afraid.

"Here. See for yourself."

I hold my baby in my arms as Gary helps me support him. Suddenly the pain is unimportant, a million miles away. My baby is alive and healthy, and beautiful. I stroke his face with quivering fingers, kiss his pink, silky cheeks over and over. I can't see the color of his eyes because he's sound asleep, but I know they are a bright, amazing blue. His mouth is like a tiny rosebud, delicate and sweet. And look at the hair! Tons and tons

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of black hair, sticking straight up in the air! As I kiss him, I smell his sweet, warm smell, the best smell in the world, full of innocence, purity, and love. His tiny fingers grip mine as he sleeps, and his rosebud mouth quivers, as if he's dreaming.

"Okay, honey. He needs to go back to the nursery. He's okay, but they need to watch him closely ... because, you know..."

"He almost died, didn't he? It was close."

Gary nods slowly, and his eyes are moist, too. My heart swells with love for this gentle man who is my husband. He leans over, kisses me, wraps his arms around our baby, and takes him from me. He holds his son close, stroking Kaleb's thick, black hair, and kisses him. Father and son--to me, the most touching, beautiful sight in the world.

My baby is no longer in my arms, and the pain returns, viciously. I feel myself fading out, very slowly, and remember how it felt to hold my baby for the first time. I want him again, but we are both too weak. As I close my eyes and drift off, I feel a love too strong for words, a relief more wonderful than I've ever known. And under my closed lids, I see my husband holding our baby close against his chest, close to his heart. It is the most beautiful image I have ever seen.

A Lesson on the Ice



Mike Tearney

I sat and stared across the barren ice. It had a unique beauty and peace to it. The sunshine made the ice sparkle like thousands of tiny stars. A few lonely leaves danced in a beautiful ballet, as the wind whisked across the crystal floor. The cold air hit my neck and sent a chill down my back. It was a refreshing sensation, like standing out in an early April morning rain. I reached down and picked up a handful of snow. The fine powder swirled away as I threw it out of my hand. I looked out through it and imagined I was in one of those tiny snow domes looking out. A break from reality was what I needed right now.

My mind was still in turmoil over the morning artillery barrage. My thoughts were completely cluttered. It had been one thing after another. I had to work overtime, even though I'd promised not to. Then my girlfriend Chris and I had one of our biggest arguments yet. I wasn't in the mood for anything that morning. So when the fight started, I retreated. I decided to go ice fishing. I couldn't seem to escape though; her voice just kept ringing over and over in my head.

"You said you were getting off early last night! I can't plan anything around you. You're just so selfish. Here's breakfast; it's your supper you didn't come home for!" Chris screamed as she threw some leftover meatloaf.

"I'm sorry; it wasn't my idea to work a twelve-hour shift. I'd like some time off too."

"What's that supposed to mean, too? Are you saying I don't do my share?"

"No, that's not what I meant."

"Bull, so what's Connie up to these days?"

"Get off it! Leave me alone."

My mind tried to focus back on the lake. I took a short step towards it and one of the ice picks in my pockets poked me. I looked back at the lake; it seemed to have a duller look now. The ice wasn't nearly as inviting. It was light gray in spots. I remembered the saying, "black and white are nice but don't trust gray." I thought to myself, "It looks safe enough, what the heck. What else could go wrong? Besides my favorite spot's open. I'll be fine. I'm not going back to the house to listen to her bitch." I grabbed my gear and started out onto the ice.

The ice seemed to have a strange sound to it as I walked. It didn't seem to really bother me. Maybe I just didn't care? I was just too distracted by the way the day had started. My thoughts seemed to drift back to the fight.

"Get off it, I haven't started yet!" Chris screamed and began to cry.

"I said 'I'm sorry,' but that's not good enough anymore. You always bring the Connie thing up. You're so insecure. She's my boss. I can't blink without you bitching. Can't you just give it a break? We need the extra cash."

"Money, money, is that all that's important anymore? What about us?"

"I don't know. I can't think straight right now. Things just aren't working out. It's been two years; I don't know what to say or do."

"Maybe we should call it quits."

Suddenly there was a long twang beneath me, and the ice started to crack. I tried to sprawl out but it was too late. As I started to fall through the ice, my mind was suddenly bashed out of its dreamscape. I was in serious trouble. The water rushed in over the top of me.

The cold hit, and I felt the air rush from my lungs. I pushed my gear away and frantically grabbed for a hand hold. Bubbles rushed by and blinded me as I tried to regain

my bearings. My mind was encompassed in fear. Only one thought was present now.

"I'm going to die."

I felt a numbness start to creep over my mind. Some tiny bit of sanity returned as I looked up and saw a dark spot. Somewhere in my confused state, I remembered hearing that you're supposed to swim to the dark spot. Yes, I knew that's what I had to do if I was going to make it. I pushed off the bottom, and with a couple of breast strokes, I reached the spot. Then with a strong kick, I pushed myself through the slushy ice and into the open air. I grabbed a much needed breath. I coughed several times as I tried to regain normal breathing.

I reached for my pocket; thank God they were still there, two ice picks. I grabbed them and started clawing at the ice around me, while I prayed the ice farther out was enough to pull me out of my frozen state. I managed to catch a grip with one pick, and then the other. There was no feeling left in my hands and my body seemed to be a weight, pulling me back into the icy waters. I continued to struggle, bit by bit, until my body lay on top of the ice. I could still hear the ice cracking beneath my weight. I crawled away from the hole towards the shore. I knew I'd be safe there. It seemed to be an eternity away. When I reached solid ground, I rolled onto my back and looked into the sky. I tried to grasp what had taken place.

How stupid could I be? Why did I even go out on the ice? Then I remembered the argument: "... Maybe we should call it quits?" I almost did. I was completely drained of all energy. I was freezing and totally soaked. Reality had just kicked in and some serious revelations came to me: Am I alive? Is there a God? (Yes, there must be.)

I've found that many times in the past, I lost my priorities. It doesn't happen all at once. First it's one thing and then another, until I finally lose perspective. The most trivial things become my life's center. Then I'll find I have one crisis after another. That was the case that winter. My life had become so sterile; I wasn't seeing the whole picture. I was already inside that tiny snow dome.

I learned a lot that day: Don't go out on thin ice because I'm mad or distracted. I found that sometimes I need to step back from a problem and think clearly, then decide

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what's really important. I don't have to rush into things blindly. My highest priority is life itself. I will live it and enjoy it! It's the only one I get.

Totalling Mercedes



Carla Driver

It seemed that the drive home was especially long that brisk fall day. I was hoping that Charlie had gotten off his butt and done something around the house. I had worked ten hours, and all I wanted to do was go home, put on my sweats, and relax. However, Charlie had different plans for us that evening. It seemed that he always had plans for us in the evening (he wasn't working at the time). When I arrived home, I walked into the same mess that was there when I left for work that morning. There he was, pacing the floors, waiting for me.

"What took you so long to get home?" I could see the anger in his face.

"I worked ten today."

"You knew we were going to Chris' to play pool tonight! " he snapped at me.

"I had no idea we were going out!" I snapped back. "Some of us have to work, you know!"

"Are we going or not?" There was a little less snap in his tone.

I could tell by the look on his face that if I said "no" it would be another argument. I tried to rationalize the situation by telling myself that I would have a good time. Then I realized that the reason I didn't want to go was because Mercedes might be there. Mercedes was a stripper who had been dancing at Chris' Go-Go for the past four weeks. Every time we went in to play pool, she would harass me in some way. I was told she did this to all the female customers who went into the bar with their significant others. It seemed that she didn't quit with me, however, because I did not respond to her games. She liked the responses she got from her harassment, and I wasn't going to give her that satisfaction. Despite my feelings, I decided we should go.

"Sure, we'll go. It'll be good for me to let off a little steam. Just give me a few minutes to freshen up and change."

I went upstairs to put on some makeup, and tried to decide what to wear. I finally decided I was going to turn some heads, and went with a red sweater dress and boots. When I started down the stairs, I could see Charlie standing at the bottom of the landing.

"Is that what you're going to wear?" He was not smiling.

"Yes, why not?"

"Who are you trying to impress?" he scolded.

"No one; I just felt like dressing up a little!"

He shrugged his shoulders and headed for the door.

It was a fifteen-mile drive to the bar, so I sat back and tried to relax. I sat staring out the window, and watched the colorful leaves of fall tumble to the ground. In the silence, my mind began to wander. If Mercedes were there, it would be best if we just left. Mile after mile there was nothing but the sound of the tires spinning on the pavement. My mind was now screaming at me. Just say it! Just say it!

"I think that if Mercedes is there we should just turn around and leave." Boy, that felt good. "I'm really not in the mood to deal with her harassment tonight." Again, there was nothing but silence.

It was dark as we crossed the railroad tracks into Cambridge, a scarcely populated Iowa town that only has a bar, a post office, a bank, and a little convenience store. With only one bar in town (a go-go bar), it was not uncommon for women to be there. Charlie found a parking place on Main Street, in front of the bank.

"Are you ready?" I could not see the expression on his face because it was so dark, but I could hear the burning question in his voice.

"Yes." I felt a little uneasy with my answer.

Walking down the barren street, I kept wondering, will she be there? Before we reached the door, I could hear the pounding of the juke box, and hoots and hollers of the men inside. Charlie opened the door, and I walked in. Thick layers of cigarette smoke and cheap perfume hit me in the face. I stood just inside the door, squinted my eyes, and tried to focus in the neon blur of light. Once I gained my vision, I looked toward the

tattered old bar, where the owner of the place usually sat. The owner was a crotchety older lady named Ida. Not surprised that she was there, I waved. She and I have always liked each other. She smiled and waved back. Charlie was standing beside me, waving to the bartender, Bill, for a couple of drinks. Bill, knowing what the two of us drink, had already prepared them.

I turned around to scan my surroundings. My eyes stopped at the tiny four-by-six stage--where was the dancer? I started looking into the crowd to see who the dancer was. It was then that I spotted Mercedes, half naked, rubbing up against some guy. I elbowed Charlie and pointed her way. She hadn't seen us.

Charlie turned to me, with a frown on his face. "Do you want to leave?"

"No! I'm not going to give her the satisfaction of running me out of here. We're staying!"

"Do you want to play pool?"

I shook my head yes, and we headed back to the pool tables. I selected a table close to the pool table, one that would enable me to see who was coming our way. I set down my drink and started searching for quarters in my purse. Finding some quarters, I racked the balls. While Charlie was breaking the rack, I selected my cue stick. I stood by the pool table and waited for my turn.

There never was much conversation between us when we played pool, so I was not surprised at the silence between us. I won the first game.

"Do you want to play again?"

"Sure, your rack."

While Charlie was racking the balls, I went to the bar and ordered us another round. I paid for the drinks and headed back to the table. Along the way, I passed Mercedes.

"Hi!" she said, with a smirk on her face.

"Hi!" I responded and kept walking.

When I reached the table, it was my turn. I made a couple of shots before I missed.

"Charlie, it's your turn."

Before Charlie could get to the table, Mercedes grabbed a stick and began to play on our pool table. This infuriated me. I could feel my body getting hot with anger.

"Hey! What the hell do you think you're doing! This is not your game! Go away and leave us alone!"

With a smirk on her face, she just kept playing, even when she wasn't making any balls. I'd finally had enough. I got out of my chair and went over to the table to confront her.

"Stop playing these head games with me. You weren't invited and you're not going to play on this table!"

"Who's going to stop me? You?" she laughed.

"Mercedes, I'm not going to put up with any more of this. Now get away from this table!"

Not saying a word, she pushed me backward. The anger pushed me forward. Like an animal, I went for her throat. I picked her up with the pool stick still in her hand. Her feet were not touching the ground. I walked carrying her about ten feet and slammed her into the bathroom door. I was still holding her by the throat when she tried to hit me with the pool stick. I grabbed the pool stick with my left hand and tried to rip it out of her hand. Before I could get the pool stick from her, the bartenders Bill and Connie came running over. Connie (a very large lady) stepped in between us. She grabbed the pool stick.

"That's enough, let's break it up!"

I let go of Mercedes' throat but kept a hold of the pool stick. Mercedes grabbed me by the hair and started pulling. With each pull of my hair, I got more angry. I reached around Connie and pulled Mercedes out from behind her. Just as I was getting ready to pound her face in, Bill grabbed my arm. Connie ran over and grabbed Mercedes by the back of the neck.

"Calm down, Carla!" Bill yelled at me.

"All right, everything's fine." I stepped back.

I stood there for a couple of minutes watching Connie. She had Mercedes bent over at the waist, holding her by the back of the neck.

"Mercedes, if you don't shut up, I'm going to dock your pay."

She just couldn't keep her mouth shut. Turning her head in my direction, she cussed at me. With every filthy word I got more angry. I walked over and grabbed the back of her hair. I pulled her away from Connie again. Wham! I punched her square in the nose. Down to the floor she went, out like a light. Mercedes looked like a ragdoll shoved under that shelf, her arms flopping at her side and her head bent sideways. Realizing that I had just hit another person, I stepped back and began to cry. Bill and Connie picked her up and carried her into the dressing room.

A few minutes later, Bill came back out. I was sitting at my table when he walked over.

"She'll be all right." He said, kind of laughing.

"I'm so sorry for fighting in the bar. I just couldn't take any more of her shit." I began to cry again.

"Oh, don't worry about it. I'm sure she had it coming."

I looked at Charlie, "Can we please leave?"

"Sure." This was the only thing he said through the whole incident.

As we were leaving, I felt I needed to apologize to Ida for fighting in her bar.

"Ida, I'm very sorr... " she cut me off.

"She had it coming." There was a slight grin on her lips.

We continued out the door. The fifteen-mile drive home was silent. I could not believe what I had done. I felt ashamed that I had hit another person. This behavior was so unlike me. I have always believed that hitting people was not the way to solve conflicts.

I don't know; maybe I was wrong. Maybe hitting is the only thing some people understand, because from that day on she has treated me with respect. Was it the beating she took, or was it the two hundred dollars the bar fined her?

Chrysalis



Barbara Neal

The house seemed to have stopped in a moment of time. It never looked back; it never reached forward. Broken panes of glass in the windows looked forlornly across the overgrown lawn. Missing shingles on the roof told of sudden summer storms. The screen door hung precariously from the top hinge, slightly askew.

Tentatively we ventured inside. A large freezer stood in the center of the kitchen with the odors of spoiled milk and rancid meat permeating the air. Scraps of linoleum clung to the wooden floor. The ceiling buckled in the center, parts of it hanging low enough to touch. In a corner stood an old Franklin stove, cast-iron black. It seemed to have stood there forever, bearing witness to the degradation of the house.

I fell in love with the house immediately. No matter that the walls and ceilings would need replacing. No matter that there was no plumbing or furnace. For the first time in my life I knew that I was "home." The house called to me. The pasture echoed its refrain. "Come home," it seemed to whisper. "Here is where you will find your heart's desire."

In the fourteen years of our marriage, I had never had a real home. Like gypsies, we had spent all of those years constantly moving. I no longer bothered to unpack the boxes. There was no need. I would only have to pack them again. My husband couldn't quite believe that this was where I wanted to live, and my teenage daughter cried. Here was an opportunity to build some permanence into our lives. I jumped at the chance. I felt that my traveling days were over. I was tired of moving, of leaving things behind, of leaving friends behind. I needed a place to call my own. It was the first time I had made any of the decisions in our marriage; I definitely wanted to live in this house!

My marriage had become almost unbearable. He drank constantly to deal with his stress. I had crawled inside a cocoon of my own making, safe from his ranting. However, as we settled into a routine of living in the country, parts of my life became more enjoyable. The kids were developing friendships in school. It was a new thing for them. In the past there hadn't been much point in making friends, only to lose them when we would move. My husband had a job to go to five days a week, which allowed me to stay at home.

As winter approached, we became confined to the indoors. My husband's outbursts became more frequent, more frightening. He had put on weight, pushing the scale to over two hundred pounds. The drinking got worse. It wasn't enough to have a few drinks in the evening; he was never without his bottle. There were bottles of vodka and gin, bottles of wine and whiskey everywhere. There were some stashed under the porch. There was one under the seat of the pickup. There were even a few down by the river. His drinking pushed me into withdrawal and the children began to hide. "Where's Dad?" they would whisper as they came home from school.

He was twenty years older than I. How can someone love and hate a person at the same time? I hated what he had become. With a bottle dangling from his hand, he would stumble, falling sometimes, just getting to the house. I began to see my situation as hopeless. Perhaps, if I hung in there long enough, I would outlive him and be free.

Being a "Jack of all Trades, Master of None" had made getting a job easy, but keeping one difficult. Working also interfered with his drinking habit. When an opportunity came for him to go to school in Kansas City, he took it. He would be gone throughout the winter, home on weekends.

This was very frightening to me. I had never lived alone. Now I had three children and a house to care for. I thought that I would miss him terribly.

It was a struggle to survive. The house was drafty, as old farm houses often are. The kids and I pulled together to make everything work and provide for ourselves. We drove the old pickup truck over frozen corn stalks down to the river, where I learned to operate a chain saw and to spot dead trees for firewood.

Jenny was two years old that year. Bundled in her snowsuit she would trudge along with us to the forest's edge. She never complained. It was all an adventure to her. Heather, 13, and David, 11, were strong enough to carry the wood through snow drifts. There was laughter in the woods. Together we worked through the silence of winter to keep ourselves warm.

We began to relax. The children and I became very close that winter. We worked together; we laughed and played. We snuggled in front of the television and soaked up the warmth from the wood stove.

Then spring arrived. My husband came home.

The harmony that the children and I had been experiencing dissipated like fog in the sunshine. Fearful of waking the giant, we no longer laughed. We tiptoed.

I'm sure that he thought that now that he was home everything would be as it had been before. But we had changed! I knew that my marriage was over. I could take no more. To watch my beautiful children shrivel inside was more than I could bear. Still, I procrastinated. Could things really be so bad? How could I live alone? I began to realize that I was alone anyway. I had kept my children warm, and housed, and fed; I had repaired the frozen water pipes in the dead of winter; I had kept the bills paid. I was already alone.

On my way home from grocery shopping one sunny afternoon, Jenny mumbling quietly in her car seat, I was gripped by a terrible fear. He had been drinking for two days nonstop. I began to imagine what lay in store for me when I would pull into the driveway. I had never experienced such despair. I began to examine the trees, ditches and utility poles along the edge of the highway. If I hit one hard enough I would never have to go home again. I was pregnant again. I had sunk to my lowest. I would have rather died than go home. Then reality struck. What would happen to my other children if I were to die? Not how could they live without me, but how could they live with him? No, suicide was not the answer.

I had to go home. I had to ask for a divorce. I had to survive; we had to survive.

A few days later I summoned my courage. There was a huge bonfire in the back yard. The night was cool. Stars twinkled overhead, oblivious to the fear in my heart.

Creating ghostly figures in the pale light, the children played in the shadows that the firelight cast upon the lawn. It was quiet. A soft giggle here and there betrayed the light hearts of the kids. My heart was heavy. Holding a bottle of vodka, my husband sat next to me. The soft glow of the fire accentuated his unshaven face, features slack and unaware of what was ahead.

Quietly, I said, "I want a divorce."

The silence was deafening.

Slowly he turned to face me. "What?" he slurred, waving his bottle in my direction.

"I want a divorce." My God, I had said it. I had said it twice! I braced myself. I had no idea what sort of reaction would be forthcoming.

"I can change," was all he said.

I pondered those words. "It's too late," I replied.

My breath was coming hard and labored. Adrenaline rushed through my body. "I'll pack your things for you. I want you to leave." With that said, I took the kids into the house and closed the door.

The next month was touch and go. I did a great deal of crying and soul searching. Was I really doing the right thing? From the depths of my being I searched for the strength to meet each day as it came. I was building a reserve and touching bases with myself. The cocoon I had so carefully wrapped myself in was beginning to change. I stood my ground through every imaginable assault. There were nights when I would wake up and find him standing beside the bed and staring at me. There were times that I knew he had been in the house, searching. The final call for courage came late one afternoon in the back yard.

I had been down the road to visit my best friend. He had told me, "If you go back to him, I will still be your friend, but I will never speak to you again." It gave me the inner courage that I needed.

There, in the back yard, stood my husband of many years and my son. "Mom," began David, "if you won't let Dad stay, then I'm going to go with him."

My heart stopped. This was my baby. I had nursed him at my breast. I had held him through childhood illnesses. I had cried with him over skinned knees and laughed with him in our joy.

Beyond their vision stood Heather. Her eyes were wide in terror. She slowly shook her head. "NO!" came from her silent lips. I looked at them in disbelief. I carefully weighed my thoughts. "David," I said, "I guess you're old enough to make that decision." I walked away from them and into the house. They stood, rooted to the earth. Mine was not the reply that they had expected.

It is now ten years since the awful spring. My children have grown, each in their own way, in their own time. I have started a second family. This one is untouched by the negative aspects of living with an abusive alcoholic. The house still stands on the little hill and watches the drama unfold within. My chrysalis has shattered. I have emerged, and although my wings are still unfolding, I will soon spread them and I will soon fly.

The Annual BJIOAHL Baseball Draft



Scott P. Mein

It was a Saturday morning, the last weekend of March. The harsh winter weather was nothing but a memory. Although baseball season was still a couple of weeks away, thoughts of the national pastime were on all of our minds. The large clock on the wall read 8:45, and the Commissioner of baseball was preparing the "War Room" for the annual player draft. It was not the Commissioner of Major League Baseball, but instead the *beloved* Commissioner of the BJIOAHL fantasy baseball league. The eighth season of competition would soon begin, and the day of the draft was eagerly anticipated by everyone in the league. The personal ridicule and friendly banter among the league's owners during the draft were always the most fun of all.

