

Fall 2001

Skunk River Review Fall 2001, vol 13

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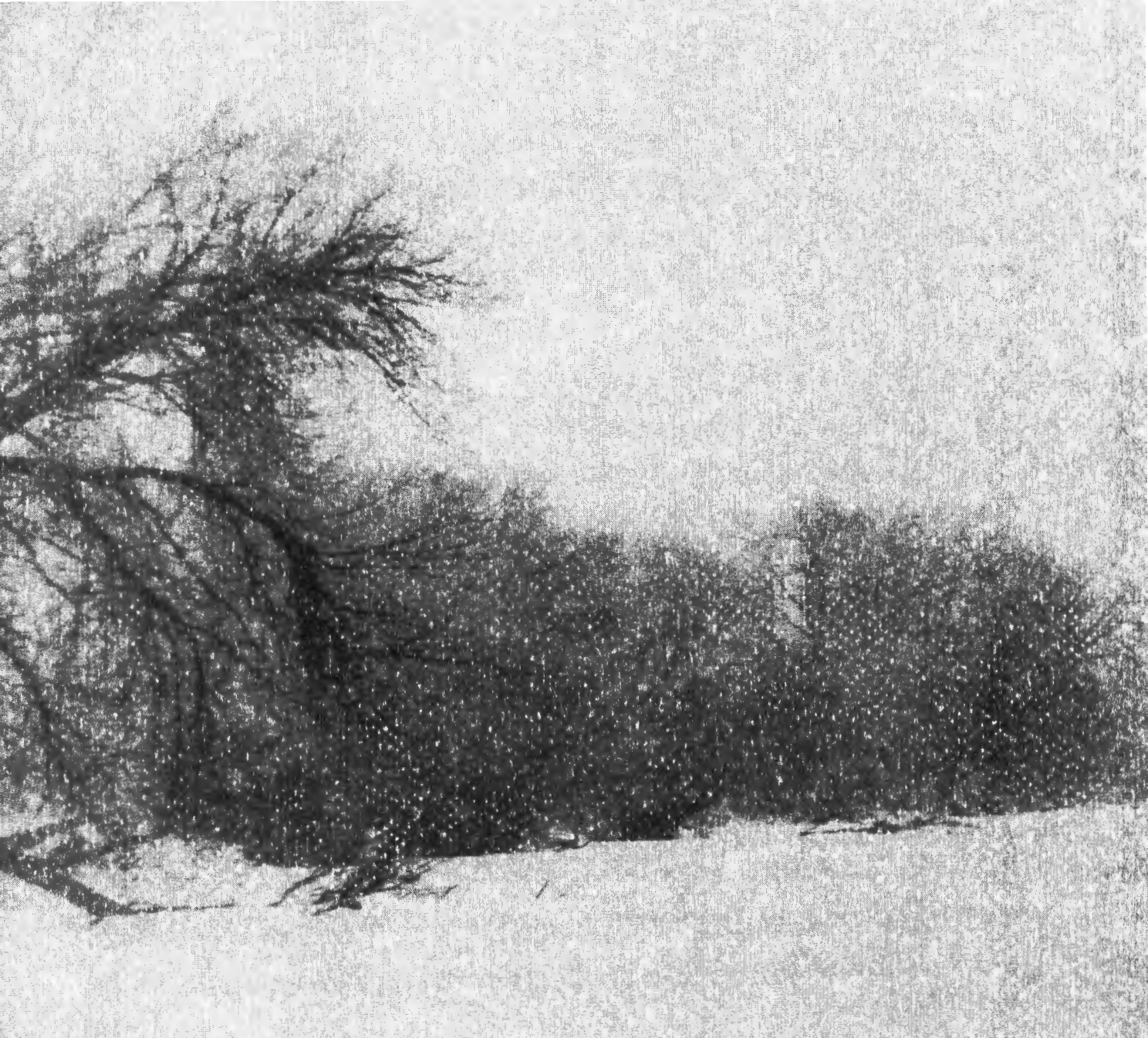
Recommended Citation