Sixteen owners, each confident of becoming this year's champion, had traveled from five different states to participate in the game which obsessed them. Fantasy baseball is a game that can be played by any number of people who take turns selecting real-life major league players into fantasy teams. When the baseball season begins, every team scores points, based on the actual performance of "their" players in real games.

"Make sure you set up the tables correctly," Butch told a couple of the owners who had arrived a little early at the rented shelter in Urbandale. As Commissioner of the "Bo Jackson It's Only A Hobby League," Butch was in charge on draft day. He was a huge person whose face was hidden behind a long, thick beard with nearly equal amounts of gray and black. The thinning hair atop his head was usually covered by a brown and orange St. Louis Browns baseball cap.

"Remember, we need the eight tables arranged in a square. Put two tables end-to-end in order to form each of the four sides," he ordered the owners of the Terminators and the Brew Crew. They did so with precision as the other team owners filed in.

The seating at the draft was very important. Seating assignments were determined by the league's final standings of the previous season. The top four owners received the prestige that went with sitting along the north wall of the building. Everyone else sat, in a clockwise order, according to where he/she finished the year before. The door of the shelter slammed shut and into the room strolled Dave, the owner of the Career Enders, carrying doughnuts and beer.

"Here comes the worst team in the league," laughed Butch, the owner of the Golden Dingbats, amid assorted catcalls from several others.

"Shut up," Dave replied. "I may have finished in last place last year, but this year is going to be different! I am going to win it all."

Keith, the owner of the Slim Pickens franchise, joined in the heckling. "Hey, Dave, there's your seat over there on the west wall with all the other losers."

"Shut up, you idiot," snapped Dave before he sat down and shoved a doughnut into his ample mouth. A few seconds later the first doughnut was followed by another, then both were washed down by a large gulp of beer.

The draft was about ready to begin, and all sixteen owners were in place. Mark sat in the defending champion's seat and was presented the traveling trophy that signified his superiority in the previous season. He stood up and announced to the gathering, "I just want to thank each of you for donating your money to the Southside Stars last year. I want everyone to know that I plan to be sitting in this same spot again at next year's draft." Before he could even sit down, he was showered with a chorus of BOOS.

Sitting in the sixteenth position, Dave hurled a white powdered doughnut at Mark. "Sit down and shut up, you loser," he said, after hitting the champ with part of his breakfast. "You were lucky last year, and you know it!"

After Mark brushed the powdered sugar from his Yankees pinstriped jersey, the Commissioner declared that the draft was officially underway. Everyone anticipated the announcement of the first draft pick. A look around the room revealed that each owner had his/her own *modus operandi*.

The owner of the Parrot Heads, Tony, had spent countless hours gathering statistical data from the previous baseball season. Spread out in front of him were at least

a dozen different computer printouts. It looked as if he had recorded every possible statistic on every single player. Through wire-rimmed eyeglasses, he stared at his printouts with unwavering focus, like a college freshman cramming for a biology exam.

The owner of the league's rookie team, the Rube Bakers, had only a baseball preview magazine that he had picked up at the newsstand on the way to the draft. "You probably can't even pronounce half of the players' names," snickered Al, who owned the Steel Curtain. "Did you even do any preparation for this?"

Scott brought his computerized rankings in a locked portfolio, paranoid that someone else might look at them. He reached into his pocket and produced the key that unlocked the file. "Why would anyone want to look at your information? Nobody wants to finish eleventh," mused Jim, the owner of Kato's Yellow Swine.

Greg, who owned The Tang, looked over his notes with a long, fat cigar hanging from his mouth. He normally didn't even smoke, but he would always light up a smelly cigar at the draft because he knew it irritated the other owners. With a poker face and a worn Boston Red Sox hat resting atop his jet-black hair, he examined the list of players he had assembled. He looked up and laughed each time someone told him to put out that stupid cigar.

Terry, whose team, The Rogues, was in its third year, guzzled down a tall Rogue beer that he brought with him to the draft. Sitting in the thirteenth position was Brian, wearing a Chicago Cubs hat and Mark Grace jersey. He made no attempt to hide the fact that he coveted the Cubs' first baseman. Everyone knew he *loved* Mark Grace because he had always drafted him each year in the past. He hoped this year would be no different. Karen, the owner of the Land Sharks, was always quick to point out that she won the championship in 1992. "If any of you guys have any questions about baseball, just let me know, and I'll try to help you out," she laughed. "Everybody knows my strategy at the draft. I don't care about their batting averages; I just choose the players who *look* the best in a baseball uniform!"

The draft began with one superstar after another being selected. "Hey, Dave," hollered the owner of the Rake Leaves, "why don't you draft Ryne Sandberg?" He was referring to the Career Enders' second-round selection the previous year. Shortly after

that draft, Sandberg announced his retirement, and Dave had wasted a pick. Everyone had always told Dave that Sandberg quit because he was embarrassed to be a Career Ender.

A short while later, Brian selected Jose Canseco, and the Terminators' owner quipped, "Are you taking him as a pitcher or an outfielder?" That derision pertained to the outfielder's brief stint on the mound the previous May, when he tore a muscle in his shoulder and missed the rest of the season.

"Canseco couldn't hit water if he fell out of a boat," Tony chimed in from the corner of the room. The insults continued to fly the rest of the day. No one was immune to the taunts and jeers of the group.

Dave's turn came around, and he stood up to announce, "The Career Enders take Mark Grace of the Cubs."

Immediately, Brian threw his Cubs hat at Dave and cried, "You jerk, you knew I wanted him. I hope he breaks his leg on opening day and misses the entire season."

Minutes later the Rube Bakers selected Shane Mack. The place erupted with laughter. "What's so funny?" asked Rod, the owner of the team, after order was restored.

"You moron," laughed Greg, while blowing cigar smoke in Rod's face. "Shane Mack signed to play baseball in Japan two months ago. Do you ever read the newspaper, or do you just look at the pictures?"

As the draft wound down, everyone waited for the inevitable. Each year at least one owner would attempt to draft a player who had already been selected. In the seventeenth round, it finally happened. Once again, the Rube Bakers were the butt of the joke when Rod selected Greg Swindell of the Houston Astros.

"That's fine," said the Commissioner, "but he was picked three rounds ago, and *you* were the one who picked him! Are you paying attention at all?"

A casual observer might have thought that members of this group were not good friends, but nothing could have been further from the truth. BJIOAHL owners were a group of people who got together once each year for a single purpose. They were baseball fanatics who enjoyed kicking their buddies' butts in competition of any kind.

They would gladly donate blood to a fellow owner in time of need, but wouldn't think twice about taking advantage of him/her in a trade.

After five hours, the draft finally came to an end. The owners gathered their belongings and returned the rented shelter to its original condition. Cigar smoke still lingered in the air. Draft day may have seemed silly to someone who had never played the game, but to the members of the BJIOAHL fantasy baseball league, it was the greatest day of the year. It was the same ritual they had gone through every year since 1988. There was a certain bond and a special camaraderie among the team owners. Regardless of the insults directed at one another, everyone parted the best of friends. They all knew it was just part of the fun. Even though the baseball season still awaited the sixteen hopeful team owners, the very next day anticipation for next year's draft would begin all over again.

Angie



Kim Edgecomb

"Come on," said Angie as we left her house for school. "Let's stop at the store for some Rainblow." Rainblow was a five pack of bubble gum balls that were the colors of the rainbow. It was the best.

"I'm not supposed to go before school. You know that!" I told her for the millionth time.

"Who cares? Like your old man is really going to find out," she taunted. She had a way of making me feel about two inches high.

We left for the little, family-owned store down the street. As we walked, I kept checking around to see if my dad's baby blue Ford Galaxy was coming. We went in and bought the five-cent Rainblows and trudged on to school. I really hated to be late to school. I was never late for class except one time before and it was Angie's fault. I looked at my watch and we had five minutes left before class started. There were still two more blocks to walk, and they were long blocks. I looked around again for the car. No sign of it. I was almost as afraid of being late for school as I was of my dad. After we left the store, Angie walked as slow as a snail.

"Come on," I begged. "We're going to be late."

"You're a chicken," she replied. I was a chicken.

"I don't want to be late," I said as I imagined my fourth grade class laughing as we walked in and then the teacher calling my parents to let them know I was late to class. Just then it started raining. The slower we walked, the wetter we got. It didn't even phase her. She was not the typical whining girl. She was tough. Rain was not going to make her melt.

We walked into class. My heart was pounding, because I was afraid the teacher would take me to the principal's office and call my dad. Mrs. James asked why we were late and Angie made up some stupid story. We were given ten minutes detention, told to go dry off and that was it. All that anxiety for nothing. Angie just looked at me and smiled. It was like she could read my mind sometimes. She ran her fingers through her long raven black hair and sat down; her face looked smug and defiant.

She was my best friend. She never got good grades and wasn't even very smart; she didn't know the right words to the Christmas carol *Silent Night*--but she knew everything. She was, what my mother called, street smart--every parent's nightmare. She lived with her mother and two older brothers who were more rebellious than she was. Because she worked two jobs, her mom did not have a lot of time to spend with her, so the brothers took care of her. Taking care of her meant letting her run the streets and doing whatever she wanted, as long as she left them alone with their girlfriends to smoke marijuana and do the "wild thing" in their basement bedrooms.

Angie was the one to give me my first cigarette. At the age of seven, she began to smoke. She would steal the cigarette butts from her mother's ashtrays when she would pretend to empty them into the garbage and would either smoke what was left or, sometimes, take a bunch of them and reroll the tobacco with a cigarette paper. Angie was really happy when she stole a whole pack of brand new ones from her brothers or one of their girlfriends. I even remember her taking some of the butts out of my own parents' ashtrays.

One time, when she actually had her own pack, she talked me into trying one. It was fun, but I really didn't like the smoke burning my eyes and turned down any further offers. I'm sure she didn't care since that meant more for her to smoke, but she always offered anyway.

Angie was the one who taught me how to cuss and spit. We would go out behind her garage and have spitting contests and see how loud we could yell bad words when people would drive by. She would laugh hysterically at me if I didn't know what one of the words meant, so I tried to act like I knew, even if I really didn't.

We were always going on new adventures. Tomboys in our t-shirts, jeans and suede moccasin boots, we would tromp through the creek from my backyard to the little store down the street to explore the tunnels below the store property. Angie said we had to be careful since bums, sometimes, slept in the gutters and had knives. We had gone through the old abandoned house that was on the next block. Nobody lived there, but we found blankets and a wind-up alarm clock on the floor in one of the rooms and the time was right. We tipped over garbage cans in the alley on her block until one of the neighbors chased us down the alley with a bat. We went sledding with all the boys in the neighborhood, and even, while her mother was home, looked through some *Playboy* magazines behind her garage. We were inseparable, which I'm sure caused some of my mother's gray hair.

Angie pushed me past my fears and pulled my invincibility to the surface. I did just about anything she dared me to do, from walking across the monkey bars six feet above the ground to stealing a pack of gum from the department store. I remember coming home from the ice cream shop--I wasn't supposed to go there either. We were cutting through behind the school yard and Angie stopped in the back of the school building and picked up a rock.

"Let's throw rocks at the window," she said as she nodded her head toward the huge school window and curled one corner of her mouth upward in a half smile.

"No way," I said. I was shocked that she could think of breaking a school window. It was unheard of.

"Don't worry. It's not going to break," she started taunting me. "Just throw it. Watch." She threw the rock; it hit the glass pane and it bounced onto the grass. "See," she smiled her told-you-so smile.

With my heart racing, I picked up a rock. I couldn't believe I was actually going to do this. I looked at her once more and she pointed at the window with one hand while the other rested on her hip. I felt like a puppy being commanded to go. I took a deep breath and threw the rock. The glass shattered and the rock landed in the second grade room beneath the bulletin board. My guts wretched.

"Oh, shit." I started running. Angie followed. After about a block, I was out of breath. My adrenaline rush was almost gone, but my heart was racing wildly. I just looked at her, my eyes wide.

"Don't worry," she reassured, "nobody saw, and nobody knows you did it." We started walking toward her house. I knew, and the butterflies in my stomach were still flying around.

"Angie, I threw the rock and my fingerprints are on it," I said nervously, almost in tears.

She began to laugh hysterically and fell on the ground rolling around. It was so funny; I finally started laughing and the subject never came up again. In the back of my mind, I always wondered if they knew who threw the rock.

We were friends until the year we went to junior high. I became involved with school. Angie became involved with drugs. My presence was a reminder of her conscience and it was easier for her to find excitement without me around. I was finally released from being the loyal friend and living a life of lies and risks, though it had been fun for a season.

I didn't see her again until a few months ago. I'm sure she didn't know who I was. She was buying a pack of cigarettes and getting some gas at a convenience store. She looked exactly the same as twenty years ago--t-shirt, frayed jeans, and the same suede moccasin boots. The only thing different this time were the dark circles under her eyes, the track marks up the inside of her left arm and the three scraggly looking little kids she was dragging behind her. I felt sorry for her, but I was thankful at the same time. It wasn't me--and it could have been.

Healing Time



Amy De Leon

It was late summer in Arizona, and the sweltering heat had wrung the moisture from everything. Creating an unbearable bed of coals, the sun beat down on the pavement and parking lots. As we jogged across the parking lot, I could feel the soles of my thongs melting on the sticky tar. My T-shirt clung to my back and salt stung my eyes with each blink. How I wished we had stayed home in the conditioned air, but we had promised Elizabeth a dog that day, and a promise is a promise.

I could see the door to the Humane Society slightly ajar as a lingering couple spoke a few last words to someone inside. Once we were inside, the 65-degree atmosphere engulfed us and cooled the beads of sweat that had bathed our bodies.

“May I help you?” asked a slightly overweight woman with thick-lensed glasses and a heavily painted face. As she smiled over the counter, we exchanged introductions and other such niceties. Then she motioned to a boy in his late teens. He sauntered over, received his instructions to show us the dogs, and gestured for us to follow him. He led us to the kennels that lined a small room, a room much smaller than the lobby of the Humane Society, which employed 10 times fewer people than the number of dogs sardined into the confining cages. We paced along the narrow walkways, our footsteps echoed among the yelping and yipping. Spaniels and poodles, setters and shepherds, mutts and purebreds, all outcasts discarded and thrown together, all hoping for a chance to survive.

In the last cage, there was silence and stillness and a yellow Labrador named Daisy--as the card on the door of the cage had read--with deep, brown, mellow eyes. Something in those eyes pleaded with me, something much louder than her sorrowful silence. She pressed her slender nose between the links and eagerly licked my hand. We

requested a leash from the boy and took the dog to the outside pen, the testing grounds for home-seeking prospects, the stage upon which all animal performances hung on a balance between life and death. Daisy gave a stellar presentation. She won the part.

On the drive home, Daisy exuded excitement, overwhelming us. Equally, Elizabeth's excitement overwhelmed Daisy as they played on that first day. Only after several days had passed did Daisy show her "true colors." She was not a passive, mellow, calm footstool or a hyper, anxious, galloping nuisance; she was a happy medium: a calm, quiet, playful, loyal, tail-wagging dog.

Elizabeth fell in love with her almost immediately. Daisy became her doll and pillow, chair and blanket, bed and horse, and many more conveniences Elizabeth desired. They played together inseparably, constantly, and Daisy filled the void for Elizabeth that Ray Jr., the baby brother she missed so much, left behind. I remember the day he died so clearly, as if a VCR in my mind had played it back. But that seemed so long ago. Elizabeth could not understand where heaven was or why she could not go there to see her brother, but these questions were forgotten with the new dog to occupy her time.

So the days passed, wounds healed, and the dog grew from a six-month-old puppy to a two-year-old dog. Elizabeth, too, had grown a year and a half, celebrating her fourth birthday with a party in the park. No longer in Arizona, we enjoyed the cool, Iowa September breeze and the many shades of fall colors. Daisy ran full speed through the grass followed by a horde of children toting water balloons and laughter. When the gap between her and the threat of getting wet was large enough, Daisy stopped and waited, taunting the children. After all the balloons had burst, spraying many of the children with water, Daisy was still dry. Laughing when they slid off onto the ground, the children all took turns trying to ride on her back. At the end of the party, when mothers had come to gather their children, many of their faces bore the signs of Daisy's saliva and the happiness she gave to each of them. That was a wonderful day.

Winter was a new experience for Daisy and Elizabeth. They had both only seen the dry ground, Saguaros, and red-rock mountains of Arizona. Tumbleweed and Joshua trees thrived even on Christmas day, but not this Christmas in southwestern Iowa. While bundled in a snowsuit and other winter accessories she had never worn before, Elizabeth

played in the snow. The few times Daisy ran by her and knocked her down brought anguish to her face because it took great effort to stand up again. I could not help but laugh. Again, later that week, an unstifled chuckle escaped my lips as I watched Elizabeth lying flat on her Red Flyer sled while Daisy, her best friend, chauffeured her around the yard. Giggles filled the air and my heart.

Winter attacked us during the next few weeks, bombarding us with blizzards and below-zero temperatures. We watched TV as the weatherman threw boiling water in the night air only to see it crystallize before hitting the ground. He also blew soap bubbles that froze to the consistency of peeling, dead skin after a terrible Arizona sunburn. These days felt longer with the cold and freezing water, cracking pipes and increasing worries. Then, one day in late January, the cold did not matter, the ice did not matter, nothing mattered.

As we stepped out of our car onto the ice that paved a path to our front door, we noticed droplets of blood staining the whiteness of winter. We followed the trail, which had soon become a pool of red surrounding the lifeless body of Daisy. In retrospect, I should have brought Elizabeth inside the house before investigating any further, but that was what I *should* have done. Instead, there I stood, frozen as she knelt beside her best friend, her tears freezing before they touched the ground. Tears welled in my own eyes, and I squeezed my eyes shut, but the tears rolled down my face as real as the pain I felt for my baby girl. A flood of memories filled my mind. I knew that she, too, was reliving the same pain.

Knowing that she would never see Daisy again, it was hard for me to take her from the dog; it was almost as hard as it was to take her from her brother. It did not matter to her how Daisy had died, or why, or that heaven was Daisy's home now. I could not seem to answer the same life and death questions that Elizabeth had asked about little Ray's death. The idea that perhaps little Ray now played with her dog in heaven seemed to give her no comfort. For days she cried, as did I, until there were no more tears left to cry.

Now, our house seems strange, empty of the life Daisy took with her when she died. The strangeness will fade in time, but the memory of that day will be etched in our minds forever. In the spring we are going to the Animal Rescue League. I am not quite sure if I can do this again, but we promised Elizabeth a new puppy, and a promise is a

promise. Where is heaven anyway? And why can't you go there? How do you answer questions like these?

Dolls--Not



Heidi Weitzel

“How much money did you say you made a week?”

“Around two thousand dollars.”

“Two thousand dollars!”

“Yeah, it’s great.”

“Where do you make that kind of money?”

“At the Doll House.”

“What’s the Doll House?”

“A topless bar.”

I figured the best way to curb my curiosity was to go to the Doll House and experience it for myself. A co-worker, who uses the alias *Sky*, works at the Doll House as a stripper, and during the conversations we had about the money she makes dancing, she invited me to go and see what her job entailed. This was perfect timing for me to find out what everyone was talking about, especially how glamorous it is to strip. I didn’t want to go alone, so I invited two close friends and my co-worker’s boyfriend. We scheduled a time and met at the bar.

As we walked further in, I felt really uneasy and tried to control my shaking hands. I stumbled around to find a seat. At first, I didn’t look around much. I only focused on what was going on right in front of me. I was uncomfortable and didn’t know how I was going to handle the many eyes that would be staring back at me and the expressions that would soon follow.

Luckily, the tension I was feeling all over my body was eased when the cocktail waitress offered all of us a drink. She was very pleasant and not topless. This made me feel comfortable because she was fully clothed. Her reaction to us was very casual and laid back. I figured she was experienced in making outsiders or newcomers welcome.

As my uneasiness started to fade, I got up the courage to look for Sky. I had a good idea where she might be: dancing. Her boyfriend told me that she was just completing her routine, so I knew I would have to observe someone else. The next dancer was young, pretty, and very much in shape. My immediate reaction was to tell my girlfriends, "Shit! I'm going to have to do some extra workouts this week to look that good." I was envious. I was a bundle of nerves, but my sense of humor helped me to hide my lack of self-confidence and to feel a little in control of myself. By my friends' laughter, I knew they were feeling the same way.

The longer I watched her dance, I noticed that she was not taking off her clothes and wondered why. I thought, "This is cool; some don't take off their clothes and just do dance routines. I could do this and probably make about half of the two thousand a week, which still sounds good to me." But instead of guessing, I decided to ask Sky's boyfriend; I knew he would know. He explained how the process works. He said the first part of the stage (the part closest to the entrance) is where the women, or "dolls" as the D.J. refers to them, dance to two songs fully clothed. After the second song, the dancers move to the end of the stage, where they proceed to take their clothes off and finish dancing to two more songs.

In the last stage, the dancers "work the floor," by going to any man and sitting on his lap. They start rubbing and grinding up and down and all around. This was very different to watch and made me feel sick to my stomach. I knew deep down inside my gut there are better occupations in society for these dancers. When I asked Sky why she danced, she said simply, "The money is great and I can buy anything I want."

Reality hit me. I could never imagine myself half-nude, pumping and grinding on some stranger. I would want something more for myself, something I feel is very important for women, R.E.S.P.E.C.T. There were some dancers who would literally

squeeze their breasts together, smashing their cleavage into these men's faces, which triggered enormous cash flow in the dancer's G-string.

I was amazed at the motionless facial expression the dancers exhibited. They possessed cold and lifeless Terminator eyes, clouded with dollar signs. They hardly smiled, but did when the smile was required. Usually, that was when money was waving back and forth in the air. The dancers showed little emotion when dancing, and being an outsider looking in, I was able to see something more than just sexuality. I was able to see how humans are conditioned by a society that sometimes forces women and men to forget what is really valued in life: love, happiness, caring, and respect for one another. At this time, I knew who I was once again, and I no longer cared if I had a gorgeous, knockout body or the handful of money the dancers carried. I knew I wasn't a dancing robot with a perfect figure, and I knew that an enormous amount of money could not make me want to lose my sense of identity and end up with the loneliness of these dancing dolls, a loneliness of having others only seeing what is on the outside and not the inside.

The men's behaviors were just as fascinating to me. They also showed small amounts of emotion. I guessed most of them were in their own fantasy land. All they had to do to keep the fantasy rolling was to put another dollar in the human slot machine. Their expressions were of fascination and amazement when watching the dancers, and occasionally they cracked a smile; their concentration was rock solid. The intensity was so great that a hurricane could have hit the building that night, and they would not have known it. The men were watching the dancers like a zoo-full of dolls, where, as the D.J. stated, "Good boys can be bad." Some of the men took the D.J. for his words, and they would literally place their faces directly against the dancers' bodies in places that are very private to me.

The concept was very unrealistic. The women just did not simply take off their clothes; they offered more. It was more than I could handle, and I knew it was time for me to leave. I now realized that two thousand dollars, or all the money in the world, would never be enough for me to feel that stripping for money, and being able to buy anything I want, is something better than the love I have for myself.

Baby Talk



Karmin Kyhl

Babies. We all love them. They are cute, helpless, and smell good (most of the time). But when parents have to be with that infant all day long, their vocabulary goes out the window. Before my brother Karl became a father, he was able to form complete ideas, speak in complete sentences, and use the vast vocabulary he had acquired over the years.

Karl had always been the thinker in the family. Before he did anything, he always thought it through completely. Before he bought his bike, he calculated exactly how many lawns he would have to mow and how many newspapers he would have to deliver in order to get that bike. Once he got the money, he spent months deliberating what kind of bike would fit his certain needs. After careful consideration, and nine months, he finally bought the bike. Now that he has a child, his thoughts are all over the place. He once told me, "Not a day goes by when I can't remember what it is that I am supposed to get or why I got up out of the chair." If he is at the mall and my nephew, Connor, is fussing, Karl won't try to appease him with a toy that he already has. Karl will buy him a new toy! It does not even occur to him that he is spoiling his child and wasting his money. He just knows that it will shut up his bawling two-year-old.

Karl used to love to tell jokes. Not stupid, childish, "knock, knock" jokes, but long drawn out stories with sound effects and special voices. If he wasn't divulging a joke, he was retelling one of his past experiences from his glory days, like the time he and his buddies stole a Ronald McDonald from a restaurant because "we were in Nebraska, and we thought they wouldn't notice." Now he is lucky if he can form a sentence with more than four words in it. And if he does, the main topics are what Connor said or what Connor did. Don't get me wrong. I'm glad that he loves his son and is involved in his life, but you wouldn't think that he has a life of his own outside of his family. You wouldn't accept it if I told you that he is in charge of seven command centers around Europe and

the satellites they control. You would think he sat around the house all day with a video camera, watching his son's every move.

Karl loves to read. No matter how remedial or hard it was, he would read it. It could be the back of a cereal box that he had read the previous three mornings; he didn't care. It was because of this that he developed such a vast vocabulary. His college professors were always telling him to become an English major and forget about the Army. His friends would bring their papers to him to edit rather than to the professors. He rarely required the use of a thesaurus when writing an essay. Now it seems as if all he is able to read is *Horton Hears a Who* or *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish* or other children's books. And because of this, his vocabulary has almost dropped out of existence. It seems as though the only word he uses with any consistency is "NOT."

Now, don't let this paper fool you. Karl is not a stupid, blubbering idiot who needs an "L" or "R" on the bottom of his shoes to keep them straight. He is a very intelligent person who takes his role as a father very importantly, as well he should. I just hope that when the aliens who abducted my real brother return him, he is able to reintegrate himself into society and become his old self again. I have a feeling that will be when Connor is about eighteen.

The Hero in Me



Brian Bialas

It was nearing the end of my fourteenth summer, and I had never been in such a position in my life. I was in the midst of a pennant race. There were only two teams left in our Windsor-Clive Little League, and it was a winner-take-all game. The entire season had narrowed down to just this one game.

I was a third baseman for our team, and not a bad one, either. I guess I liked the position, but I really didn't do that much to contribute to the team. It wasn't a position that was highly recognized. However, I was, and still am, a die-hard baseball fan. I have played ever since I picked up that oversized red plastic bat, which is further back than I can remember. So as long as I played, any position was fine with me.

I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, going to Indians games every summer, which gave me my love for the game. I would always be waiting for the next year to see if this would be the year my team would go all the way. I looked up to a lot of players on the Indians, but none other as much as I did Bob Feller. He was a pitcher for the Indians during the forties and fifties. I still remember watching old clips on television where he would just take control of the game. Feller would simply step in and blow the competition away. He was a true hero to me.

I played every summer, never missing a single game. Heck, sometimes I would play on more than one team per season. I just didn't feel like myself unless I had a ball and a glove in my hand. I was always striving to be on a first-place team, which led me up to this one day where I had the chance to be on the best team in the league.

So I stood at third base and watched the game go by. I had a ground ball or two, but I really didn't do that much because our "star" pitcher was in. It was a fairly close game on this cold and moist day; well, up until the last inning. We were ahead six to five

and only three outs away from that shiny-gold trophy. However, our "star" pitcher began to tire. Before too long, he had walked the bases loaded without gaining one out. It seemed like the life had been sucked out of our team. It also seemed as if someone had hit the pause button on the crowd. My heart sank down to my foot, for I was scared that we had come all this way and now we were minutes away from losing it all.

From out of nowhere the coach had popped onto the field and was heading for the mound. He and the pitcher had their little chat, which seemed to take forever. A few minutes later the pitcher started to walk off of the field after he handed the ball to the coach. Then the coach just stood there he was in deep thought, chewing his gum and squeezing the ball in both hands. Then all of a sudden he turned to me, tossed me the ball, and said "You're in."

I was never so scared in my life. I had always wanted to pitch, but I didn't want to start in the situation I was given. I trotted over to the mound with adrenaline pumping through my body about a hundred miles an hour. I stood above the prestigious pile of dirt, higher than anyone else on the field. It was a feeling of power I've never had in the game. All the eyes of the crowd were on me. The rest of the game was dependent on what I did, and I liked it.

I was a little reluctant to start the game, but since the first batter had stepped in I had no choice. I rocked back and fired my first pitch. Within seconds of releasing the ball I could hear the umpire blurt out "Strike!" A slight cheer from the crowd arose. My arm felt great, better than it has ever felt before. I stepped back on the rubber, rocked back and fired my next pitch.

"Strike!" The heads of my teammates began to look up as the umpire screamed. The crowd began to get louder with the possibility of the momentum shifting our way.

"Strike! Strike! Strike! Strike! Strike!" It seemed as if no matter what I did I could do no wrong, like destiny. With every pitch the umpire would scream louder, and the crowd would cheer more. I remember looking back at my teammates for support and all I could see was the anticipation for the next pitch on their faces. A smile cracked across the face of my coach, which was more than enough reassurance that I was going to be all right. Before too long I was up to my last pitch.

I was scared for this one though. This was it, anything could happen. The crowd was on their feet and roaring. I gathered myself together and stepped on the rubber. I took off my hat, wiped the sweat from my forehead, put my hat back on and took a deep breath. Then I began my motion. I put everything I had left into this one pitch. Never looking up, all I could hear was a loud crack.

The catcher's glove snapped on the hard impact. Just after, the umpire's arm rose while he screamed the final "STEEE-RIKE!" for the season. Before I knew what I had done I was tackled by my catcher. Then the rest of the team began the pile on ritual right there on the mound. The crowd cheered in a way that I had never heard before in person. It was the kind of cheer you only hear on television. Pride ran up and down my spine like lightning as my teammates shouted, "We did it, we did it, we really did it!"

Baseball days have come and gone since that day. Even though I never did go on to be a pitcher, I still carry this one feeling. For even if it was only five or ten minutes long, I can truly say I know how it feels to be like my hero, Bob Feller.

Fountain of Youth



Jill Pepper

In the basement of an out-of-date shopping center, there is a small area where several elderly people get together for meals, fun, and a few laughs with each other. This is not the average senior citizen center, however. It reminds me of the movie *Cocoon* when all of the elderly people are jumping about in the pool with the alien cocoon pods. What a sight it is to see a crowd of old people scurrying around like they are fifteen again!

The anticipation of visiting a senior citizen center really surprised me. Assuming that they were like those I take care of at work, I wasn't prepared to be so excited about a bunch of geriatric persons. The center, on the other hand, took on a whole different persona of geriatrics. As I began my descent down the escalator, I began to feel the "youth" of this place. I was greeted at the door by Russ, a frequent patron of the center. "Good mornin', Ma'am," his spirited voice said with a raspy drawl. The man stood only partially erect while being supported by his cane. He was dressed in overalls, a knit shirt and a plaid flannel shirt. To top the ensemble, he wore a baseball cap--**backwards!** As I entered through the door being held open for me, I scanned the room for Peg, one of the center's managers.

Instead of spotting Peg, I gazed upon a crowd of elderly people scuttling around tables, claiming their seats as if they were in grade school. They were pulling silverware from their purses, bags, and breast-pockets in an effort to mark **their** seats. Finally, among the shuffle, I scouted out Peg. I made my way through the mob of people over to the woman. "Hi, I'm Jill," I said with hand extended.

"Ah, yes, pleased to meet you, Jill. I'm Peg, one of the center's managers," she said, returning the gesture.

I continued to explain that since I had already received most of my information over the phone, I would like to just mingle with the people. "Fine, fine!" she exclaimed and continued with her business.

During my conversation with Peg over the phone, I discovered many interesting things about the center. "The people here are all in their sixties and seventies," she began. "All of them must have their reservations in by 5 p.m. to be served lunch the next day. They can bring their spouses, too. Activities need no reservations."

When I asked about what types of activities are available, she paused and then said with a giggle, "Would you believe line dancing?"

I thought to myself, "These elderly people are taking line dancing lessons?" A vision of my grandmother doing the "electric slide" or the "tush push" with two fresh knee replacements flashed through my mind, and I laughed with nervous disbelief. I was jarred back to reality by Peg saying that another favorite activity was square dancing. "Now that's more like it," I thought to myself with a grin.

I continued to ask questions about the center's beginnings, how it was funded, et cetera. These questions had answers which were less surprising. Peg then told me that the center would be having needlepoint in the morning and line dancing in the afternoon the day I was planning to be there. Oh goody! There may have been a hint of sarcasm in my thoughts, or was it curiosity?

I asked Peg if the center had any special services that they offered to their patrons. "We do have a nurse come once a month to do physicals and student nurses from various institutions come every so often to take blood pressures. Oh, yes, and Drake's law students. They come by to help the people with living wills and that sort of thing," she said.

"That's great," I replied, remembering how important that is to my profession in the hospital setting. "Well, I can't think of anything else right off hand," I said. "Thank you very much and I'll see you next week." As I hung up the phone, I felt a spark of heightened interest.

One-thirty slowly came around. Suddenly, all the tables were being pushed aside to make room for the dancing. A middle-aged couple emerged from the back of the room

carrying a small stereo set-up with a microphone. "Okay everybody," the speakers bellowed. "Are you ready?"

The entire group lined up shoulder to shoulder stringing their walkers and canes right along with them. They were set "boy, girl, boy, girl" in two perfectly straight lines, seemingly ready for anything. The music started. "Achy Breaky Heart" began to play. Suddenly, the center transformed into a slightly smaller versions of Guitars and Cadillacs.

The seniors clapped and counted out their steps. And to my amazement, the senior citizens stomped, glided and twirled around on the caller's count with minimal effort. The women stopped with their hands on their hips. The men danced around them, taking their hands and spinning them around to meet the next couple. They did this several times; then it was the women's turn to lead. My eyes were wide with sheer astonishment; I was really impressed!

The song had ended and I half-expected them to be gasping for air, but instead they clapped and shouted out their requests for the next song. The next song was "Boot Scootin' Boogie." Once again, the seniors pranced around, "yahoo-ing" and circling their imaginary cowboy hats in the air. For forty-five minutes the group moved with as much ease as professional dancers, laughing, smiling and clapping all the way. One could probably compare them to beautiful butterflies: gliding in the air, weightless. When time was up, they quietly went back to their chairs and back to their unostentatious selves.

I continued to visit with the men and women of the center. They shared their accomplishments with me and I shared my goals with them. When the afternoon finally ended, I helped some of the people to their rides and taxis. I got into my car and drove away thinking to myself with a snicker, "Man, do I feel old! I hope that someday I can find my 'fountain of youth' and am able to enjoy life as much as these folks do."

AHO!



Kim Carlson

Sally and I chat while driving down the lonely, winding, Missouri road. Our conversation is consumed by the current turmoil in each of our lives. Sally, my best friend, a blonde, blue-eyed, high-spirited special education teacher, is pained by an earlier divorce and recent memories of boyfriends who treated her as a high school date rather than the mature woman she is. I, dark-haired and brown-eyed, a secretary for a corporation, am also agonizing over a painful divorce and wondering how my six children are being impacted by the divorce. Ultimately, our conversation is depressing, but never lacking for content. We are both strong, confident women--willing to face any challenge. We chatter on like a song, never missing a beat. In the midst of our chattering we round a corner and directly in front of us flies a magnificent owl that appears to be hunting for his early evening meal. We slow down and watch his plotted flight with amazement. He dives into the weed-infested ditch and ascends with a limp snake hanging from his locked jaws. Sally and I watch this winged creature fly off into the harvest sky. We look at each other briefly and wonder if this is a sign of the weekend to come.

One more Missouri curve and there it is--the Conception Abbey. We gaze in awe as we slowly drive up the lane to the magnificent grounds and buildings. Our conversation ends abruptly as we try to put the whole scene into perspective. We slowly get out of the car and further absorb the peacefulness and beauty that surrounds us. Here we are, just a few miles from the red-neck town we call home, not knowing for one moment that the Abbey is practically in our back yard. Taking in the holiness that seems to fill both of us instantly, we walk slowly and reverently up the grass-hidden sidewalk, neither of us able to speak. We reach a door and quietly open it. The sounds of soprano voices singing

delicately and ever so angelically greet us. A second door is in front of us. This door opens into the sanctuary and a Sister greets us. She is dressed in traditional habit, looking radiant and smiling like a saint. She whispers a welcome and takes us through the "nun-singing sanctuary" towards the kitchen of the Abbey. Walking down a dimly-lit hallway, she welcomes us in her softest tone, "My name is Sister Mary Katherine. Welcome to the Conception Abbey. We have been anxiously waiting for the two of you to arrive. I will take you to the timber where we will join the others already working on the sweat lodge. Did you have a hard time finding us?"

Sally and I, still looking around to take in the sights, are eager to catch up with the rest of the women to see what we may do to help. Sally whispers, "We are so glad to finally be here. What a beautiful place this is. We did get lost in Maryville on the way. We took a left instead of a right at the stop light, but here we are. I hope we aren't too late to join in the activities."

Sister Mary Katherine smiles and says, "The fun activities will be getting underway soon. You arrived in plenty of time. So let the games begin!"

Sister Mary Katherine is as anxious to visit the lodge site as we are. Sally and I can hardly keep up with her. We hustle to the timber in the light of the early evening moon, still trying to soak in the beautiful surroundings that we will be a part of the next two days. Both of us are feeling safe and secure--feelings neither of us have in our daily lives. As we approach the sweat lodge site, we hear and see several women, busy as bees, working on what appears to be the frame of our sweat lodge. We soon see the lodge and it looks like an Eskimo igloo, except the form is made of small trees tied together with twine. Sally and I are eager to begin our contribution. Sister Mary Katherine introduces us to our cohorts on this project and our enthusiasm rises.

Night is fast approaching. Medicine Heart Woman, part Navajo Indian, suggests we clean up the area and head back to our rooms. It is time to prepare for the evening ceremonies. Sally and I feel we missed out on the building of the sweat lodge, but Medicine Heart Woman reassures us tomorrow we will be able to help finish the Inipi, or Indian sweat lodge. She smiles and says there is plenty for all to do. We walk back to the

Abbey with our new-found friends, asking questions about what they encountered and wondering what ceremonies we will be a part of this evening.

As we arrive at our dorm room, Sally and I are like excited children at Christmas. Our eyes are sparkling with wonderment and curiosity. Our conversation is no longer depressing. We prepare to meet our fellow sweat lodgers in the Abbey dining room for our evening meal along with the nuns.

Following a delicious meal prepared by the Sisters, we go to the ceremonial Indian meeting lodge. This is what we have been waiting for. The meeting room is large enough for 20 women to sit on the floor--Indian style. In the middle of the large floor lies a buffalo rug, a peace pipe with an eagle feather attached, a smudge pot, and an Indian drum. Each item has special significance. As the evening goes on, we find out how important these items are to the Indian beliefs. Medicine Heart Woman tells us the significance of the "sweat" for the Indian people. I shiver as she tells of the Indian ways and their strong conviction to Mother Nature. I am eager to be part of that conviction.

Drumming is the first Indian ritual they teach us. It sounds easy and it is. Indian songs are simple, yet heartfelt. Indians know how to keep the beat. They feel it, they live it, they breathe it, and they believe it. They sing of Mother Earth, Father Sun, Grandmother Moon, and nature in every way. We sing many songs this evening. It is so relaxing to hear the drum beat and to chant along in harmony. The songs repeat a simple message again and again. The tones of the drum are low and mellow. Every woman has faith in what we are doing and we are enjoying each other's company and the message of the Indian people. The ceremonial room is filled with laughter and hope. We smudge and pray and chant. We prepare for "the sweat" as the Indians do. We let out a big Indian yelp. "Ah-Yah-Wah-Ah!!" Tomorrow is one moon away.

Saturday morning, Father Sun is shining brilliantly. This is going to be an extraordinary day. We dress in swimsuits, and sweat suits, not typical Indian attire, but my buffalo dress is at the cleaners. We meet the rest of our tribe in the front of the lodge. Everyone is eager to begin. We meet Medicine Heart Woman and file up the dew-covered hill to the partially-finished sweat lodge nestled in the corner of the timber. Everyone finds a job. Sally and I are instructed to take the young, cut trees and bend them to finish the

lodge. Medicine Heart Woman shows us how to bend the small tree that has sacrificed its life for our lodge. She tells us to talk to this tree, to thank him for giving his young life for our lodge. Then we are to bend him around our leg, our back, and our neck. At first I am skeptical, but after talking out loud to my little tree and thanking him, he starts to bend. To my amazement, it does not take long for my tree to bend into correct shape. I can now make my contribution to the lodge. We place my little tree in his special spot on the lodge and tie him down securely. He fits perfectly. I am proud of my accomplishment.

Everyone is busy doing last-minute preparations. Some women cover the lodge with plastic and blankets. This will ensure the lodge will be completely dark inside and will retain most of the heat. Other women put stakes in the four directions to call the spirits to us. Still other women put the finishing touch on the fire pit.

Finally, Medicine Heart Woman calls us together. She says, "It is time to begin." It is time to hold the ceremony to thank the rock people and start the fire. We gather around the rock pit, located outside the sweat lodge. Excitement is radiating off of us as we anxiously wait for the ceremony to begin. We place rocks in a circle several feet away from the pit, leaving an opening for each direction. We enter this circle of rocks from one of the four openings, hold up a rock, present it to the four directions, and say a simple prayer. In this prayer we thank the rock people for giving its life for our sweat, then place the rock in the pit. When all of the rocks have been presented to the four directions, Medicine Heart Woman instructs the fire keepers to place a teepee of wood over the rocks and light the fire. We hold hands around the pit of fire. The sound of the crackling wood and my heart beating is all I hear.

Medicine Heart Woman offers a simple prayer: "All my relations, our hearts are filled with gratitude and humility for our friends the rock people and our plant friends the trees. May the wind walkers carry our message of gratefulness to them. Fire and smoke, sage and cedar, we bless and honor you. Oh great spirits, may the sacred fire burn long in our hearts. Aho."

The ceremonial sweat has begun.

We literally race back to the ceremonial Indian lodge to experience one more ritual before actually entering the sweat lodge. Before we enter the room, we remove our

shoes, get comfortable sitting Indian style again, and prepare for the religious ceremony. Medicine Heart Woman starts with the smudging ceremony. She uses a small wooden bowl, filled with sage, cedar, a little tobacco and sweet grass. She lights it. A pungent odor fills the room. Its effect is soothing. As she pulls the smoke in her direction with her hands to her face, she chants and asks the spirits to clear her energy field. She then passes the smudge pot to the next person, and they repeat the process. A woman is drumming ever so quietly in the background. The feeling in the room is almost eerie. Everyone is really concentrating and feeling the emotions. After smudging, it is time for the peace pipe. I have never smoked before, yet I find myself anxiously awaiting my turn. Medicine Heart Woman demonstrates how to smoke the pipe correctly and how to pass the pipe on to the next person. She says another prayer and smokes the pipe. She respectfully passes the pipe to the next person, who follows Medicine Heart Woman's style and passes to the person next to her. Finally, it is my turn. I take the foot-long pipe, softly touch the eagle feather attached to the Navajo peace pipe, and say my prayer. This is what I have been waiting for. I inhale the pipe hard. Nothing happens. I try again, harder. Yes! Again. Four times I smoke the pipe. Each time I hold the smoke in my mouth and blow a puff of smoke like she showed us. I know Tunkasheila, the Great Spirit, had heard my prayer. With tears in my eyes I pass the pipe on. I feel great pride in the Indian tradition of smoking the peace pipe. I know now the spirits will be with me in the Inipi.