Murphy, Bethany; Loftus, Barb; Papiani, Melissa; Landers, Betty; Gitzen, Jadney; Brockett, Trisha; McVey, Cory; Wilson, Gena; Fritz, Luiza; Westbrook, Shannon; Egan, Diana; Woldruff, Alexa; Cheely, Larry; Lundquist, Russell; Liu, Yun; Michel, Keri; Eising, Bethany; Chicchelly, Lori; Erickson, Teresa; Wiesemann, MaCay; Zaun, Joe; Tiffany, Evie; Spencer, Julie; Wright, Heather; Tonelli, Matthew C. Sr.; Launspach, Diane; O'Callahan, Robert; Kriegel, Krissy; and Sitzmann, Adam, "Skunk River Review Fall 2001, vol 13" (2001). *Skunk River Review*. 23.

<https://openspace.dmacc.edu/skunkriver/23>

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SKUNK RIVER REVIEW

Volume 13

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SKUNK RIVER REVIEW

Volume 13

Fall 2001

**Skunk River Review is a celebration of
student writing published once a year by**

The Des Moines Area Community College

**Edited by
Paula J. Yerty
Eden F. Pearson**

**A special thanks to our scholarship
committee judges:
Bonne Doron, Miggs Hubbard, Sharran
Slinkard, Sharon Witty, and Will Zhang**

**We would also like to thank Deb, April, Curt,
and all our colleagues and students who have
contributed to the success of this project.**

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Introduction

Welcome to the 2001 edition of the Skunk River Review. Thirteen years ago, DMACC's first journal of student writing from composition classes was published. The goal then was to celebrate student writing by offering essays that reflect the diversity of DMACC's five campuses.

In the ensuing years, the Skunk's editors have had the honor of reading papers that reflect the best work of DMACC students, and this year was no exception. The selection process was difficult; this year's sixty-four submissions were begrudgingly winnowed down to thirty, due to space limitations.

The title, *Skunk River Review*, was selected in 1989 because both the Skunk River and the voices of the student writers represented in the anthology are evocations of a particular time and place. On the figurative level, however, a river can be a metaphor for the writing process. Just as the Skunk River meanders slowly from its origin in central Iowa to its destination at the Mississippi River, so, too, does the process of writing.

No good writer simply sits down and pounds out a well-written paper. The writing process is recursive. A good writer thinks and writes, then reads, then rewrites, then rereads and rewrites, often *ad infinitum*. Eventually, though, just as a river reaches its destination, a paper is born. The process is long and arduous, but the end-result is joyous and invigorating; a cause for celebration.

In this 13th edition of the Skunk River Review, we invite you to visit places you've never been, to learn things you've never known, and to consider opinions you've never considered. Celebrate with us these thirty papers; papers that have, after much thought, effort and creativity, reached their destination.

ENGLISH 090/091

BASIC WRITING/WRITING SKILLS REVIEW



Childhood Husbands

Bethany Murphy

In Delores Wilson's class, students were asked to write an illustration essay on a topic of their choice.

When we are children, many of us have an image of whom we want to marry. Unfortunately, reality sets in when we grow up to be teenagers. Take a journey with me to see who my "childhood husbands" were and the people I have met in my past who remind me of them.

Many children love fairy tales, but I love movies. My very first movie was a CBS special of Camelot. Sir Lancelot, who would do anything for his queen Guinevere, astonished me. He astonished me with his romantic act, saving Guinevere from her fiery death. I am still obsessed with fantasy tales, where unicorns live and knights are devoted to their fair maidens, but Lancelot still holds my heart. I met my Sir Lancelot, Noah, in the fifth grade. He helped me when I was teased. We were both in the resource room, so we helped each other. He was a big kid with heart of gold. This is why I thought he was the reincarnation of Sir Lancelot himself. In many ways, he still is to this day.

As we grow older, a part of us has this yearning to become teenagers, but still wants to have fun. This was characterized by a 1980 classic movie, The Goonies. In this movie, there was a kid named Mouth, played by Corey Feldman. Mouth was my favorite character because he contributed to the comedy of the film. He poked fun at people but never really meant what he said. I first met my Mouth in the seventh grade. He was a new kid at school, and he chose to pick on me in a friendly way. His name was Mike, but his nickname was Mouse because his voice cracked all the time. That was one of those

voices that is instantly recognizable, just like Corey Feldman's voice. Every once in a while, I can still hear his friendly taunting.

We made it! We are teenagers. Now that we are here, where is the guy of our dreams and his '62 black Camaro? During this time, my favorite movie was The Breakfast Club. This movie tells the truth about the way we think and feel at this age. My favorite character from this movie is John Bender. I liked this character because he acted really tough, but that is all it was, an act. John Bender was actually the sweetest guy in the entire film. I met a guy almost exactly like him during my junior year of high school. I was new at Shenandoah High, so I didn't know anybody. The teacher asked if anyone wanted to show me around the school, and David raised his hand. I first thought he was a thug because of the way he was dressed. Fortunately, as the year passed, I found out he was a totally sweet guy. The way he acted in school reminded me of John Bender. The only thing that was different between the two was that David loved to roller skate!

Now that we have taken the journey through my "childhood husbands," I realize that we depend on these childhood fantasies to look toward our future. In my future, I hope to have just one guy that has a heart of a knight, an unforgettable voice and a sweet disposition to his nature.

Moving Home

Barb Loftus

In Meridith Nelson's class, students were asked to write a personal essay on a topic of their choice.

Moving home is like taking a fish from a small tank and moving him to a bigger tank. For the past eleven months my son, Jordan, and I, have been living in a 15x20 room. There is not much room to move around. There was only enough room to get dressed and sleep.

Jordan was about thirteen months old when we moved to the House of Mercy, a halfway-house treatment facility. That is where we stayed in our 15x20 room. Living in one room did not allow much growing room for my son. Six months had passed and it did not seem like he grew very much. Jordan was sick nine out of the eleven months of our stay at the House of Mercy. The more we were away from the House of Mercy, the better Jordan was getting. He was away from all of the germs. Now it was time to move him home.

Taking a fish from a small tank and placing him into a big tank and then watching him grow in no time at all is like taking my son, Jordan, from one room and placing him in our five room apartment. Jordan now has enough room to roam around. Jordan and I each have enough room to go to our own room and even to wrestle around on the floor.

I have seen a lot of growth in Jordan since we moved home. Not only have I seen a lot of growth in Jordan, but I get to watch Jordan learn new words and talk like he is making a conversation. In the month we have been home I had to buy Jordan some more clothes because his other ones were getting too small for him.

Moving home was one of the best experiences in my life. We have gone from one room to five rooms. I have gotten to watch my son grow in a lot of different ways. I would

not trade this part of my life for anything in the world. Moving home is the best experience a mother could ever enjoy.

What I Learned From Having a Job

Melissa Papiani

In Bonne Doron's class, students were given a choice of topics from which they were to select one and write a personal essay.

There are many things I have learned from having a job while being in management. I have worked at United Parcel Service for about two years but only in management for over a year as a part-time supervisor. I have learned that maturity, job conflicts, and the lack of integrity are the three biggest problems I have had to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

In management at UPS, everyone is required to take several hub schools. Hub school is an orientation class that lasts for a week. Hub school is a management training class that develops a person into being a good supervisor. There are many subjects that we learn about in this class such as having a good attitude on the job, how to hold other people accountable, being more responsible, being organized, being more mature, dealing with conflicts, and handling integrity problems.

The lack of integrity is the biggest problem that I have had to deal with since I have started in management. There are people that can talk like they are being honest, but yet, they turn around and talk about one another behind their back. Integrity means having morals, principles, and being honest. This is something everyone should practice no matter what, but it should be taken more seriously while having a job.