One more significant journey back to the lodge. It is time to reflect on the Indian beliefs: the importance of every blade of grass, every tree, every rock, and every living creature to the Indian people. How wise they were beyond their time. And then--time for another ceremony. We plant a sapling in front of the lodge. This is to thank the spirits for the trees we are using in our lodge. I lay my cross necklace on the fresh soil by the infant tree. No jewelry, no clothes--only our swimsuits are allowed in the lodge. This is to be a union between the spirits and me. Humbly, I pray. Following this prayer we enter the lodge, crawling in one at a time on our hands and knees. The lodge is big enough for all 15 women. Dark, it is so very dark and very close. We sit Indian style. Medicine Heart Woman is the last one in the lodge. She instructs the fire keeper to start bringing the sizzling hot rocks. She places pine needles and cedar on the rocks until the odor of the

lodge is that of a forest. Then she splashes water on the burning rocks. She tells the fire keepers we have enough rocks, and she instructs the doorkeepers to close the flaps. It is starting to feel like a sauna and smells like evergreen and cedar. It is darker than the darkest night. Everyone is hushed. We are ready to begin.

Medicine Heart Woman tells us our first round of prayers will be for family and friends. Sally is sitting on my right and Sister Jane on my left. I hear them breathing. I hear the sizzling of the scorching rocks. There is complete silence until Medicine Heart Woman begins her prayer. I listen intently. It is obvious she has done this before. Her voice does not quiver and she is confident in every word. We speak in a clockwise circle. This time we are unable to see expressions on faces. We feel what is being said. We know we understand the emotions. We sympathize, we laugh, we cry, and we believe. We *are* all alike. We pray for our spouse, our babies, our parents, grandparents, siblings, and other relatives. We pray for our friends, old and new. We pray for children in other countries. We pray for our God. We come from varied lifestyles, yet we have so much in common. We have the capacity to love so many people.

This first round is emotionally draining, yet exhilarating! sweat is running down my face. I wipe my brow with the wet cloth we pass around. Medicine Heart Woman tells us, "If you feel faint, lay your face on the cool ground to regain your composure."

Round two is ready to begin. More rocks are brought in by the fire keepers. More water splashed over them. We are beginning to lose our impurities. The sweat feels good running down my face and back. This round we are to pray for our leaders-leaders of our country, our cities, our church, any leader we know. This is a powerful session, but not as emotional as the first. The sweat is pouring out of my body now. The lodge is a sauna. The smell of pine, hot rocks, and close bodies is prevalent.

Some of the women are leaving the lodge. It is extremely hot. I cannot leave. I am not going to quit now. I am here for the duration. Everyone appears focused. More water, more heat. Time to close the flaps. It is time to pray for ourselves. I listen to each woman again. The stories are heart wrenching. These women are unbelievable. Stories of abuse, rape, hate, and anger flow from my new friend, Sister Jane. Now in her twenties, she has devoted her life to her God. I never would have guessed her life was so

complicated. In this Inipi there are 15 extraordinary women. We are all searching for some form of identity. We are searching for love, security, strength, and wisdom. Now as I wipe the sweat off of my face, I find the tears are plentiful too. I know I am in extraordinary company.

One more session to go. Our emotions are being drained, as is the strength of our body. We have been in the lodge for almost 3 and 1/2 hours. The final prayer is to go to the most important one of all--Mother Earth. Mother Earth is our life. The Indian people know that she is our survival. We are slowly destroying her. After listening again to Medicine Heart Woman, I am really beginning to understand the Indian ways. Everything we do revolves around Mother Earth and Father Sun. She thanked the rock people, the plant people, the winds, the four-leggeds and the winged-ones too. Every person, place, and thing has a place in the Indian world. How can we not respect their beliefs!

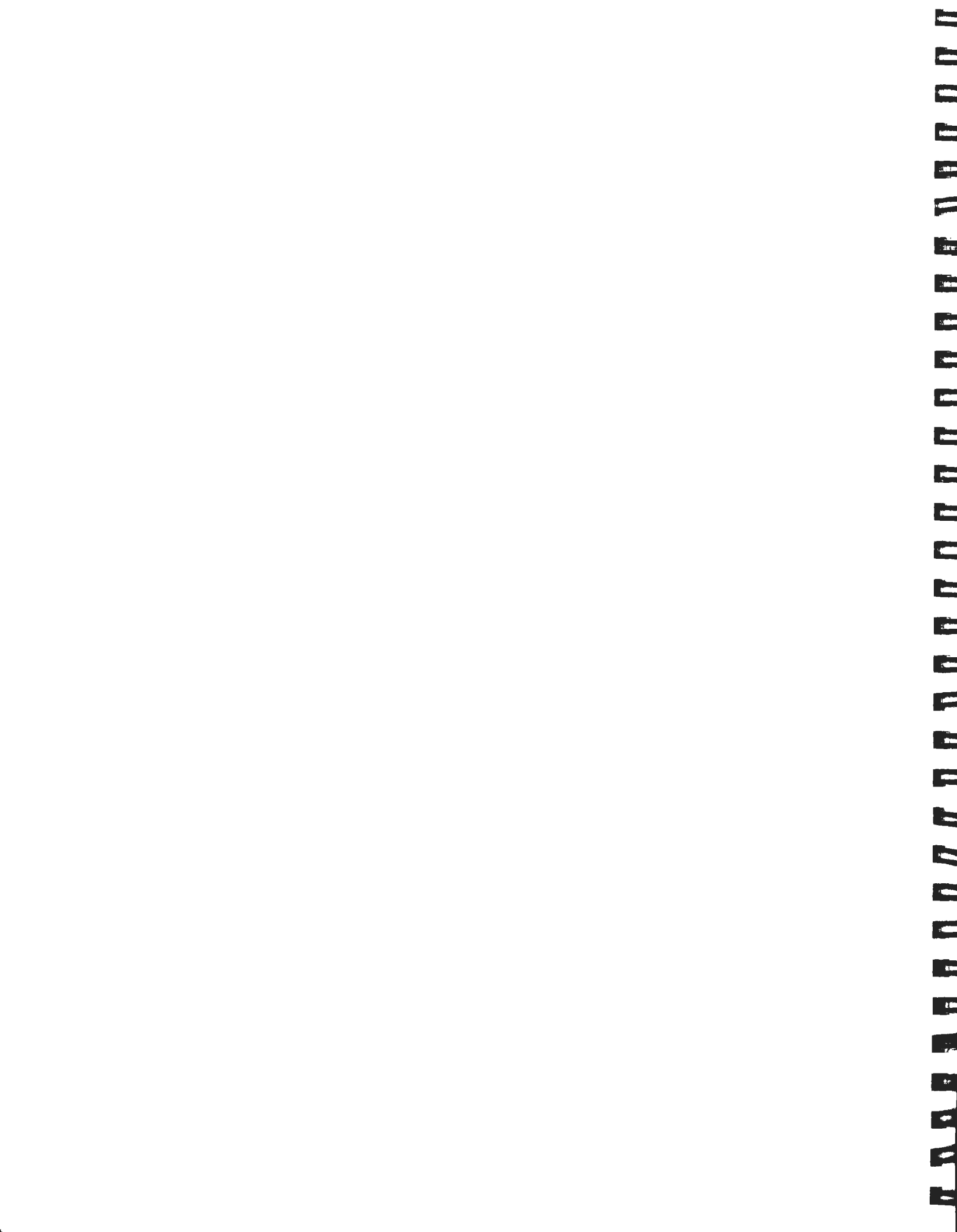
After four hours, it is time to leave our world of heat and compassion. I can barely stand up. My legs feel weak, but my mind is strong. I am emotionally and physically drained. Everyone is filled with a sense of belonging. Medicine Heart Woman tells us she has never done a sweat that lasted so long. She tells us this has been one of her most rewarding sessions. Sally and I hold each other for a moment, and I look into her tear-filled eyes; neither of us say a word. From this day on our souls will be filled with the great spirits and a special bond between friends.

Humbly, I have danced with the great spirits and they have heard my prayers. Aho!



Composition II





Trashy Talk Show Host: Scum of the Earth and Proud of It



Brendan Greiner

I am now going to jump on the band wagon. That's right, Brendan Greiner is going to get his very own talk show. I'm going to join all the washed up, no good, so-called journalists and try the "Trash Talk Shows" for a little while. But I need to analyze what I will have to do to make my show really work. There are so many factors that are involved in putting on a truly trashy talk show that I wouldn't know where to begin. So I think that I will start by watching and studying all of the experts, including Montel, Ricki, Jerry, Sally, Mark, and of course the ever popular Donahue; I'm trying to stay away from Oprah because she actually cares about getting something accomplished on her show. The preceding list includes the new kings and queens of daytime and even really late-night trash talk, so I'm going to see what they're doing to get such good ratings.

The first aspect of a trash show I have found to be important is the parade of guests that are just asking to be ridiculed in front of a live television audience. On each show, all of my guests on the panel need to fit into at least one of these categories (if they fit into all of them that would be perfect): three-hundred pounds overweight, African American, Latino, or trailer-park WASP, poor or unemployed; a stripper, bi-sexual, single mother of three, or hard core sex and drug addict. The main goal of my show would be to round up all of the societal wash-ups of these categories and let them engage in their dispute, usually having to do with some weird, perverse, sexual act. Or if that didn't happen, I would create the dispute myself (*National Review*, 1995, p. 18). My guests would swear and scream at each other, often being egged on by the audience, and the only

good aspect that would come out of it all is that their personal lives would be exposed on national television all for entertainment's sake.

Of course, I would have to think about what kinds of themes I would want all of these guests to battle it out on. One show's theme that I would probably try is "my best friend is sleeping with my spouse, and I'm here today to tell her to quit," and of course I would ask for the usual spectacles of the friend in question to take out a pair of the husband's jockey shorts and swing them over her head while gyrating to techno-dance music in front of the wife. But that theme is overused and, by talk-show standards, pretty dull. A really successful show needs to have at least one transsexual on it, with a theme such as "Mom, tomorrow you are losing your son, but gaining a daughter," or such successful, typical trash shows themes like "you want more sex than I do," "I want to be an escort," and "sorry, honey, but I'm sleeping with your mother" (Oliver, 1995, pp. 52-4).

But all of these guests would really be nothing if I didn't get a good studio audience. First of all, the audience needs to be just as freaky as the panel of guests; if I could get half of the audience to be compulsive body piercers, it would be more than ideal. They would be so opinionated that I wouldn't need to have an expert on the panel, such as an accomplished psychiatrist or maybe a lawyer, because I'm sure the advice that the audience would give would be much more entertaining than the "experts." If I could get the audience to start throwing punches at my guests on stage, that would shoot my ratings right through the roof. And if the show started to have a little lull, I would be one of the audience members to say that ever classic line, "Girlfriend, that guy is doin' you no good." That one line alone has provoked more arguments between audience and panel than any other in the history of talk shows. It's still a pretty powerful instigator, even if it has nothing to do with what's currently going on in the episode's dialogue. Of course that line is closely followed in popularity by the lines "You're a horrible parent," "I wouldn't let my kid talk to me like that," and the ever popular "I think you're all a bunch of freaks."

Having a socially defective panel and rowdy audiences are not the only keys to having a great talk show. My own image and attitude also play a major role in exploiting my guests. For instance, we have the hip Ricki, macho ex-marine Montel, and clean cut,

suburban, middle-age types like Jenny Jones, Jerry Springer, and Maury Povich. I would be a sensitive and caring individual from Iowa with good Christian, Midwestern values, which would be a front to make myself look better than my guests, since my mission would not be to get beneath everyone's assumptions and stereotypes, but to solidify them (Nelson, 1995, pp. 800-2). I could also do shows that are dedicated to my own well being, such as having a hair transplant from my butt to my head to cure baldness. This would be on live television in front of a studio audience. Would I be worried about losing my pride for being in such an awkward state that even I become as dysfunctional as my guests? Of course not. I would have already proven to everyone that I can hold my head up high, and still be scum of the Earth, simply by being a talk show host.

I would also have to devote a show to those who feel that what my colleagues and myself are trying to accomplish has no benefit to society and no journalistic value. Former Secretary of Education, William Bennet, feels this way and has a following of devotees to crusade against what he calls "cultural rot." One of Bennet's crusaders is Senator Joseph Liberman, who says, "These shows increasingly make the abnormal normal and set up the most perverse models. It's time for a revolt of the revolted" (Luscome, 1995, p. 67). These Republicans who try to shame the shows' producers, viewers and advertisers don't understand that the audience wants to see degenerates battling it out on stage. While some talk show hosts shudder at the thought of political juggernauts shooting down their shows, I, on the other hand, would welcome their tauntings because they create enough fodder for at least a week of shows (Luscome, 1995, p. 67). If I could get Senator Liberman on my show to defend himself, I would expose my rear end to him and tell him to "kiss my a--." A move like that, though very childish and reinforcing of Bennet's message for reform, would make my ratings shoot through the roof.

Even though it will be a very rough ride, I feel that I am ready to jump into the ring. I've carefully examined all the best talk shows and from those, formulated the theme for my pilot show: Transsexual, rock-group roadies, who are part-time accountants and the Asian-American, body-piercing, dominatrixes who love them. For anyone who fits this category, I welcome them to call my toll free hot-line, 1-800-IMA-FREK.

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The Real Homeless Crisis



Chris Koester

Of all the hot topics debated in this country in the last decade, the issue of homelessness is probably near the top. It is a topic of great economic and societal impact, as well as having a great deal of emotional appeal. It is this emotional appeal that has been the fodder for many of the socially liberal activists who would artificially inflate the importance of the issue. In fact, the scope of this issue has been so distorted and misrepresented in the news media that my next statement, no matter how factual, is bound to seem somewhat shocking. The real crisis of homelessness today is not the populations of homeless themselves, but rather the detrimental effects of their existence upon society.

Let me begin by providing a definition for the word "crisis." *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines a crisis in this context: "a social condition requiring the transformation of existing patterns and values." For a social condition to "require" such a transformation, it would logically have to affect a significant portion of the population. Much of the attention that has been focused on homelessness was originally inspired by incorrect estimates of the scope of the problem.

In the late 1970s Mitch Snyder had argued that a million Americans were homeless. In 1982 he and Mary Ellen Hombs raised their estimate to between two and three million. Lacking better figures, journalists, legislators, and advocates for the homeless repeated this guess, usually without attribution. In due course it became so familiar that people treated it as an established fact. In 1984 the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) produced some numbers of its own. HUD's best estimate was between 250,000 and 350,000. When Ted Koppel asked Snyder where his own estimate of two or three million homeless had

come from, this is what Snyder said: "Everybody demanded it. Everybody said we want a number, . . . we got on the phone, we made a lot of calls, we talked to a lot of people, and we said, 'Okay, here are some numbers.' They have no meaning, no value." (Jencks 2)

The attention that has been afforded the issue of homelessness in America was clearly borne of misinformation and false pretenses. The "crisis" of homelessness in America is a myth. The population of America is now over 250 million. Estimates of the homeless population in America are near 250,000. The U.S. Census Bureau counted 240,140 homeless persons on March 20-21, 1990 (*Homeless in America* 3). Only one in one thousand Americans is homeless. While it would be preferable for that number to be zero, no issue that concerns only one quarter of one percent of the population can honestly be considered a crisis. The actual scale of this issue is so exaggerated by advocates of the homeless that proving their estimates to be inflated tenfold is the first, and perhaps most significant, step towards rational consideration of the homeless issue.

Let me propose a different possible crisis. Let's consider the societal ills that are caused by, rather than the root of, homeless populations. First, there is the issue of the violation of the personal rights of the everyday citizens who have to deal with the detrimental habits of this very small minority of the American population. According to Joel Blau, "A 1990 *New York Times* poll reported that 68 percent of urban Americans see the homeless in the course of their daily routine" (qtd. in *The Homeless: Opposing Viewpoints* 12). Now we're talking about a significant figure. A representative of this portion of the population, Steven Byfofsky, was quoted by John Leo in his essay on the homeless situation.

I am about to be heartless. There are people living on the streets of most American cities, turning sidewalks into dormitories. They are called the homeless . . . they are America's living nightmare . . . they have got to go. I am fed up with the trash they bring into my neighborhood. The pools of urine in apartment-house lobbies disgust me. I am fed up with picking my way down sidewalks blocked by plastic milk crates, stepping over human forms sprawled on steam gratings.

I don't know, exactly, when they got the *right* to live on the street. I don't know, exactly, when I *lost* the right to walk through town without being pestered by panhandlers. I do know I want them off my sidewalk. If you think I am heartless for saying that, can I send them to live on *your* sidewalk? (48)

How many of these 68 percent of urban Americans feel this way? Certainly not all of them would agree, but just as certainly, more than the equivalent of one quarter of one percent of the U.S. population would echo these sentiments. So on a hierarchy of crises facing the nation today, this disenchantment and even outrage toward the habits of the homeless seems more ubiquitous than the difficulties faced by the relatively minuscule homeless population.

Finally, there is the issue of the detrimental effect that the homeless population has on the quality of the communities that they frequent. Just because their "right" to have a home has been seemingly violated does not grant them license to violate the safety, privacy, security, and financial investments of others.

There is (and should be) much compassion for the disoriented street people. This will lead to discussion of the "right" to sleep wherever one collapses, and the argument that this behavior "does not harm anyone." But there will be no discussion about the demoralization of neighbors or the connection between the loss of social controls and the destabilization of entire communities. (Leo 47)

This process of destabilization and loss of control has taken its toll on cities across the U.S., and I need not give an example of this beyond any reader's personal experience. What did most of us see the last time we ventured into the inner city? What are the specific attributes of a particular neighborhood that we consider bad or unsafe that make it seem that way? Not a single one of these neighborhoods were bad or unsafe in the first years of their existence. Someone bought each and every one of those houses when they were brand new. Would those same people choose to live there now? What changed? Nothing happened overnight; it was a gradual process. It was the same process previously described by John Leo--destabilization. This process eventually creates disorder in the

community. "At the community level, disorder and crime are almost inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence" (Wilson 78). Leo further reveals the root of this process: "Today that destabilization is likely to be spearheaded by the homeless street people" (47). The destabilization of communities that occurs as a result of the homeless presence in these communities creates the disorder that is "almost inextricably linked" with an increase in crime. This increase in crime is bad enough in and of itself, but it also destroys neighborhoods and forces people out, while terrorizing those who remain. This process created the inner city ghettos altogether too common in America's major cities: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, D.C., New Orleans, Miami, Newark . . . even Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, and Waterloo. The problem is creeping toward *our* towns and *our* neighborhoods and *our* homes, or maybe it's already there. Now what's the crisis?

The homeless population in the United States is far too low to be considered a crisis on its own. The proportion of the homeless to the entire U.S. population is far too insignificant to warrant the attention that it currently receives. Furthermore, this attention would be better focused on two related crises. First, let's consider the violation of the rights of those who are forced to deal with the detrimental habits of the homeless every day, through no fault of their own. Secondly, let's realize the magnitude of the destabilization of neighborhoods frequented by the homeless, and the ensuing ruin and terrorization of these neighborhoods as a result. Let's become aware of the real problems of homelessness in this country, and not concentrate solely on the one with the greatest emotional appeal.

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A New Kind of Segregation?



Gerald De Maris

"The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone," (King 77). Martin Luther King Jr. spoke those words on the mall in Washington in the midst of his famous speech. Thirty years later, there is a black middle class that has had the opportunity to become educated and that have participated in the American dream. Yet, many of the members of this new black middle class have a desire to segregate themselves from white America. Is it possible America has moved from legal segregation to a system of legal integration, and now to a system of *voluntary* segregation in a period of less than forty years? This trend, for the black middle class to segregate itself from white America, is bad for our nation because voluntary black segregation could be used to justify voluntary white segregation. Black and white people need to interact on a regular basis to better understand each other, and the separation of the races results in the radical voices of both races forcing our opinions about the other.

I understand that middle-class blacks have not been totally accepted by white America. Furthermore, young black men are looked on with suspicion by many whites. In a personal example of discrimination, Brent Staples a writer and editor for the *New York Times*, states, "She cast back a worried glance. To her, the youngish black man seemed menacingly close. After a few more quick glimpses, she picked up her pace and was soon running in earnest. Within seconds she disappeared into a cross street" (497). The frustration and discomfort that this causes for black people is deeply felt. Their anger

and frustration are justified; however, does this mean they should segregate themselves voluntarily from white America?

Sam Fulwood, a correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*'s Washington Bureau, quotes his Atlanta neighbor Pam Harris: "I can't see (whites) everyday, It's not that I dislike them or anything, but there's a membrane of coping that you have to wear to be around them" (466). This is a single example of a comment from a member of the black middle class. If this is representative of the feelings of large numbers of the black middle-class, it indicates a desire for blacks to withdraw from contact with whites. The comments Harris makes are not much different from those made by white people forty or fifty years ago to justify segregation. If it is all right for black people to segregate themselves from white people, is it all right for white people to segregate themselves from black people? If my white child is not comfortable going to school with a black child, am I justified in advocating a segregated school system? The Supreme Court answered that question in 1954 in the Brown case.

Black people and white people need to associate on a regular basis to better understand each other. If we do not interact with people who are different than ourselves, how will we understand them? Steven Covey, the author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, states, "If I were to summarize in one sentence the single most important principle I have learned in the field of interpersonal relations, it would be this: *Seek first to understand, than to be understood.* This principle is the key to effective interpersonal communication" (237). When I do not get the chance to communicate with a person, how can I understand them? Black people and white people need frequent time together, both in working environments and in social settings, to understand each other. Only after we communicate frequently, will we start to understand each other.