Dealing with other business related conflicts on the job with other employees is a big part of my position as well. A couple days out of the week, some people come into work with a bad attitude, and it is my job to go make sure everything is all right before

they take it out on anyone else. Some people cooperate, and others don't. That is when I take the problem over to full-time management. I can tell if something is wrong by someone's body language. I then go confront them and make sure they focus on the job rather than their outside life.

Another thing I have learned at this job is to be more mature. There is a time when I can joke around and have a good time, and then there are times when I have to act as if I were older than I am. I have to put on a good impression for the people that work for me, as well as my full-time managers. I must always have a positive attitude, yet be aggressive and not let things get to me. If I were to come into work all the time and not be mature about anything, we would not get anything accomplished because the people working for me would follow in my footsteps. If someone has done something wrong there at UPS, the employees would know as soon as possible, because we follow up with documentation to make sure that we correct the mistake on the spot, so it does not happen again. Following up with people like that, we supervisors have to always be mature about that. If we are not mature about the problems, it's going to be a continuous thing.

Having a job with this company at UPS is a good experience for me, being my age and having to deal with so many things at once. They give me so many things to handle at once to see if I can actually control or handle it myself. I have learned mostly about integrity out of all them. I think that a person should always handle the problem with others themselves before the problem gets to someone else!

Childhood Fun

Betty Landers

For Meredith Nelson's class, students were asked to write a three paragraph thesis essay on a topic of their choice.

I would like to return to being a child of five again. I learned a lot of things that year. I went to school then; my mom let me help her in the house and garden and I helped dad in the garden and basement. I loved that winter when my big brother let me play in the snow with his friends and him.

My family moved from downtown to the country and bought a house, our first home. I was to go into first grade, but when the teacher found out that the town school didn't even teach you how to write your name in kindergarten –well- back to kindergarten I went. I didn't care then that I would be meeting all new kids. I was looking forward to that. My new school was two miles away and I walked. We got a lot of exercise in those days.

Dad was happy in the country. He tilled a large garden. We all helped to plant it; my brother and I helped to weed it and hoe around the plants. It was hard work but it was fun watching things grow. I helped mom where I could in the house and watched her can all sorts of vegetables out of the garden. We had plenty to eat during the winter. Dad dug a large hole under the house and put up support beams. He then made a lot of shelves and lined them along the wall to put our canned goods on. He built a bin to put the potatoes in when we dug them up. Dad fastened a door over the outside hole and told us to stay away from it, because it could cave in. Mom hung bunches of onions on the back porch for the winter. We even had some apple trees in the back yard. Dad would pick the apples and hang bags of them down in the basement to dry, and when it came

time for mom to bake a pie, she would get a bag of them and soak them in water for awhile. They would swell up some and make it easier to peel; they made the best pie.

The other thing that I like about being young was playing in the snow with my older brother and his friends. We would roll huge balls of snow, put them in a round circle and leave a small opening, just big enough to get through. Then we would pile more snow balls on top and pack them in and have ourselves a snow fort. We would go over to my brother's friend's house next door and build another snow fort across from ours. Then the fun began; we had a snow fight. My brother and I lined up against his friends.

I really enjoyed being five. I got to go to school and make new friends, I enjoyed helping mom with the garden and dad with the dug-out basement and had fun with my brother. Yes, being five years old was the very best time.

Most Parent Today Don't Do Their Job Jadney Gitzen

For Bonne Doron's class, students were asked to write an essay on a topic of their choice.

Parents today have many different ways and devices to raise their children for them. Parents have organizations, full-time or part-time help and also electronic devices to raise and teach their children the values and morals of society.

Parents today are dependent on organizations like daycare centers to raise and teach their children the values and morals. The reason why children are at the day care centers so much is because both parents have to work to support the family. Most parents start their children out in day care as early as a few months old, and then they stay there until they are in sixth grade. They can very easily spend four to five hours a day with the employees of the day care center. The majority of children spend years at the day care center until they are old enough to care for themselves.

Parents today also have full-time or part-time help to raise their children. Some families have a nanny or a baby-sitter who will take the role of the parent for the child. They are there when the child awakes and then take care of them from there. They do what their parents should be doing. They dress, feed, and teach the children morals and values for their life. When I worked at a day camp this past summer, I saw that the campers were lying and stealing each other's food and personal items. That was telling me that these children did not have morals and values.

Also parents have electronic devices to raise their children such as TV, Internet, videos, computers and video games. The child becomes more dependent on the

electronic device to teach them morals and values than on their parents for the most fundamental items, such as attention and human contact. For example, Paul, a one-year-old, has become very dependent on TV and videos. When I tried to play with him, he was not sure how to act and respond to me playing with him. All he did was give me a dumbfounded look and just sat there. At that point I really thought that he was underdeveloped in the social part of his life.

With the organizations, full or part time help and electric devices available to parents, it is no wonder the parents have little input in raising their own children. The one thing that I would like to see is more parents setting aside one-day a week to have with their children.

Life as an Addict
Trisha Brockett

For Wendy Gibson's class, students were asked to write a personal essay.

Becoming a drug addict is not a decision a person consciously makes. It is a sickness that is extremely hard to overcome.

I started experimenting with meth at the age of eighteen. At first it was something that I did because everyone else I was around was doing it. I also thought it was fun. My friends and I would stay up all night talking, playing cards, or coloring. I spent hours upon hours driving aimlessly around town, listening to music and talking to (at the time) my best friend. It was all fun and games at first; I didn't even realize I was addicted until about three years later.

A group of us were at a friend's house, getting high and remodeling the house (a common thing tweakers do). Suddenly there was a loud bang from the door; it flew open. Men in black suits carrying guns came storming in yelling, "F.B.I-- come out with your f---ing hands in the air!" News crews were there, and our faces and names were broadcast on the news. One of my friends and I were arrested, and two of the others talked, so they let them go. It was the scariest thing I've ever experienced. I was charged with possession of a controlled substance and released a few hours later. My friend, on the other hand, was wanted for a number of things and is now serving a fifty-five year sentence in federal prison.

The F.B.I threatened to take my son away if I didn't tell on someone else. They will use anything against you to get information, and all that I had was my son. I was too scared to run my mouth (you never know what a drug dealer will have done to

you), so I felt I had no choice but to sign custody over to his father. He was better off with him, at that time anyway.

That wasn't the end; I still had to go through my court trial for that possession charge. It was a long process. I had a good lawyer and was blessed with a hung jury. That happens when the jury cannot agree on a guilty or not guilty verdict.

You would think that going through all that and losing so much would have scared me into quitting, but it did exactly the opposite. I started to use meth as a painkiller. I thought it helped me deal with my problems; it was as if I had to have it.

I started hanging out with a new crowd, and even began dating a drug dealer. At first life seemed great: lots of money, parties, and best of all a steady supply of drugs. We would always go shopping or hang out with other friends, getting high and playing darts. I thought life was great. I had a boyfriend who claimed he loved me and we never fought. Best of all, I still got my son every weekend!

About one month into seeing this guy, I found out that I was pregnant. I was extremely scared. I knew that I could not provide for this baby properly and I told him that I didn't want to have the baby. He begged me to keep the baby; he said that he loved me and wanted to spend the rest of his life with me. He also promised to quit dealing and to get a real job. For some unknown reason, I believed him. I stopped using even while he kept on using and dealing. We made an agreement that he would stop dealing as soon as he saved up enough money for a down payment on a mobile home.

Eight months passed and it was almost time for the baby to arrive. We were arguing a lot and he still did not have the money. He had spent it all on more drugs and girls, while cheating on me. At that time I was going to leave him, but he said that he

was sorry and that it would not happen again. Again I believed him. That night I was upset, and decided to go to Prairie Meadows. I won a jackpot and was able to make the down- payment myself.