Do white Americans need to get their information about black people from the likes of Howard Stern? Do black Americans need to get their information about white people from the likes of Louis Farrakhan? Our opinions of other races are more accurate if we base them on our actual associations with people of that race. It is easy to hate people when we do not know them and do not associate with them. It is easy to believe the voices of hate and separation because they are so convincing. The voice on the radio

speaks of how black people take our jobs through affirmative action. Whites believe the inference that most blacks do not deserve their jobs because white people do not personally associate with black people. The black radical movement spreads the message that most white people are racists, and black people believe it because they do not have much communication with white people. If our two races do not associate and communicate frequently, our information about the other race will come from these radicals.

The black middle class needs to resist the understandable desire on their part to segregate themselves from white people. The white middle class needs to make a better effort to understand black people and make them feel a part of our society. If we do not make this effort, a time may come when white people justify segregation on the fact that black people want segregation, the radical voices will speak to us and tell us how we feel about the other race, and we will not understand each other enough to live together in a free and peaceful society. This task is not easy for blacks or whites, but most things that are good in life are not easy. Perhaps each of us should buy into a piece of King's dream as he so eloquently stated thirty-three years ago: "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." I do not believe that King envisioned are two races voluntarily camped on opposite sides of those red hills.

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Parental Discretion Advised



Rachel Garnett

Today our lives are flooded by advertisements for "protect-yourself products." A variety of merchandise is available from "The Club" that prevents car theft to the ear drum shattering emergency beepers that may prevent a rape or mugging. Picture yourself watching television one evening with your family and seeing an advertisement for one of these products. Directly following the commercial comes the introduction for the next program to be aired. Clips from the upcoming episode are shown and then a low voice says, "PARENTAL DISCRETION ADVISED." Have you ever stopped to wonder if there could be a connection between the violence or nudity about to be shown and the need for the new "protect-yourself device" that was just advertised? I believe that there is definitely a cause and effect relationship connecting the violence shown on television and the real world violence that occurs in our communities every day. TV violence has been proven time and time again to have a negative effect on children and their behaviors. We must remember that these children grow up to be either functioning or non-functioning members of our society. Since this "fake" violence has such strong and long-lasting effects on our children, we must take the time to acknowledge and control it.

Prolonged studies over decades have shown that TV violence and societal violence are related. About thirty-five years ago, Dr. Leonard D. Eron, then a psychology professor at Yale University, decided to do a study on the causes of violence and aggression in children. His goal was to prove a correlation between how the kids were treated by their parents and how they acted when they became teenagers and adults. While doing his initial survey in the 1960's, he asked certain basic questions about the home life. Some of these related to the amount of time the children spent watching TV. Ten years later, in 1970, when he interviewed the families again, he was shocked to find

the amount of television they were allowed to watch was the best prediction of aggression and violence among the teenagers. About ten years later, in 1980, Dr. Eron found that the ties of TV to aggression still held strongly. The children who watched significant amounts of television at about the age of eight "were consistently more likely to commit violent crimes or engage in child or spouse abuse at age thirty" (Medved 184). More immediate effects of TV violence can be seen in a story told by Marly Penner, a kindergarten teacher in Ontario. She states that she began noticing her students doing "*Power Ranger-style* high kicks" at recess. She proceeded to send a letter home to parents and also talked to the kids. She said this did stop the kicking at recess, but still believes that cartoons like the *Power Rangers* "get kids high and distract them from their work. . . . It's like an addiction, especially for the boys" (Chisholm 52). It is not only elementary-age kids, however, who mimic stunts they see on television. In 1993, two teenagers died while copying a game of "chicken" that was portrayed in the movie *The Program*. The movie showed drunken college football players lying in the middle of a highway at night playing "chicken" with the cars (Leland 47).

Still, some parents doubt the correlation between children watching violence and children doing violent things. I suggest that these people simply take some time to observe their own children, and I think they will see a definite connection. In one lab study, a group of children watched various segments of different shows or movies and were observed afterwards. After viewing violent segments of the TV series *The Untouchables*, researchers found that "the children were more willing to hurt one another" (Kolbert A1 3). In a case which occurred in England in 1993, four young adults were convicted of torturing and murdering a young teen-age girl. Before burning her to death, they chanted this line from the popular *Child's Play* horror film: "I'm Chucky. Wanna play?" (Kolbert A1 3). The series of "Chucky" horror movies revolves around a demonic animated doll named Chucky. Since the time these movies were released, Chucky's name has appeared in several other court cases involving violence by young people against other children.

Police officers, teachers, and parents are concerned about this "watching becomes doing" effect as it relates to music videos and gang participation. A significant source for

a variety of violent acts is the popular MTV, whose viewing audience consists mainly of 12 to 24 year olds. Music videos by "gangsta" rappers are a standard feature on this station. Police Lieutenant Yenington of Davenport, Iowa, has the responsibility of warning parents about influences that may lead their kids into gang membership. One aspect he focuses on is "gangsta" rap. Police investigations there have found so many "gangsta" rap recordings in the homes of gang suspects that they believe there is a connection between kids listening to this music and their involvement in gangs. Here is an example of this type of rap music from the recording *Mind of a Lunatic* by the Geto Boys: "Her body's so beautiful, so I'm thinking rape. Shouldn't have had her curtains open, so that's her fate. . . . Slit her throat and watched her shake" (Kolbert A1 3). It is not surprising that police are concerned about the influence these kinds of lyrics can have on young boys. Parents and teachers are also concerned about the kind of role models these rappers have become. Tupac Shakur and Snoop Doggy Dog, two of the more popular gangsta artists, recently made headlines. Tupac was convicted of sexual abuse while Snoop was found guilty of murder.

Television stations in the United States not only air shows with violent content, but they air them at times when school-age children are most likely to be watching. The Center for Media and Public Affairs analyzed the violent content of broadcast and cable TV stations on a Thursday in April of 1994. They studied programming on ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, PBS and one independent station from six in the morning until midnight. They also monitored four cable channels: TBS, USA, MTV, and HBO. The hours containing the highest number of violent scenes were 3 to 4 P. M. and 6 to 7 P. M. These are times that many school-age children are home and plopped in front of the television. In these two hours alone, excluding the rest of the day, over 425 violent scenes were shown. Some of the programs showing the greatest number of violent scenes were *Tom and Jerry*, *Batman Returns* (movie), *World News Tonight*, and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Kolbert A1 3). In another related study, it was found that cartoons such as *Power Rangers* have five times more violence than prime-time programs (Leland 48).

Some would like to excuse these results by saying that violence is a part of

reality--a necessary part of teaching our kids what life in the real world is all about. They say TV is only a reflection of the real life violence that occurs everyday. The problem with this reasoning is that TV shows the violence, but its real-life effects are conveniently left out of the picture. Movies or TV shows may portray real life, but they only show half the picture, which leaves the viewer with a skewed impression of violence and its effects. A movie may show a murder or thrilling explosion where many are killed, but yet the hurt of the family or friends is never shown. Screenwriters conveniently omit the months and years of pain and struggle of the wife, husband, or children who are left behind. Television loves to show the thrill of the fight, but the tears of family and friends become trivial and unnecessary in the search for an exciting storyline.

I would like to agree with those who believe that television causes all of us to become more sensitive and aware of the violence that afflicts some members of our society. Unfortunately, TV often desensitizes us to violence and the suffering that it causes. What used to be considered pornographic or unsuitable for children, has now become commonplace in many homes, causing even our children to be desensitized to the reality of violence. I remember an incident that occurred when I was in high school. I was asked to baby-sit two kids in my neighborhood. One was a boy about five years old and the other was a girl of about eight. After several hours of playing in the pool, they decided to come in and watch a movie. The little boy went and picked out one that had been taped off HBO. He told me what it was about and said that this was one of his favorite movies. As the movie progressed deeper into the storyline, I became appalled at the language and violent content of the movie. I said to the older girl, "Are you sure your parents let you guys watch this movie?" She said, " Oh yeah, we watch this one all the time." Finally, when the movie went into a scene containing nudity and an explicit rape scene, I turned it off and made them watch a Disney movie. I was shocked that any parents would allow their young children to watch such a movie. The kids just sat there and played with their toys and watched the movie, not even flinching at the violent acts or sexually explicit scenes. I could not in good conscience allow them to watch that movie knowing that what children see may eventually come out in their words and actions.

Television also gives kids a warped view of the permanence of death. How many times has the coyote died (or at least should have died) in the cartoon *The Road Runner*? In reality, throwing a stick of dynamite down a hole would likely kill anything that was in it. Wiley Coyote ends up with some singed fur and a few floating stars around his head, but by the time the commercial is over, he's up and running. Consider another example. A young person watches a movie where a teenage boy commits suicide. The next evening, the same actor shows up in a different show without a scratch on him. What message does this type of contradiction send our children?--the message that death is not permanent. This desensitization to death ties back in with the *Child's Play* murders and the boy who tried the lie-in-the-road-stunt. Perhaps these kids did not have a firm grasp on the permanence of death.

Going hand in hand with desensitization is the audience's desire for a greater amount of violence and more graphic depictions of gory crimes. Murders in horror movies used to consist of *implications* of the murder, such as a scream, a smoking gun, or the sound of a gun shot. However, over a period of time, audiences began to crave *more* blood and guts in order for a movie to be a thrill. Alan J. Pakula, director of *Presumed Innocent* and *All The President's Men*, recently stated:

Movie violence is like eating salt. The more you eat, the more you need to eat to taste it at all. People are becoming immune to effects: the death counts have quadrupled, the blast power is increasing by the megaton, and they're becoming deaf to it. They've developed an insatiability for raw sensation. (qtd in Medved 186)

Some believe that TV violence is harmful to children, but also believe that it is the parents' responsibility to regulate what is appropriate for their children and what is not. They maintain that it is not the responsibility of the government, an organization, or even other parents. The problem is that a large portion of parents are not aware of the effects this type of programming can have on their children, or perhaps they are aware but are not speaking out. The networks are still airing the violent cartoons, weekly shows, and movies. Arlette Lefebvre, a child psychiatrist and member of the Alliance for Children and Television, states that she is "amazed by parents who are more worried about vitamins in

their kids' snack than what they see on TV. They are just unaware of its impact" (qtd in Chisholm 52).

We want to believe that most parents are capable of making the right decisions when it comes to TV programs, but what about the five-year-old who burned down his house (killing his little sister) after watching *Beavis and Butt-head* make a torch out of an aerosol can? (Katzman 116). Where were his parents? And what about the father who rented *Child's Play 3* for his sons to watch? Soon after, the boys lured a two-year-old away from his mother at a mall and brutally beat him to death (Kolbert A1 3). Obviously, there are parents out there who lack the knowledge and understanding necessary for keeping their children from harm. Even those of us who *are* capable of making wise choices in regard to TV viewing cannot be in the room every time the kids are watching television. How many of us used to change the channel quickly as soon as Mom's footsteps were heard coming down the hall? Do you know for sure what your kids are watching when you leave them with the babysitter? Few parents have the time to regulate every movie or TV program their child watches to make sure it is appropriate for that child's maturity level. Therefore, it is necessary that the violence be controlled before it ends up on our TV screen.

The concern for television violence is shared by people on both sides of the political spectrum. It is not a right-wing conservative issue, nor is it a left-wing liberal issue. TV violence is of concern to parents and citizens of all social and political classes. President Bill Clinton told an audience in Ohio in 1992 that there is "a value crisis in America. . . . Like any parent, I'm troubled by the gratuitous violence and sex and mixed moral signals on television" (qtd in Medved 199). C. Delores Tucker, a liberal Democrat who is head of the National Political Congress of Black Women, has been noted for her dramatic denouncement of "gangsta rap" due to its celebration of "the rape, torture, and murder of women" (qtd in Dobrzynski 30). Tucker gained national interest when she appeared with Republican William Bennett in anti-rap TV commercials. Republicans and Democrats of all races are joining forces to curb the rise of violence portrayed on television (Dobrzynski 30).

Violence is an issue that we must deal with every day. We must study its causes and sources in order to protect our children. As we consciously begin to open our eyes, we become more and more aware of the many places that violence is portrayed--in books, magazines, advertisements, music, movies, and the list goes on. In order to combat this constant barrage of negative information, we as parents must pay attention to the messages our children are sending us, become more in tune with the ideas and morals they are encountering, and then weed out those ideas that may be detrimental to their behavior. Keeping track of what our children watch on television can be the first step toward making sure they grow up with the healthy attitudes necessary for an enjoyable and secure life.

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Equal Rights



Janelle Johnson

In the constitution of America it is stated that all men should be treated equal. Unfortunately, in our society that has never happened. People have been fighting for equal rights since the beginning of American culture. Native Americans, women, and African Americans are just a few of the groups that have been working to be treated equally. It has taken many years and a lot of struggles for these rights. Now it is the 90's and there is another struggle for equality. This is a fight of men generally born into many rights. They are conceived and raised like any other man in America, but there is one difference: who they choose to love drastically changes how people see them. This is discrimination. These men are denied privileges and ridiculed on a daily basis. They are not allowed basic rights that others are. This is done out of fear. E.L. Pattullo describes this fear as a fear of gays not because they are different but because they are so similar. Many straights are conscious of homosexual feelings and are scared of undermining their heterosexuality (Pattullo 22). This leads to discrimination that is just as wrong as any past discrimination Americans have experienced. Homosexuals need to be treated the same as anyone else. Their sexual preference in no way inhibits the way they run their daily lives. Their sexual orientation is a natural emotion just as heterosexuality is. Loving someone is not immoral. It is a natural human response. Everyone loves and it should be irrelevant whom they choose to love. Most importantly, homosexuals do not "choose" their lifestyle. It is a response to their genetic coding. They have certain biological feelings and they act on them. These reasons are important in understanding why homosexuals need to be treated equally.

One of the most important arguments for the equal treatment of gays is the genetic research. In 1993 Dean Hamer of the National Cancer Institute did a study that linked

male homosexuality to a strand of the X chromosome. He found that 83 percent of the 40 pairs of gay brothers had extremely similar regions on their X chromosome (*U.S. News* 93). This gene is known as Xq28. He also found that most straight brothers of the gay men did not have this same chromosome region (*U.S. News* 93). This study was widely publicized and widely criticized. Two years later another study was done. This time 32 pairs of homosexual brothers were tested. Two-thirds of them were found to have this Xq28 gene (Holden 1571). Even after this second set of evidence people still question its validity. The fact is there is proof that there is a link between homosexuality and a person's genetic make-up. With this information it is inconceivable to treat homosexuals differently. They deserve to be treated the same as people without the Xq28 gene. Society does not torture other groups of people with a different genetic make-up. People with muscular dystrophy, a genetic difference, are treated with kindness and love. They are constantly being offered help. Why should the homosexuals be any different?

Another reason homosexuals should not be treated differently is that their sexual preference does not affect their daily lives. They function the same as anyone else. Homosexuals get up in the morning, go to work and have the same social lives as heterosexuals. It has been averaged that one out of every ten people in America is homosexual (*Newsweek* 46). In the January 1994 issue of *Discover* magazine, that estimate was redone and averaged at more like four out of every ten people. Either way the fact is there are homosexuals in the workforce and in the American society. Homosexuals have just as much importance in the daily running of our world as heterosexuals. If people don't know that their co-worker is gay then there normally isn't a problem. Society should not discriminate against these people once they find out they are gay.

should be documented

Gay men should not be denied rights because people fear they will "recruit" more gay people. This is absurd. Heterosexuals don't go around "recruiting" other straight people. Sexual preference is not a game or a war between the sexes. It is a natural biological response to being human.

Needs a stronger lead into the counter argument

Another argument against the equality of homosexuals is that it is a psychological problem that can be "fixed." Some people feel that gay people can get counseling to

change their feelings back to the "right way." If this were true then perhaps denying equal rights could be justified. The problem with that argument is that it is not true. The Psychiatric Association of America has stated that homosexuality is not a disease. It is in no way a mental illness that needs or should be "fixed." People cannot argue that they have a right to discriminate against gays because it is a mental problem that they are choosing not to get treatment for.

According to psychologist E.L. Pattullo, many people fear that homosexuality is a choice and that if it is offered to children they will choose it. Pattullo refers to people who have thought about straying or have strayed from their dominant sexual orientation as "waverers." He feels that "waverers" can often be swayed one way or another on the sexual spectrum. His primary concern is for children. He feels that in a totally nondiscriminatory world the advantages of heterosexuality would not be so obvious. This would mean that children brought up around gays would be likely to gravitate away from heterosexuality. He also feels that early childhood teachers should not be able to "flaunt their sexual orientation" because this would influence young children to become homosexual. These statements are wrong because it is not a choice for people to be homosexual.

"Sometimes I have just wanted to shake people and say, 'Do you think I just woke up one day and decided I wanted to be society's definition of a deviant?'" (*U.S. News* 94). This was a statement made by a gay man in response to people who believe gays "choose" their lifestyle. Sexual preference is not chosen. It is a natural response to love someone whom you are attracted to. Heterosexuals do not choose to love someone of the opposite sex. That is who they are attracted to. People get a certain physiological response to someone when they meet them. Hearts do not distinguish between male and female; they are only concerned with who makes them feel good. It is not fair to discriminate against homosexuals on the basis that they choose their lifestyle. In most cases if a gay man had a choice, he would probably not choose homosexuality. This is not because homosexuality is worse than heterosexuality. It is because it is obvious the advantages that go along with being straight. They don't want to be shunned by the community. Everyone wants to be accepted, but not everyone has the opportunity. The question of equality has always been

a tough one. No one really has a right to say who should be treated equally and who should not. The only right way is to treat everyone equally. What people do in the privacy of their own home should be no one else's business. Homosexuals need to be viewed as equal human beings and should be given the same rights as heterosexuals.

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Legalized Gambling: Cancer or Cure-All?



Eric Buitenwerf

The scene is a hospital operating room. On a table lies a patient, visibly sick, in need of a transfusion. Gathered around the patient are a number of surgeons and specialists talking in a heated manner. The problem? A disagreement. A disagreement not about the diagnosis, but the proper cure. You see, their patient is extremely important. It is America, more specifically, her states, which are suffering from a shortage of revenues and funds. The specialists, having specific training in this area, propose an intravenous drip of legalized gambling solution as the painless remedy. The surgeons, possessing a broader base of knowledge, claim the specialists' prescription will not heal the patient at all, that it will instead inject carcinogenic substances into the body that will slowly eat the patient away.

Who are the specialists? They are the proponents of legalized gambling. Many are everyday people who enjoy gambling as a form of entertainment, but the mainstay of this group is big business such as MGM and Hilton (Popkin and Hetter 43). They know their presentation well, evidenced by the existence of some form of legalized gambling in every state except Utah and Hawaii (Zipperer 58). Speaking of a patient yearning for a panacea, the specialists sweetly explain that legalized gambling will bring enormous amounts of “free” revenue and business to surrounding areas, and do so in an entertaining way. Side effects may occur, but are minimal and can be controlled by setting aside a small amount of the income for treatment. The Iowa State Tourism Task Force states, “Gambling creates wealth” (qtd. in Lotz 58). Tom Timmons, director of Pari-Mutuels at Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino in Altoona, Iowa, elaborates on this view, “I feel [Prairie Meadows] is an economic boon to the state of Iowa. It supports horse racing and breeding

farms . . . agriculture. Nine hundred employees' jobs were created by [Prairie Meadows] and their salaries generate multiplied buying power." It can easily be seen why so many states have found gambling proponents' claims appealing. But why do the surgeons so vehemently disagree?

Basically, the surgeons (those against legalized gambling) believe if something sounds too good to be true, it usually is. They tend to be skeptical in nature and see the world from a big-picture view. Given these propensities, anti-gambling advocates have been quick to come up with solid reasoning and evidence that legal gambling is actually not a cure-all, but a cancer. Their argument cites social as well as economic problems incurred by gambling's introduction.

To begin, gambling has significant social consequences. It erodes morals such as the work ethic (Loots 58) by touting easy money available almost anywhere as well as de-emphasizing diligent labor. Gambling can lead to greed and weakened responsibility and character. Rarely does a person come away from a racetrack or casino (especially over multiple visits) better off than when he/she went in. One need only to look back through the history books to see that gambling and moral decay have a direct correlation. Arnie Wexler, executive director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey, is a prime example: "I used to have sex with my wife with the radio on under the pillow, listening to the ball games I was betting on. When I was 30 years old, I lost of \$300,000. I liked to kill myself." His wife had a miscarriage and he "prayed all the way to the hospital that she would die because it would solve all my problems" (qtd. in Ingrassia 74). How many more cases like Arnie are there?

Apparently, there are many, though probably not as extreme. According to Mike Brodie, a gambling counselor at Delta Dynamics, Inc., in Des Moines, Iowa, compulsive gamblers make up five percent of the population of the United States. Based on a total population estimate of 250 million people by the 1990 census, five percent equals 12.5 million people (*Information Please Almanac* 826). Brodie says these gamblers create a ripple effect in their communities through typical problems of bankruptcy, divorce, depression, abuse, crime and relapses of other addictions (like alcohol or drugs) triggered by gambling. For example, within one year of gambling's introduction to Biloxi,

Mississippi, five chapters of Gamblers Anonymous sprang into existence and the suicide rate doubled (Hirshey 41).

The effect of compulsive gamblers is also economic. William Thompson, professor of public administration at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas and resident gambling specialist, says authorities agree that each compulsive gambler costs his/her community roughly \$17,000 a year in lost productivity, social services, theft, jails, and specialized policing (Corelli 28). Seventeen thousand multiplied by 12.5 million gamblers equals a yearly expense of \$212.5 billion. Legalized gambling's total gross intake in 1992 was \$330 billion (Popkin and Hetter 43). Two-thirds of gambling's revenues are thus negated by one aspect of what specialists term "minimal" side effects. Considering the average compulsive gambler probably has a spouse and/or children, roughly fifteen to twenty percent (37.5 to 50 million) of the American population is adversely affected by legalized gambling. Add to this the above-mentioned impact of \$212.5 billion, and it is easy to see the social problems associated with legalized gambling can be much larger and more harmful than gambling proponents would have one believe.

What is most frightening is that the number of compulsive gamblers is only expected to rise. Richard J. Rosenthal, president of the California Council on compulsive Gambling, says it once took twenty years of gambling for a person to hit "serious trouble," but due to the advent of video poker machines, it now requires only two or three years before a gambler has to seek help (qtd. in Adler, Springen, and Glick 69). The lure of technology is strong and likely to become stronger as the Internet raises possibilities of gambling from the comfort of home, but there are additional reasons for predicted increases in compulsiveness. In a 1992 study done by Chicago's Better Government Association, juveniles gambling were estimated to total seven million in the United States (Zipperer 58). Couple this with the increasing appeal and availability of gambling and it is easy to justify concern for the issue.

Advocates of legalized gambling state they can control/prevent this problem with funds allocated from state gaming revenues. This is unlikely, given the fact they claim the above-mentioned social consequences are "minimal." For example, according to KCCI-TV8 news reporter Todd Magel in a news story titled "Your Money or Your Life," the

state of Iowa grosses \$130 million a year from legalized gambling, but only .76 percent (one million dollars) is set aside to treat problem gamblers. Iowa currently has 33,000 known compulsive gamblers (“Your Money or Your Life”). Multiply this number by Thompson’s figure of \$17,000 and the total comes to \$561 million. Will one million dollars effectively treat a \$561 million problem? Given the costs of counseling (high session numbers and rates, counselor salaries, and advertisement of services, etc.), it is doubtful this small percentage can successfully treat 33,000 people year in and out. And this is an ideal theoretical situation where all problem gamblers seek help. In reality, like an addict, rarely will a compulsive gambler admit to having a problem. State offered counseling/treatment services do little good if the addict does not first request assistance. Looking for warning signs in gamblers also has little benefit because doing so is labor, and thus money intensive, and does not guarantee the gambler will consent to assistance. Money set aside to treat compulsive gamblers is, in reality, hardly used and even ideally, too small an amount to either counteract or treat this problem.

While the social growths of this cancer are not always easily seen (illustrated by gambling proponents’ blindness), the economic tumors produced by it are much more evident. Gambling tends to dislodge local residents and established community businesses. increased real estate prices in Tunica, Mississippi, after the introduction of casinos to the area, forced many people from their neighborhoods and surrounding land. Monthly rent for trailer homes went from \$120 a month to \$500 a month or more (Popkin 52) and the price for an acre of land jumped from \$800 to at least \$8,000 (Popkin 56). Numerous cities and states have lost their diversified economies because of gambling and been forced to look to other areas for such basic businesses as supermarkets and restaurants. In Atlantic City, New Jersey, 100 of 250 local restaurants have closed since casinos appeared there in 1978 (Popkin and Hetter 46). Retail business has dropped one-third and the city has no golf courses, supermarkets, or movie theaters (Hishey 40), a far cry from proponents’ claims that legalized gambling increases an area’s business. Tucker Adams, chief economist at the Colorado National Bank, comments on gambling’s effect on the town of Black Hawk, Colorado, where aside from the post office and bank, gambling is

now the only enterprise in town. "If a factory came in, you'd get a housing development and a grocery store and a drugstore. With gaming, you don't" (qtd. in Bogert 23).

Not only are gambling advocates incorrect in asserting that legalized gambling increases surrounding business, they are wrong in believing jobs created by gambling establishments boost the local economy. The problem is these new jobs are low skill such as cocktail waitresses, slot machine and parking attendants, and food service cashiers and dishwashers. Low skill jobs are always plentiful. Rarely is there a shortage of jobs for gas station attendants or waiters/waitresses. Shortages occur in high skilled positions, such as a chemical engineer. Since there are not people waiting for low skill jobs to open up and seldom do high skilled job seekers apply for such assignments, when new low skill positions become available, they must be filled by individuals already possessing similar jobs. What results is a transfer of workers from one segment of the economy to another. Gambling "creates" new jobs while other businesses lose their's. The "new" money sent into the economy by the casino or riverboat employee is actually the same money that has been pumped into it for years. All that differs is which portion of the economy it benefits.

The economic downfalls of gambling do not stop there. Typically, areas where gambling has been introduced suffer form a rise in one or more of the following related problems: traffic tie-ups, which lead to a need for improved roads and services; crimes such as prostitution, theft, embezzlement, and the possible introduction of the Mafia; a need for extra police forces; and from the cost of paying for all of these services. Due to the high level of alcohol consumed since gambling was introduced, Black Hawk, Colorado, has been forced to build a new sewage treatment plant because alcohol kills the bacteria used to break down the sewage (Bogart 23). According to Andrew Nachison, Deadwood, South Dakota, has had a 40 percent increase in minor offenses and a 93 percent increase in serious crime since the town brought in gambling in 1989 (83). In order to support legal wagering in Central City, Colorado, more police staffing, building inspectors, and city planners had to be hired. As a result, the city's debt rose from \$500,000 to \$20 million (Koselka and Palmeri 70). And gambling advocates say legalized gambling increases rather than decreases government funds?

What proponents of gambling do not realize is that the money taxed in gambling is money that would have been taxed anyway, possibly even more profitably. Thompson states, “[public officials] don’t look . . . down the line and see that money will be drained out of other community resources--from retail sales, say--which otherwise would provide sales tax revenues” (qtd. in Worsnop 243). For example, dollars spent at a movie theater create numerous tax opportunities. First, the purchase of a ticket to see a show is taxed. Then, the theater is taxed for its overall yearly income. Food suppliers are taxed for buying and selling the popcorn, pop, and candy and the theater pays taxes when purchasing these products to sell. Employees of the theater also pay taxes on their income. This totals five instances for tax revenues to be generated. Restaurants, bars, and pleasure shopping, etc. offer equal if not more occasions to tax than do gambling establishments. Since gambling relies on competing with other entertainment forms of equal or greater tax generating abilities, how can advocates claim it increases tax revenues?

Another problem already emerging is that the market for gambling is becoming saturated. Many locations are registering losses in both attendance and net profit. For example, in Biloxi, Mississippi, when slot machine gambling was introduced in 1992, revenues topped \$207 per machine per day. When additional gambling sites came into town a year later, the daily win-per-machine figure dropped to \$109 (Popkin and Hetter 46). According to the Gannett News Service, half the casinos in Atlantic City, New Jersey, are bankrupt and half of Nevada’s casinos have only a three percent profit margin (Zipperer 58). Some states are even admitting to this dilemma. A report issued in a 1993 by the State of Iowa Gaming Study Committee stated the proliferation of casino gambling has had a “devastating effect upon pari-mutuel facilities nationwide” and that this “scene is and will be played out in every state . . . during the 90s . . . where . . . legal gambling exist[s]” (25). Richard A. McGowan, a professor of management and assistant provost for academic affairs at the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania, notes this saturation problem is due to the fact that gambling operators must constantly add bigger and better attractions in order to keep the public’s attention (4).

An economic principle comes into play here: the concept of diminishing returns. This is the level at which a business will begin to lose money if it hires another worker. For

the gambling industry, it is the point at which the addition of another casino will decrease overall profits rather than add to them. Gambling relies on improving the local economy at the expense of another region's economy (Koselka and Palmeri 72). If too many casinos are built, they will begin to draw money from local residents or be forced to close, each being an obviously harmful result.

Compulsive gamblers; lack of a diversified economy; and a saturated, unproductive market: all of these could have been avoided had the patient reflected on one simple, basic economic theory: there is "no such thing as a free lunch." Gambling cannot "create wealth" as the Iowa State Tourism Task Force claims (qtd. in Lotz 58). John Gnuschke, a Memphis State university economics professor and occasional casino consultant, concurs: "casinos are not generating new dollars [but they] are just stirring up the resources we currently have and redistributing them" (qtd. in Popkin 56). Brodie states the same idea in rudimentary terms:

They say a casino brought in half a million dollars. That means working people . . . lost half a million dollars. If somebody says, "I won a thousand dollars today," someone else had to lose that thousand dollars in order for you to win it.

Legalized gambling has proven itself to be cancerous, not miraculous. It is not, and never will be, a cure-all or end-all to our state's financial difficulties. The specialists, despite their prestige and fancy degrees, have left their patient lying on the table in worse shape than before. The patient's heart is being engulfed by a malignant social mass. Its limbs of economic activity are slowly reaching atrophy. The scene remains a hospital operating room and the patient is still sick.

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Gender Differences: What Are We Teaching Our Children?



Lisa Ann Brown

We live in a society where certain gender attitudes and stereotypes exist. While we acknowledge that this issue is a problem, there seems to be no solution as to how it can be resolved. Could it be that we as parents, through the examples we set and the values we consciously and unconsciously instill in our children, are teaching them the very gender stereotypes that will hinder their future goals and aspirations as young adults?

At the time of birth all children, regardless of sex, are presumably born androgynous. Personal knowledge of gender is not established until nearly two years of age. Yet as soon as the sex of the child is determined, we begin gender typing. Boys wear blue, girls wear pink. Already the instruction as to male and female roles has begun. By the time children reach the age of 2 to 3 years, they have already developed a very rigid idea and position about the roles that are assigned to both men and women. They know which toys the boys should be playing with, which activities the girls shouldn't be participating in, and even what types of careers each sex will most likely pursue. These ideas were formed by the parents' own teachings. Whether deliberate or not, we are setting in motion biased attitudes that will last a lifetime. Is it any wonder that one of the most common phrases from girls at this age is "I can't do it by myself," while a common phrase from boys is "Let me do it by myself"? It is clear that already girls are made to feel helpless while boys are strong and capable (Irwin & Simmons 181).

Gender roles teach females that men come first and women come second. During longitudinal studies, ranging over the past ten years, preschoolers were questioned as to what kinds of jobs women and men should have. Their answers ranged from housewives, teachers, and cooks for women to business man, construction worker, policeman, and

fireman for men. Female gender roles have set characteristics for women which include child caretaker, housekeeper, love-giver, submissiveness, obedience, dependent, and sympathetic. The contrast of the male characteristics is obvious as their characteristics include bread-winner, disciplinarian, responsible, commanding respect, dominant, authoritarian and demanding (Irwin & Simmons 182).

There is also the fact that gender roles over-emphasize the differences between men and women. Although the physiological differences are vast and obvious, the fact is, biological, men and women are more similar than different. Women carry all the chromosomes to be male and men carry all the chromosomes to be female. If not for one single gene on the Y chromosome, humankind would exist as one sex instead of as two (Gorman 93).

When the gender roles we impose upon our children are reinforced, they can lead to gender stereotyping. Parents seem to put much more emphasis on the male gender role characteristics than on the female characteristics. This leads to a reinforcement in aggression in boys and underachiever attitudes in girls (Allen & Santrock 304).

Society does expect a certain behavior from both men and women. The responsibility for teaching children society's expectations is the responsibility of that child's parents. yet it has been confirmed in studies by Joseph Pleck, a gender role theorist, that imposing these rigid gender roles on children can lead to dysfunctional behavior. Children are happier with more flexible attitudes (Irwin & Simmons 184).

It has been argued that men and women are biologically programmed to be different in their attitudes and actions as well as their appearances. Most differences between men and women are physiological, but there are certain biological differences in men and women that cannot be ignored. The most prevalent are the hormonal differences of testosterone for males and estrogen for females. As indicated before, men and women share more biological similarities than differences. The studies done on preschoolers illustrate that the attitudes and behaviors that exist in men and women are socially learned and are not biologically imposed (Irwin & Simmons 182).

The roles that men and women play are traditional. In old sitcoms and even some current ones, women and men are portrayed very true to the gender roles imposed upon

them. Just because something is traditional, it doesn't mean it is right. At one time slavery was traditional, so what does that say about some traditions? These traditional gender roles are detrimental to both men and women. Women are taught that there are limits for them that don't exist for men, while men are taught aggression and dominance resulting in an attitude of supremacy over women.

While it's true that children do become less rigid in their positions on gender roles as they become older, parents can and should take steps towards raising more gender-free attitudes in their children. There should be emphasis on gender-free colors, permitting the play of both boy- and girl-associated toys, assignment of a variety of chores not based on a child's gender, emphasis of independence in both sexes, non-sexist compliments, and equal allowances. Only when we as parents refuse to limit our children's abilities based upon their genders will they truly be able to reach any goal and believe completely in themselves.

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Illusions



Deena Bechtel

Hot cross buns!

Hot cross buns!

One-a-penny

Two-a-penny

Hot cross buns!

Many street cries such as this one were written down and in later years were recited by children. Such nursery rhymes are still repeated today, but few realize that they were originally a form of advertising. In fact, town criers and hawkers ringing bells, chanting and shouting in the streets were some of the first advertisers. Their shouts and chants called attention to the goods and services they were offering for sale.

From innocent nursery rhymes to Calvin Klein's decadent *Obsession*, welcome to the seductive world of illusion. According to international consultants Stan Rapp and Tom Collins, Americans are on the average, bombarded by 5,000 advertising messages daily, and the number of ads is expected to increase steadily (Gay 47). In the world of illusion, advertising adversely affects society in that it generates discrimination of body proportions, creates unrealistic expectations of women's physiognomy, and sexualizes women.

Researchers report that in the United States, children between the ages of 4 and 12 represent a market estimated at 75 billion dollars worth of goods and services purchased by adults. Twenty-eight million US teens, ages 12 to 19, spend 55 billion dollars annually in consumer goods and services from cars to groceries. College students spend 20 billion dollars a year on goods not related to their education (Gay 28). It is no wonder this multi-billion dollar industry is playing a high stakes game, targeting virtually every

socioeconomic and cultural segment of the population. Due to the cult of thinness that advertising perpetuates, being overweight is so despised that fat people face discrimination. For instance, studies reveal that obese individuals usually have a more difficult time getting a job, making friends, renting apartments, gaining college admittance and finding clothing stores where they have numerous styles and colors from which to choose (Sirmarco 68).

In modern day society, being obese has certain meanings. The fat person is a symbol of many things, none of them complimentary: greed, gluttony, laziness, filthiness, lack of control, self-discipline and intelligence. By contrast, being thin is a sign of a person's self-control, athletic ability, hard work ethic, competence and intellect. While it is considered wrong to insult a people's race, religion, even sexual preference, people have no qualms about expressing revulsion for the obese. Case in point: one study showed that elementary school children perceived obesity as worse than having a physical disability (O'Halloran 43). People come in all beautiful sizes and shapes. It is time to celebrate that variety and stop the pressure to conform to what advertisers perceive as real.

Due to the illusions created in advertising, the life of a woman has turned into a walking Miss America pageant. Just open any magazine--*Vogue*, *Seventeen*, *Self*, or *Sports Illustrated*--to find models in their teens or very early twenties, selling everything from cars to toothpaste. O'Halloran states, "Sadly, even magazines aimed at women over 40, such as *Lear*'s, provide an unrealistic physical image to women as illustrated by their models, who, although over 35, are mysteriously lacking in wrinkles and all are slender of thigh" (35). Nowhere do you see Roseanne Barr scantily clad, draped over the hood of a Jaguar, whispering sweet nothings in a man's ear.

Models and actresses receive a lot of help from people like hair stylists and makeup artists. Experts know how to retouch photographs and take away imperfections like wrinkles and cellulite. According to supermodel Cindy Crawford:

I think women see me on the cover of magazines and think I never have a pimple or bags under my eyes. You have to realize that's after hours of hair and makeup, plus retouching. I diet and exercise strenuously to

maintain my weight. Anyone who thinks that society pressures women to live up to my image should think of what I have to go through to maintain that image. (Sirimarco 55)

Through the power of illusion, everyone dreams of becoming Cindy Crawford, thus encouraging females to become forever the object of another's gaze.

In their frenzied bids for attention and constant hopes to be remembered, advertisers frequently wave sexual imagery at consumers. Some are remembered, but many are not. According to Carol Moog,

what does get set in the collective memory of the culture are portraits of stunted sexual development, portraits of sexual status displays, narcissistic glorification, and crude innuendo. These are portraits that are sold along with products pledging to help consumers put themselves in the power positions promoted by the advertiser as enviable. (166)

Contemplate the following marketing schemes that exemplify the sexualization of women: "A woman in leather, sitting on the railing of a boardwalk, simultaneously kissing a well-tattooed man and vigorously grabbing the area of his Katherine Hammett jeans roughly located between his two front pockets" (Sullivan 166). Sullivan also reports explicit sexual advertising in the 1994 Request Jeans ad campaigns. For instance, a fully nude couple is in the shower all moist and frothy, and he is leaning up against her. Another vignette is a nice couple on satin sheets, where he is lying full length over her. An illustration of one of Klein's more modest magazine ads is a of a "model in briefs reclining with her back arched and a T-shirt pulled up over one breast" (Sullivan 166). When men are faced with such overt sexual imagery, they can't **remember** anything--often they can't even describe what was in the ad, let alone name the product! Sexy ads do rivet a man's attention, but the intellectual circuits can get overloaded fast and, at that point, all that gets marketed is food for fantasies.

Advertisers are the first to insist that their business is by no means as powerful as the critics would have it. Diane Barthel suggests that "if we could so easily manipulate consumers, all advertised products would succeed and we would all be living on easy street" (21). It is their belief that what best sells anything--cars, books, laundry soap--is

word of mouth. This may be why advertising that gets talked about has more value than we think. Could this be why the controversial Calvin Klein ads that were so ceremoniously pulled from the media worked so well and boosted his sales in the millions? Martin Mayer states, "Although advertising does not have the power to compel you to buy, according to *Advertising Age*, it does have the power to prevail" (31). The jingle "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should" didn't compel me to buy Winstons or, for that matter, encourage me to start smoking. But the ditty did prevail because I can remember it 30 years after it was last aired in any media format.

If we climb into the real world offered by advertising, we will all be sexy, confident, competent, successful, intelligent, exceptional, but ordinary people in this pressure-cooker world of expectations.

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Affirmative Action



Steven Strawn

Affirmative action programs were invented during the Johnson administration soon after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In a 1965 address at Howard University, President Johnson said, "You do not take a person who for years has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him to the starting line, and they say, 'You are free to compete with all the others' and still justly believe that you have been fair" (qtd. in *The Black Scholar* 24). Public opinion on this issue has changed in the 31 years since that speech was made. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* NBC News survey, 2 out of 3 Americans opposed affirmative action (*U.S. News & World Report* 32). White males in particular see it as an example of reverse discrimination and a severe limitation on their futures. ^{* There's quite a jump to the thesis} Although many politicians believe that affirmative action programs should be eliminated, affirmative action should not be abolished because it makes sense economically, it provides diversity in the workplace, and it promotes fairness.

^{in this claim, the writer offers the reasons. However he does not maintain the same order - making sense economically is listed first} First of all, affirmative action promotes diversity in the workplace. Lack of diversity is a kind of veiled segregation. White males make up one third of the population in America, yet they make up 95 percent of those who run American and control and distribute 90 percent of the nation's wealth. They comprise 80 percent of Congress, 80 percent of tenured positions at universities, 99.9 percent of athletic team owners, and 100 percent of United States presidents. ^{* a transition would help here} Studies over the years have shown that up to 65 percent of Americans find their jobs through contacts made through the friends and kinship network (Jackson-Leslie 28). In effect, white males will almost always hire white males. Without affirmative action, minorities have little, if any, chance to make any inroads into a white male dominated economy. Even with affirmative action, progress has been slow and much work still needs to be accomplished.

Secondly, the goal of affirmative action is one of fairness. The history of African Americans in America is one of unfairness. After 246 years of bondage, they were subjected to another century of segregation, which created a vast social and economic gulf between racial groups. The inequities which developed over this time cannot be quickly dissolved. Much time, effort, and sacrifice must be expended so that true equality can be achieved in the future (Jackson-Leslie 29).

The myth of the individual who goes from rags to riches without benefit of class advantage or family riches is popular in America. It is especially popular with white immigrants who came with nothing and made something of themselves. However, they were gifted with white skin and the privileges that go with it. They may have become successful because of what they accomplished, or because of what they weren't, i.e. black, inheriting a lack of opportunity that accompanies that particular skin color.

Finally, all Americans benefit when each citizen is allowed a chance to participate in the growth of an economy. With growing competition from worldwide markets, we need every individual to be able to contribute with the best of his or her abilities. Affirmative action has created new opportunities for millions of minorities.

When affirmative action was created in 1964, there were nearly 74 million Americans in the workplace. In 1995, the number of workers had grown to slightly more than 123 million. The 50 million jobs were not created by taking jobs away from white males. They were created by utilizing the talents of a diverse workforce. America cannot be competitive worldwide unless it takes advantage of 100 percent of its population (Tharp 33). That is the conclusion of a report released by the Glass Ceiling Commission, created by Congress as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. The following conclusion was reached:

Increasing numbers of corporate leaders recognize that glass ceilings and exclusion of members of groups other than white non-Hispanic males are bad for business because of recent dramatic shifts in three areas that are fundamental to business survival: changes in the demographics of the labor force, changes in the demographics of the national consumer markets, and the rapid

Why is this paragraph tossed in here?

Should all of this be gathered?

globalization of the marketplace. (qtd. in *Newsweek* 27)

The changes that Allstate Insurance made illustrate this point. In the 1970s, the traditional, largely white rural and suburban markets were being saturated by insurers. Looking for new sales, the company focused on cities and primarily minority working and middle classes. Selling insurance is usually best done by hometown agents who already know their customers. Allstate set aside one third of its promotions and a number entry level hires for minorities. As a result, the number of black agents doubled, from 5.3 percent to 10.6 percent. Black employment company-wide rose from 9.5 percent to 15 percent and 25 percent of the company's officers are now minorities. The payoff is that Allstate Insurance is now the number one insurer in New York City and in Chicago's black community (Walberg 28).

Many of those who oppose affirmative action do so on the basis of test scores measuring certain types of intelligence. They reject the idea that those who score lower should be given preference over those who receive a higher score. But should someone be hired on the results of a single test, especially when it has been shown that the test is biased by the people who create it, mainly white males? No one would suggest that the head of a corporation be hired simply because of a high test score. There are many other factors that need to be considered and weighed objectively.

No protests are made when star athletes or sons and daughters of alumni are given admission to colleges even if they are not the most qualified. No one complains when veterans are given advantages in hiring, even if they are not the most deserving. Most people understand that there are other factors considered when these decisions are made.

Critics of affirmative action want to go to a system where an individual's merit is the sole consideration for receiving a job. They say that the only fair way is for everyone to have a level playing field. However, there is little enthusiasm for stepping up enforcement of anti-discrimination laws or earmarking funds to upgrade inner city schools. No one seems eager to reallocate any of society's resources into ensuring that level field exists.

Many white males feel they are being hurt by affirmative action because of lost job opportunities or lost chances for advancement. However, just the opposite is true.

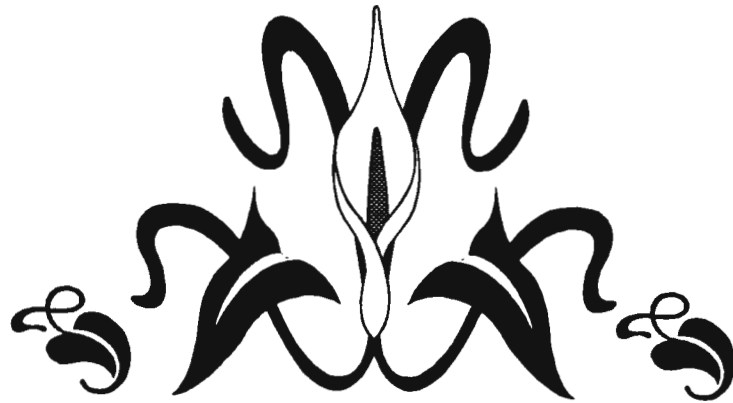
Since affirmative action programs were enacted, unemployment for white men has not increased and their paychecks, when compared to black men, are still about 25 percent higher (Tharp 36). They still control a disproportionate amount of power in the economy and in society when compared to the general population.

Affirmative action addresses the basic right of all American citizens to receive a quality education, have the opportunity to be hired for a good job, and be promoted when they succeed at work. Everyone should have a chance to contribute to society, regardless of race. Affirmative action should not be abolished because it makes sense economically, it provides diversity in the workplace, and it promotes fairness. Affirmative action provides a small incentive for companies, government, and universities to do the right thing.

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Appendix A
MLA Style Sheet



MLA Works Cited & Parenthetical Documentation for DMACC Writers

Although there is no universally agreed-upon system for acknowledging sources, there is agreement on both the need for documentation and the items that should be included. Writers should acknowledge sources for two reasons: to give credit to those sources and to enable readers to consult the sources for further information. The new MLA style adopted a simpler parenthetical citation method rather than using footnotes or endnotes.

GENERAL BOOKS

1. A book with one author

Works Cited Form:

Norris, William. The Unsafe Sky: The Unvarnished Truth about Air Safety. New York: Norton, 1901.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Norris 54).

2. Two books with the same author

Works Cited Form:

Lanham, Richard A. Literacy and the Survival of Humanities. New Haven: Yale UP, 1983.

---. Style: An Anti-Textbook. New Haven: Yale UP, 1974.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Lanham, Literacy 24).

(Lanham, Style 70).

3. A book with two or three authors

Works Cited Form:

Boeck, Wilhelm, William Cran and Robert McNeil. The Story of English. New York: Viking, 1986.

Parenthetical Documentation: (McCrum, Cran and McNeil 61).

4. A book with more than three authors

Works Cited Form:

Young, Ralph A., et al. Personal Finance Companies. New York: Viking, 1941.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Young et al. 12).

5. A book with an editor

Works Cited Form:

Newhall, Beaumont, ed. Photography. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Newhall 114).

6. A book with an author and editor

Works Cited Form:

Whitman, Walt. Leaves of Grass. Ed. Emory Holloway. New York: Doubleday, 1926.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Whitman 22).

7. An anonymous book
Works Cited Form:
A Times Atlas of the World. 7th ed. New York: New York Times, 1985.
Parenthetical Documentation: (A Times Atlas 25).

PERIODICALS

8. An unsigned article in a magazine
Works Cited Form:
"Dubious Venture." Time 3 Jan. 1994: 64-5.
Parenthetical Documentation: ("Dubious" 65).
9. A signed article in a magazine
Works Cited Form:
Cunningham, Kim. "US Davis Cuppers Set to Conquer." World Tennis Oct. 1988: 68-9.
Parenthetical Documentation: (Cunningham 68).
10. An unsigned newspaper article
Works Cited Form:
"Air Travel Less Safe Now." The Orange County Register 11 Aug. 1988: A10.
Parenthetical Documentation: ("Air Travel" 10).
11. A signed newspaper article
Works Cited Form:
Malnic, Eric. "Jet Engine Wing Flaps Under Study." Los Angeles Times 2 Sept. 1988, B1+.
(The plus sign is used here to indicate that the article continues on other, not necessarily continuous, pages.)
Parenthetical Documentation: (Malnic 18).
12. A letter to the editor
Works Cited Form:
Masters, Mark. Letter. The Futurist Sept. 1988: 2.
Parenthetical Documentation: (Masters 2).
13. An unsigned editorial
Works Cited Form:
"Magic Words for College." Editorial. Los Angeles Times 3 May 1985, sec. 2: 6.
Parenthetical Documentation: ("Magic Words" 6).
14. A signed editorial
Works Cited Form:
Birnbbaum, Norman. "The Center Holds." Editorial. Nation 1 June 1985: 660-61.
Parenthetical Documentation: (Birnbbaum 661).

ENCYCLOPEDIAS

15. An unsigned article from an encyclopedia

Works Cited Form:

"Cancer." Encyclopedia Britannica: Micropaedia. 1988 ed.

Parenthetical Documentation: ("Cancer").

(Volume and page numbers are not required for an article appearing alphabetically in an encyclopedia.)

16. A signed article from an encyclopedia

Works Cited Form:

Pepper, Eleanor. "Interior Design." Encyclopedia Americana. 1987 ed.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Pepper 218).

OTHER SOURCES

17. An unsigned pamphlet

Works Cited Form:

Herbert Hoover: The Uncommon Man. Washington: Hoover Presidential Library Assn., 1974.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Herbert Hoover 16).

18. A signed pamphlet

Works Cited Form:

Lobsenz, Norman M. Grandparents Today. New York: Public Affairs Committee, 1987.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Lobsenz 10).

19. Television or Radio program

Works Cited Form:

Good Morning America. ABC. KABC, Los Angeles. 4 Oct. 1985.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Good Morning America).

20. An interview

Works Cited Form:

Seymour, Carolyn. Personal Interview. 7 Aug. 1988.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Seymour).

ELECTRONIC SOURCES

21. SIRS

Works Cited Form:

Clark, Matt. "Medicine: A Brave New World." Newsweek 5 Mar. 1992: 64-70. SIRS CD-ROM. SIRS Inc., Winter 1996.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Clark).

22. InfoTrac (Full text of article)

Works Cited Form:

Russo, Michelle Cash. "Recovering from Bibliographic Instruction Blahs." RQ: Reference Quarterly 32 (1992): 178-83. Infotrac: Magazine Index Select ASAP II. CD-ROM.

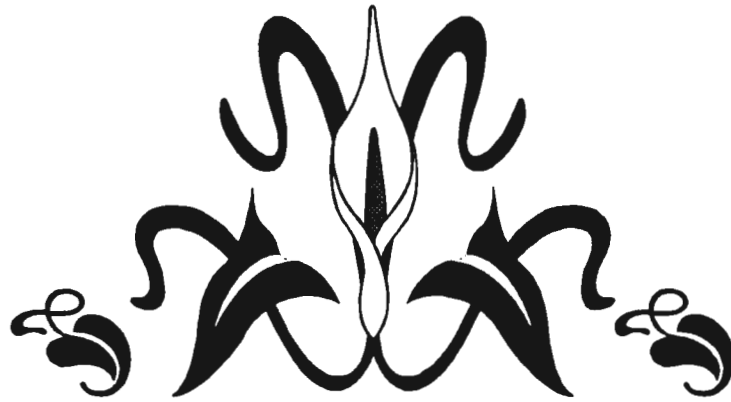
Information Access. Dec. 1995.

Parenthetical Documentation: (Russo).

23. InfoTrac (Abstract of article)
Works Cited Form:
"Santa's Little Helper (Diary of an Elf at Macy's Department Store)" by David Sedaris. Harper's Magazine Dec. 1993: 13. Abstract. Infotrac: Magazine Index Select ASAP II. CD-ROM. Information Access. Dec 1995.
Parenthetical Documentation: ("Santa's").
24. Des Moines Register
Works Cited Form:
Binnie, Ian. "Criticizing Vision 2005 Isn't Condemnation." Des Moines Register Oct. 31, 1995: 9. CD News Des Moines Register. CD-ROM. NewsBank, Inc. 1995.
Parenthetical Documentation: (Binnie).
25. CINAHL (Abstract of article)
Works Cited Form:
"Corneal Vascularization" by B. E. Caffery and J. E. Josephson. Optometry-Clinics 4.3 (1995): 19-29. Abstract. Nursing & Allied Health (CINAHL)-CD. CD-ROM. Silver Platter International N.V. Oct. 1995.
Parenthetical Documentation: ("Corneal").
26. Encyclopedia
Works Cited Form:
Klots, Alexander B. "Butterflies and Moths." Grolier Multimedia. Vers. 7.01. CD-ROM. Grolier. 1995.
Parenthetical Documentation: (Klots).
27. Internet
a. WWW (Original)
Works Cited Form:
Smith, James. "What Fun This Is." Online. Internet. Available HTTP: <http://www.fun.com>
Accessed January 31, 1996.
Parenthetical Documentation: (Smith).
- b. WWW (Electronic source with printed analogue)
Works Cited Form:
Loeb, Paul Rogat. "Greeks and Granolas and Steeps and Slackers." Mother Jones. Sept/Oct 1994. Online. Internet. Available HTTP:
http://www.mojones.com/mother_jones/SO94/loeb.html Accessed February 1, 1996.
Parenthetical Documentation: (Loeb).
- c. Gopher
Works Cited Form:
Howe, Neil and William Strauss. "The New Generation Gap." The Atlantic. Dec. 1992.
Online. Internet. Available Gopher: <gopher.eneews.com/Atlantic.Dec92> Accessed February 1, 1996.
Parenthetical Documentation: (Howe and Strauss)



Appendix B
Sample Writing
Assignment



A Sample Writing Assignment: The Explanatory Essay

Composition classes teach writing as a skill; like any skill, good results are achieved by learning the craft, or process, of writing. While every writer has a preferred method, there are several steps to good writing which are effective; these steps are often taught to students in composition classes to help them learn the multi-faceted skill of writing at the college level.

The following steps in the writing process are those taught by Kris Bigalk; every instructor will have a variation on the steps below:

- 1) Prewriting
- 2) Organizing/Researching
- 3) Writing the Rough Draft
- 4) Revising
- 5) Writing the Second Draft
- 6) Revising and Proofreading
- 7) Writing the Third Draft
- 8) Revising and Proofreading
- 9) Writing the Final Draft

While it is necessary to begin with prewriting, it isn't always necessary (or possible) to complete each step in order. Sometimes students find they have to repeat several steps, or switch back and forth between steps. Some students can write a flawless paper after three drafts; some students must write six drafts to achieve the same result. The important concept to remember about the writing process is that each student needs to find his/her own process that works.

On the pages that follow, you will see examples of a student's progress through a writing assignment. All of the student's drafts are not included here; she completed six drafts to achieve the final result.

The Explanatory Essay

The explanatory essay is the second essay that students in Kris Bigalk's classes write. At the beginning of the hour, she tells the students that the next essay will be an essay that explains a process. She asks her students to take out a piece of paper and make a list of things they knew how to do that they think the rest of the class would like to learn about. Quickly making a list like this is called *brainstorming*.

After Bigalk's students had brainstormed a list of possible topics, she asked them to get into groups and talk about what they had written down. Their groups helped them decide which topic to write about.

Then Bigalk asked the students to write a *thesis statement*, or purpose statement, that reflected their choice of topic.

After writing their thesis statements, Bigalk's students read the chapter in their textbook about *strategies of development*, or methods they could use to explain their topic. During the next classtime, they discussed which strategies of development would work best with certain topics. The students then wrote out lists of the strategies of development and analyzed how their topic would best be explained.

Researching and organizing don't have to take place entirely in the library. Bigalk's students then answered six questions about their topic: *who, what, why, where, when, and how*. Answering these questions helped them "research" their own memories. After they had answered these questions, they went to the library and learned how to find sources to back up their theses.

After making *bibliography* and *note cards*, the students began drafting their papers. *Lisa Benjamin's first, fifth, and final drafts* are shown as examples of good revising. Rarely will a student revise alone; in many writing classes, students are required to form writing workshops and edit peers' papers. Motivated students often meet with other students and help each other revise outside of class. Students also can get help with revising by setting up meeting times with instructors, visiting the Writing Lab, or by requesting a regular tutor from the Tutoring Center.

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English 117E3
Mrs Kris Bigall
July 3, 1996

Brainstorming Ideas

- How to reduce housework
 - organizing closets
- How to raise a child with self-confidence
- How to discipline in a positive way
- How to Recycle
- Raising a child with respect for elders,
- How to choose a college
- How to teach a Sunday school class
 - adult
 - child
- How to find a babysitter
- How to set up chore schedule for kids

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July 3, 1996

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- How to set up chore schedule for kids

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July 3, 1996

Thesis Statement

I will tell how to decipher which items need to be discarded, how to make your closet functional and efficient, and how to avoid clutter build-up.

Strategies of Development

Description - feeling - Item thumping on head. Shoes hurt
sight - mountains of clutter.
smell - aroma of mothballs.
touch - weigh + feel of material.

Definition - sorting - Dividing a large accumulation of affects into smaller, more workable categories.

Wardrobe Closet - used for apparel, shoes, accessories, + a few personal affects.

Process Analysis - Basic tools required (boxes, etc.)
getting ready, marking boxes,
sorting to boxes, organizing good items into closet, discarding, maintenance

Compare/contrast - un-organized vs organized closets. similar items, different items,

Clarification/Division - organizing → begin with sorting.

Wardrobe closet → Reach-In wardrobe closet.

Cause/effect un-organized - wastes time, energy & space, organized - no searching necessary
take phone off hook - avoids distractions.
durable wood plastic hangers - eliminated tangled mess of wire hangers.
Ties scarfs wrinkle when fall to the floor or jammed in boxes. → hang also display so will use.
iron clothes - make selection easier when rushed.

Writing to Explain

Organizing a Reach-In Wardrobe Closet

What? Organizing begins with sorting

Wardrobe closet - store attire, accessories, pers affects

Sorting - dividing into smaller categories by likeliness

What means? reducing, rearranging, discarding

How works? Organize - Sort - Discard - maintaining
Each Item has its own place.

How put together? only placing necessary items
back in closet

How relates to other things? ^{un-organized} wastes energy, time
& space. organized - saves time, energy, space.
Takes less work.

Cause - not following rule in with the new, out
with the old. Not being organized.

Consequences - ^{not being organized} - waste time, energy, space
not able to find needed items
Items fall on head, doors won't shut
organized - Every items has its place. SAVES time,
energy, space

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Note Cards

McMillan, Closet Makeovers. p58.

"Space isn't storage space until it's organized."

p56

By adding new or additional shelves, drawers, and hanging rods you can greatly increase your storage space. ✓

Howie, The Fine Art of Closet Cleaning. p69

If you can't remember how your shoes fit, close your eyes and take a brief walk in each pair. ✓

Kaufman, Necktie Madness. p69.

"A necktie should be considered an ornament, not a long-term investment." ✓

Lampert, The Clutter Cop. p120.

gtd Shur - Recommend purchasing durable wood or plastic hangers. ✓

gtd Shur - Store out-of-season attire in a marked box under a bed. ✓

Hughes, Custom Closets: Organize and Build, p. 15

Suggests using multi-level part
hardware to save space. ✓

Mc Millan Closet Makeover, p. 56.
Once your closet is organized, you
will know exactly what your closet
lacks.

Lisa Benjamin

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Ms. Kris Bigalk

June 27, 1996

Reach-In
Organizing a Wardrobe Closet

An unorganized wardrobe closet contains items that are damaged, don't fit, out of season, and seldom used. All of these items can be found mixed in with items that are well used. When searching for a needed item, a person must first sort through mountains of clutter. This wastes valuable time, energy, and space. How many times have you opened your closet, only to have an object fall off the top shelf, thumping you on the head? Have you ever stood undressed searching desperately for something to wear, despite the mounds of clothing jumping out at you?

Items found in an organized wardrobe closet are of good quality, in season, fit well, and used often. An organized closet eliminates the need to search. Each item is neatly arranged in its proper place. Needed items can be obtained, without wasting valuable time and energy. Storage space is abundant. Pat McMillan, a writer for Home Mechanix, stated ~~this~~^{his} point well. "Space isn't storage until it's organized" (58). ^{WIP} Many great articles have been written about organizing, but how can one get organized if they do not know where to start? Often overlooked, sorting is the most important step in the process of organizing. Sorting—dividing a large accumulation of personal affects into small^d, more workable categories, according to their similarities. You will learn how to eliminate the un-necessary clutter in your closet, by sorting. You will learn how to decipher which items are necessary and which items need to be disposed of. ^{This will make your closet functional and efficient.} New techniques will be addressed, enabling you to ~~know~~ ~~how to~~ keep your closet organized, avoiding clutter build up. *First you must understand the differences between an unorganized closet and a organized closet.*

Lisa Benjamin

English 117 E3

Ms. Kris Bigalk

July 4, 1996

How to Organize a Wordrobe Closet

An un-organized wordrobe closet can be bewildering, overflowing with clothing, shoes, belts, ties, handbags and other miscellaneous personal affects. How many times have you opened your closet, only to have an object fall and thump you on your head? Have you ever stood un-dressed searching desperately for something to wear, Despite the hudge quantity of choices? Many great articles have been written about organizing, but how can one get organized if they don't know where to start?

thesis statement

This process begins with sorting-dividing a large accumulation of personal affects into smaller, more workable categories, according to their likenesses. You will learn how to decifer which items are necessary and which items need to be disposed of. Once this has been accomplished, you will learn how to organize your truely valuable affects. Each item will have it's proper place and you will easily find needed items.

Before you begin ^{sorting} organizing, a few small details need to be handled. Pick a day where you can ^{freshly} ~~lauder~~ ^{and pressed} ALL clothing needs to be laundered and pressed. be un-interrupted. Plan to Send your spouse and children out for the day. Mark this day on your calendar. ^{Deolie Hampert, Lifestyle Editor on Ladies' Home Journal recomen} ~~You will need to purchase plenty of plastic hangers.~~ Make sure you have ten empty cardboard boxes and some trash bags. A black, permanant marker will be needed for labeling. Plan to begin early in the morning and work until you are finished. Do not purchase new organizing racks, it is better to wait and see what you have left. This way you can pick a

organizing ceter that best meets your needs. You may even find you have plenty of room once un-necessary items have been removed.

Now that the day has arrived, begin by taking the phone off the hook. Interruptions will only slow you down. Open the closet door and take a deep breath. Take every item out of the closet and place in piles on your bed and floor. You can't go to bed now until you have finished. If you share your closet with a spouse divide the room in half. One half for your spouse and one half for you. Pick a half and get ready to sort. Label your boxes; garbage, wrong room, charity, spring/fall, winter, and summer.

The garbage box will be used for any items that appear damaged. Damaged items are no good to anyone, they only take up valuable space. Do not attempt to mend these items. If they were important to you, they would have already been mended.

Personal affects-ties, scarfs, handbags, and a few other items belong in the box you should label as personal affects.

A garmet closet is supposed to be used for apparel, shoes, accessories and a few personal affects. Anything you remove from your closet that doesn't meet this criteria should be placed in the wrong room box. When you finish with your closet organizing you will need to find a more appropriate storage place for these misplaced items.

Any items that you come across that remain in good condition but dont't fit properly, or are un-comfortable, place in the box marked charity. Out of style items, or any duplicate articles should also be sorted to the charity box.

Sort through the remaining articles and place any items that you have not used in the last year in the box also.

You will need at least three out of season boxes. Label them; spring/fall, winter, and summer. Heavy, long sleeved winter items belong in the box marked winter. If you aren't sure which season they belong to, check the fabric. For example, woolen items are worn in winter. Any transitional items that can be worn in either spring or fall belong in the spring/fall box. Light summer clothes belong in the box marked summer.

Now that you understand the uses of each box, begin sorting your clothing articles. When finished, Pick the appropriate season box and organize the items back into your closet. Place each article on the new plastic hangers you purchased earlier. Plastic hangers will not get all tangled up like wire hangers will. Sort the clothes into the following categories; pants, skirts, shirts, dresses, suits, sport coats, and sweaters. Note that sweaters may not be in season, or could be placed in a drawer to avoid stretching. Lingerie can be placed in a separate category if you choose to hang them. Plastic hangers have little hooks to hold spaghetti straps. Hanging will also help keep wrinkles out of these light weight, delicate items. *After sorting, divide further and lengths (Leslie Lampert pg#)* The above categories can be sorted further by color. This will make mixing and matching quicker and easier.

Once all your clothing items are hung you can move on to the enormous pile of shoes. Sort your shoes into the six basic categories. Reminder, any shoes that are uncomfortable, or hurt your back or feet should be tossed given to charity. *Close your eyes and take a brief walk in ea* If they are in poor condition toss them. They will not be of use to anyone. Be shure shoes are sorted by color and style into the proper season boxes. Most shoes will be in the spring/fall box. Boots and the like will be placed in the winter box. Tennis shoes can be worn any season and belong in the current season box. Shoe racks organize and save space. If you have one, place the most worn items in front. If you do not have one, thats fine. Now you will know just what size organizer to purchase. You probably have

found shoes you thought were lost forever, another great benefit to being organized.

Ties and scarfs wrinkle when they fall to the floor or are jammed into boxes. If you have a tie rack this is a good time to organize it. Expandable mug racks are another great way to display

ties^{belts} and scarfs. Be sure to display these items so they are easily visible and accessible, You will

be more apt to use them this way. *Mervyn Kaufman, a ~~top~~^{self} professed tie collector, who sorted through his mountains of ties, ~~summed~~ summed up a great strategie for →*

Examine all handbags, properly sorting them into the basic categories. Remember to keep

only one of each color. You should only be placing a couple of handbags back into your closet.

Pegs are great for displaying your bags, or they can be placed on the top shelf. If you travel often

you can put your overnight bag on the top shelf. All other luggage should be put in a more long

term storage closet.

Personal affects in your wardrobe closet should be limited. Now would be a good time to

review what a wardrobe closet should be used for as described earlier in this essay. Most of the

items left in the personal affects box probable do not belong in your wardrobe closet. Check

again, placing misplaced items in the wrong room box. Be sure to label any containers of

personal nature, *that you put in closet,* to avoid un-necessary searching later.

Now that your bed and floor is visible once again, move on to discarding the un-necessary

clutter you have removed. Sack up the garbage box items and take them out to the curb. Call

your favorite charity and arrange for your donation. Remember to ask for a receipt, as this can be

used for a tax donation. Depending on the size of your closet, the out of season boxes can be

stored, or if you have a spare closet it can be organized to hold all of your out of season items.

leslie lampert, known as the clutter cop, suggest storing out-of-season items in ~~boxes~~ boxes under bed. Be sure to label each box.

Moth balls are commonly used but create quite a foul odor. Washing also become a requirement if

you want to use these items. Be sure the environment you choose, to store these articles is free of

mold, mildew, and insects. This will eliminate the need for the smelly moth balls.

The following tips can help you keep your closet organized and functional. Remember one basic rule. In with the new, out with the old. Essentially this means if you purchase a new white, silk blouse you can replace the tattered old blouse you were wearing.

Before shopping, make an inventory of items that need replaced. Don't buy a blouse just because it is on sale. Buy it because you need it. Also, shop in season. This will help you to avoid duplicating an item that is currently in storage. Most stores stock clothing before the season is current. When you buy in season, the clothes will probably be on sale, saving you money.

Enjoy your now organized and functional closet. Remind yourself how great it feels to be able to shut the closet door without having to kick articles into a pile on the floor. No more headaches from falling debris. Sleep in a few extra minutes tomorrow, knowing you will not have to search your closet in vain.

If your closet ^{space} still seems inadequate, you may want to look into purchasing a closet organization system. By adding new or additional shelves, drawers and hanging rods you can greatly increase your available storage. ~~You know exactly~~
Once your closet has been organized you will know exactly
what your ~~closet~~ closet needs or is lacking (Pat McMillan (pg)
Closet Makeovers)

SM

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July 3, 1996

Story or anecdote

tab 5 spaces

Organizing a Reach-In Wardrobe Closet

end of #

Many great articles have been written about organizing, but how can you become organized if you do not know where to start? ~~Often overlooked, sorting is the most important step in the process of organizing.~~ Sorting is dividing a large accumulation of personal belongings into smaller categories, according to their similarities. You will learn how to decipher which items need to be discarded, making your closet functional and efficient. ~~New techniques will be addressed, enabling you to keep your closet organized, avoiding clutter build-up.~~ First, you must understand the differences between an unorganized closet and an organized closet.

An unorganized wardrobe closet contains items that are damaged, ~~do not fit~~, out-of-season, and seldom used. All of these items can be found mixed in with well-used items. When locating a needed item, a person must first sort through mountains of clutter. This wastes valuable time, energy and space. [How many times have you opened your closet, only to have an object fall off the top shelf, thumping you on the head? Have you ever stood undressed searching desperately for something to wear, despite the mounds of clothing jumping out at you?]

On the contrary, items found in an organized wardrobe closet are of good quality, in-season, ~~filled~~ well, and used often. An organized closet eliminates the need to search. Each item is neatly arranged in its proper place. Needed items can be obtained, without wasting valuable time and energy. Storage space is abundant. Pat McMillan, in an article written for the magazine Home Mechanix, ^{written for} states this point well, when he writes: "space isn't storage space until it's organized"

Before you begin sorting, a few small details need to be addressed. All clothing articles need to be freshly laundered and pressed. Pick a day where you will not be interrupted. If necessary, plan to send your spouse and children out of the house for the day. Be sure to mark this day on your calendar. Stephanie Schur, a professional organizer, recommends purchasing durable wood or plastic hangers (cited in Lampert 120). These more durable hangers will eliminate the tangled-up mess wire hangers create. You will need up to ten empty cardboard boxes and some trash bags. A black permanent marker will be needed for labeling. Plan to begin early in the morning and work until you finish. Avoid purchasing new organizing systems at this time. If you wait, you will be able to choose the right system for your new needs. You may even find you have plenty of room once the clutter has been removed.

When the day you have chosen arrives, take the phone off the hook, because interruptions will only slow you down. Open the closet door and take a deep breath. Remove every item from your closet, placing them on the bed and floor. If you share closet space with a spouse, split the room in half and divide the articles into the proper halves of the room. Pick a half and get ready to sort. Label your boxes: Garbage, wrong-room, charity, spring/fall, winter, and summer.

Personal accessories, such as ties, scarves, handbags, and other items of a personal nature belong in the box labeled personal affects. These items should be limited to possessions used frequently.

A garment closet is supposed to be used for apparel, shoes, accessories, and a few personal affects. Anything you removed from your closet that does not meet this criteria should be placed in the wrong-room box. When finished with your closet organizing, you will need to find a more appropriate storage place for these misplaced items.

Any items that you come across that remain in good condition, but do not fit properly, should be placed in the box marked charity. Out-of-style items and duplicate articles should also be

sorted to this box. If an item has not been used in the last year, it probably never will be used.

Giving these items to charity would make the ~~items~~^{item} useful once again.

Three out-of-season boxes will be needed. They should be labeled spring/fall, winter and summer. Sort your useful items left into their appropriate season box. If you can not decide which box the items belong in, check the fabric. For example, woolen items belong in the winter box because they are worn during cold weather. Transitional items that can be worn in either spring or fall belong in the spring/fall box. Light-weight summer clothes belong in the box marked summer.

Now that the items have been sorted, you will be ready to organize your well used, valuable articles back into your closet. Pick out the appropriate season box and place all clothing items on the new hangers you purchased earlier. Organize your clothes back into your closet in the following categories; pants, skirts, shirts, dresses, suits, sport coats, and sweaters. Note, ^{that} you may prefer to place sweaters in drawers. Lingerie can be placed in a separate category, if you choose to hang the light-weight, delicate articles. Herb Hughes, the author of Custom Closets: Organize & Build, suggests using multi-level pant hangers to help save space (15).

Once all clothing items have been hung, you can move on to the enormous pile of shoes. Sort your shoes into the six basic categories. Elaine Louie, in her article titled "The ~~Fine Art~~ of Closet Cleaning," ~~for the magazine New Choices for Retirement Living,~~ suggests if you can not remember how the shoes fit, close your eyes and take a brief walk in each pair. If they hurt, place them in the charity box (69). Any shoes that you come across that appear to be in poor condition should be placed in the garbage box. Most shoes will be in the spring/fall box. Place your boots in the winter box. Tennis shoes can be worn in any season and belong in the current season container. Shoe racks organize and save space. If you have one, place the most worn shoes in front. If you do not have one, organize shoes neatly on the floor of your closet. You may wish to

purchase a suitable shoe organizer later.

Ties and scarves wrinkle when they fall to the floor or get jammed into boxes. If you have a tie rack, you should organize it now. Be sure to sort ties into the six basic categories.

Expandable mug racks display ties, scarves, and belts well. These items need to be visible, so they will get used. Mervyn Kaufman, a self-professed tie collector, shared his experience sorting through his mountains of ties, in his article cleverly titled, "Necktie Madness". He summed up a great strategy for considering which ties to keep and how to look at purchasing new ties: "a necktie should be considered an ornament, not a long-term investment" ^(Kaufman 69).

Examine all handbags, properly sorting them into the basic categories. Keep only one of each color. Place only a couple of handbags back into your closet. Pegs display small bags well. Larger bags should be placed on the top shelf. If you travel often, your overnight bag can also be put on the shelf. Other luggage belongs in a long-term storage closet.

Personal affects in a wardrobe closet should be limited. Keep in mind the proper use for a wardrobe closet as described earlier in this essay. Most of the items left in the personal affects box, after sorting, probably do not belong in your wardrobe closet. Label any containers placed back into the closet, to avoid searching later.

If you have a spouse, you need to repeat the above process with his or her belongings. If not, discard the clutter you have removed. Sack up the garbage box items and take the sack out to the curb. Call your favorite charity and arrange for a donation. Remember to ask for a receipt, as it can be used for a tax deduction.

Depending on the size of your closet, out-of-season boxes can be stored in your closet, or as Stephanie Schur recommends, in a marked box under a bed (120). ^{connection?} Moth balls, commonly used, create a foul odor. ^{Washing} becomes a requirement if you want to use a stored item. By selecting a more suitable environment, free of mold, mildew, and insects, the need for smelly moth

balls can be eliminated.

→ What are math balls for?

Now that your closet has been organized, you will want to keep it that way. Remember these basic rules. If you purchase a new, white blouse, replace the old, tattered blouse you were wearing with the new one. Before shopping, make an inventory of items that are needed. Do not purchase an item just because it is on sale. Purchase only what you need. Always iron clothing before returning to the closet. This will make selecting easier when ~~you feel~~ rushed.

If your closet space still seems inadequate, you may want to look into purchasing a closet organization system. Adding new or additional shelves, drawers, and hanging rods, can greatly increase your available storage. Once your closet has been organized you will know exactly what your closet lacks (McMillan 56).

Enjoy your new organized and functional closet. Remind yourself of how great it feels to be able to shut the closet door without having to kick articles into a pile on the floor. You will not suffer from headaches caused from falling debris. Sleep in a few extra minutes, in the morning, knowing you will not have to search your closet in vain tomorrow.

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Ms. Kris Bigalk

July 3, 1996

Organizing a Reach-In Wardrobe Closet

One day, while I was opening my closet door, a mound of sweaters fell on top of me. I stood in disbelief, sweaters draping my body. I still could not find the sweater I wanted to wear. That is when I decided my closet needed help. You may have encountered similar circumstances. Have you ever stood undressed searching desperately for something to wear, despite the mounds of clothing jumping out at you? How many times have you opened your closet, only to have an object fall off the top shelf, thumping you on the head? With the following information, you will learn how to decipher which items need to be discarded, how to make your closet functional and efficient, and how to avoid clutter build-up.

First you must understand the differences between an unorganized closet and an organized closet. An unorganized wardrobe closet contains items that are damaged, too big or too small, out-of-season, and seldom used. All of these items can be found mixed in with well-used items. When locating a needed item, you must first sort through mountains of clutter. This wastes valuable time, energy and space.

On the contrary, items found in an organized wardrobe closet are of good quality, in-season, well-fitted, and used often. An organized closet eliminates the need to search. Each item is neatly arranged in its proper place. Needed items can be obtained, without wasting valuable time and energy. Storage space is abundant. Pat McMillan, a writer for the magazine Home Mechanix, states this point well, when he writes: "Space isn't storage space until it's organized" (58).

Before you begin organizing, a few small details need to be addressed. All clothing articles need to be freshly laundered and pressed. Pick a day where you will not be interrupted. If necessary, plan to send your spouse and children out of the house for the day. Be sure to mark this day on your calendar. Stephanie Schur, a professional organizer, recommends purchasing durable wood or plastic hangers (qtd. in Lampert 120). These more durable hangers will eliminate the tangled-up mess that wire hangers create. You will need up to ten empty cardboard boxes and some trash bags. A black permanent marker will be needed for labeling. Plan to begin early in the morning and work until you finish. Avoid purchasing new organizing systems at this time. If you wait, you will be able to choose the right system for your new needs. You may even find you have plenty of room once the clutter has been removed.

When the day you have chosen arrives, take the phone off the hook, because interruptions will only slow you down. Open the closet door and take a deep breath. Remove every item from your closet, placing them on the bed and floor. If you share closet space with a spouse, split the room in half and divide the articles into the proper halves of the room. Pick a half and get ready to sort.

Sorting is the most important step in the process of organizing. Sorting is dividing a large accumulation of personal belongings into smaller categories, according to their similarities. This step is essential if you want your closet to be functional and efficient. Begin this process by labeling your boxes: garbage, personal accessories, wrong-room, charity, spring/fall, winter, and summer.

The box marked garbage will be used for any items that do not fit into the other categories. These items will be damaged or badly soiled. If a shirt is missing a button, it belongs in the garbage box. Do not place these kinds of items in the charity box. Charities do not have time to mend donated items.

Personal items, such as ties, scarves, handbags, and other items of a personal nature belong in the box labeled personal accessories. These items should be limited to possessions used frequently.

A garment closet is supposed to be used for apparel, shoes, accessories, and a few personal effects. Anything you removed from your closet that does not meet this criteria should be placed in the wrong-room box. When finished with your closet organizing, you will need to find a more appropriate storage place for these misplaced items.

Any items that you come across that remain in good condition but do not fit properly should be placed in the box marked charity. Out-of-style items and duplicate articles should also be sorted to this box. If an item has not been used in the last year, it probably never will be used. Giving these items to charity would make the items useful once again.

Three out-of-season boxes will be needed. They should be labeled spring/fall, winter and summer. Sort your useful items left into their appropriate season box. If you can not decide which box an item belongs in, check the fabric. For example, woolen items belong in the winter box because they are worn during cold weather. Transitional items that can be worn in either spring or fall belong in the spring/fall box. Light-weight summer clothes belong in the box marked summer.

Now that all items have been sorted, you will be ready to organize your well used, valuable articles back into your closet. Pick out the appropriate season box and place all clothing items on the new hangers you purchased earlier. Organize your clothes back into your closet in the following categories: pants, skirts, shirts, dresses, suits, sport coats, and sweaters. Herb Hughes, the author of Custom Closets: Organize & Build, suggests using multi-level pant hangers to help save space (15). You may choose to place sweaters in drawers. Lingerie can be placed in a separate category if you choose to hang the light-weight, delicate articles.

Before you begin organizing, a few small details need to be addressed. All clothing articles need to be freshly laundered and pressed. Pick a day where you will not be interrupted. If necessary, plan to send your spouse and children out of the house for the day. Be sure to mark this day on your calendar. Stephanie Schur, a professional organizer, recommends purchasing durable wood or plastic hangers (qtd. in Lampert 120). These more durable hangers will eliminate the tangled-up mess that wire hangers create. You will need up to ten empty cardboard boxes and some trash bags. A black permanent marker will be needed for labeling. Plan to begin early in the morning and work until you finish. Avoid purchasing new organizing systems at this time. If you wait, you will be able to choose the right system for your new needs. You may even find you have plenty of room once the clutter has been removed.

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The box marked garbage will be used for any items that do not fit into the other categories. These items will be damaged or badly soiled. If a shirt is missing a button, it belongs in the garbage box. Do not place these kinds of items in the charity box. Charities do not have time to mend donated items.

Personal items, such as ties, scarves, handbags, and other items of a personal nature belong in the box labeled personal accessories. These items should be limited to possessions used frequently.

A garment closet is supposed to be used for apparel, shoes, accessories, and a few personal effects. Anything you removed from your closet that does not meet this criteria should be placed in the wrong-room box. When finished with your closet organizing, you will need to find a more appropriate storage place for these misplaced items.

Any items that you come across that remain in good condition but do not fit properly should be placed in the box marked charity. Out-of-style items and duplicate articles should also be sorted to this box. If an item has not been used in the last year, it probably never will be used. Giving these items to charity would make the items useful once again.

Three out-of-season boxes will be needed. They should be labeled spring/fall, winter and summer. Sort your useful items left into their appropriate season box. If you can not decide which box an item belongs in, check the fabric. For example, woolen items belong in the winter box because they are worn during cold weather. Transitional items that can be worn in either spring or fall belong in the spring/fall box. Light-weight summer clothes belong in the box marked summer.

Now that all items have been sorted, you will be ready to organize your well used, valuable articles back into your closet. Pick out the appropriate season box and place all clothing items on the new hangers you purchased earlier. Organize your clothes back into your closet in the following categories: pants, skirts, shirts, dresses, suits, sport coats, and sweaters. Herb Hughes, the author of Custom Closets: Organize & Build, suggests using multi-level pant hangers to help save space (15). You may choose to place sweaters in drawers. Lingerie can be placed in a separate category if you choose to hang the light-weight, delicate articles.

Once all clothing items have been hung, you can move on to the enormous pile of shoes. Sort your shoes into the seven basic categories. Elaine Louie, in her article titled “The Fine Art of Closet Cleaning,” suggests if you cannot remember how a pair of shoes fit, close your eyes and take a brief walk in each pair. If they hurt, place them in the charity box (69). Any shoes you come across that appear to be in poor condition should be placed in the garbage box. Most shoes will be in the spring/fall box. Place your boots in the winter box. Tennis shoes can be worn in any season and belong in the current season container. Shoe racks organize and save space. If you have one, place the most worn shoes in front. If you do not have one, organize shoes neatly on the floor of your closet. You may wish to purchase a suitable shoe organizer later.

Ties and scarves wrinkle when they fall to the floor or get jammed into boxes. If you have a tie rack, you should organize it now. Be sure to sort ties into the seven basic categories. Expandable mug racks display ties, scarves, and belts well. These items need to be visible, so they will get used. Mervyn Kaufman, a self-professed tie collector, shared his experience sorting through his mountains of ties, in his article cleverly titled, “Necktie Madness.” He sums up a great strategy for considering which ties to keep and how to look at purchasing new ties: “A necktie should be considered an ornament, not a long-term investment” (Kaufman 69).

Examine all handbags, properly sorting them into the basic categories. Keep only one of each color. Place only a couple of handbags back into your closet. Pegs display small bags well. Larger bags should be placed on the top shelf. If you travel often, your overnight bag can also be put on the shelf. Other luggage belongs in a long-term storage closet.

Personal effects in a wardrobe closet should be limited. Keep in mind the proper use for a wardrobe closet as described earlier in this essay. Most of the items left in the personal accessories box after sorting probably do not belong in your wardrobe closet. Label any containers placed back into the closet to avoid searching later.

If you have a spouse, you may choose to repeat the above process with his or her belongings, or leave this up to him or her. You need to discard the clutter you have removed. Sack up the garbage box items and take the sack out to the curb. Call your favorite charity and arrange for a donation. Remember to ask for a receipt, as it can be used for a tax deduction.

Depending on the size of your closet, out-of-season boxes can be stored in your closet, or as Stephanie Schur recommends, in a marked box under a bed (Lampert 120). Moth balls, chemical pellets commonly used to protect clothing from moths, create a foul odor. Washing becomes a requirement if you want to use a stored item. By selecting a more suitable environment free of insects, the need for smelly moth balls can be eliminated. Be careful to select an environment free of mold, mildew, and insects, all of which can quickly destroy stored clothing.

Now that your closet has been organized, you will want to keep it that way. Remember these basic rules. If you purchase a new, white blouse, replace the old, tattered blouse you were wearing with the new one. Before shopping, make an inventory of items that are needed. Do not purchase an item just because it is on sale. Purchase only what you need. Always iron clothing before returning to the closet. This will make selecting easier when rushed.

If your closet space still seems inadequate, you may want to look into purchasing a closet organization system. Adding new or additional shelves, drawers, and hanging rods can greatly increase your available storage. Once your closet has been organized, you will know exactly what your closet lacks (McMillan 56).

Enjoy your newly organized and functional closet. Remind yourself of how great it feels to be able to shut the closet door without having to kick articles into a pile on the floor. You will no longer suffer from headaches caused from falling debris. Sleep in a few extra minutes in the morning, knowing you will not have to search your closet in vain tomorrow.

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Cover Photo: Katie Jordison

A DMACC photography student, Katie Jordison, created the image during a July 1996 field studies trip to the origin of the North Skunk River. This picture was taken near the Story County/ Marshall County lines, just south of Highway 30. From this inauspicious beginning the North Skunk River will join with the South Skunk River and travel over 250 miles on its journey to the Mississippi River, just south of Burlington.