We moved in and exactly one week later my daughter was born. It wasn't more than two weeks after she was born that I was back on drugs again. I kept telling myself that I was only doing it to lose weight, and then I'd quit.

I did get him to finally get a job and stop dealing. In fact we both got full-time jobs at the same towing company. Things seemed to be going well. We had jobs, a home, cars, and we even got married. The drug dealing ceased until about six months later, when he was caught smoking meth in his tow truck and was fired. Because he was so jealous, he wouldn't allow me to keep working there either. So he started dealing again and things started falling apart; we were using so much that we couldn't pay our bills and they came to repo my car. We were always fighting about bills and his cheating.

It wasn't long after he started dealing again that the cops raided our house. He went to jail because they found meth and paraphernalia in his shed. The raid and the fact that we were behind on the payments caused us to lose our home. We moved into a friend's basement. We were both using five to six hundred dollars worth of meth a day.

I knew that something had to change or I was going to lose my daughter. The thought of losing her scared me to death; I couldn't bear the thought of losing a second child. I knew that it was time to make some severe changes. I called my grandmother. I told her what was going on and that I knew I had to change. She and my grandfather talked it over, and they offered my daughter and me a place to stay if I truly wanted to

change. After taking a couple of days to think it through, I decided that it really was what I wanted. I called, and asked her to pick us up the next morning.

The night before she picked us up was the last time that I touched meth. That will be exactly one year ago on March eighteenth. After moving to my grandparent's house, I got myself back into school. It took me about eight months to get my G.E.D., because I had to learn how to study all over again. I am also fighting medical conditions my addiction caused.

This is my first semester in college and I don't regret my choice to change my life. I've learned a lot about myself and I'm proud to say I am drug free. I do still struggle everyday. I remind myself that if I can conquer a drug addiction, I can conquer anything.

The Odd Couple

Cory McVey

For Ami Yaro's class, students were asked to write a comparison and contrast essay. Comparison and contrast is one of the most important writing strategies, and there are two ways to organize comparison and contrast writing: in blocks and in sequence. In blocking, each object of the comparison is considered independently, while in sequencing, each item is compared point by point.

I am the proud father of two outrageously funny felines. Salami lives with my mom now and Felix lives across town with my girlfriend, Carrie, and me in our apartment in West Des Moines. Salami is a gray and white cat with crazy looking white spots. One of the spots reminds me of a person lying on the Four Corners—a monument in the United States that bridges the states of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado. It looks like a person is spreading his arms and legs in order to lie in all four states. Salami also has two white spots going up his ears that look like horns and his back sports a spot that looks like a pitch fork. I gave him the nickname devil cat because of his funny markings and the way he acts. Salami also has some funny markings on his tail that look like a person's spinal cord and vertebrae. Felix, on the other hand, is a black cat. My girlfriend's uncle told us he is a Bombay cat—a breed of short-haired domestic cat with a solid black coat and round, yellowish eyes. He also looks like he has eyebrows, as where the eyebrows on humans are he has a silver colored hair.

Salami and Felix have both been neutered and declawed for their own good, I guess. When Salami was neutered the vet sent him home the same day. It brought tears to my eyes to see him in so much pain and so drugged up. He had to spend the night locked up in a small quiet place so that he wouldn't roam around and hurt himself, which in our house was the bathroom. He did not like that at all especially since he wasn't feeling good. Our whole household felt sorry for him. I was lucky that when Felix got neutered he had the luxury of staying overnight at the vets as I didn't want to go through that emotional pain again.

Both cats were about six months old when we got them. We picked Salami up at the Animal Rescue League in 1992. I got him as a Christmas present from my mom. I had already named him though before we got him. My mom and I were on the way to the grocery store. She asked me what I wanted for Christmas and I said, “a cat”. She asked me what I would call him. My mind was in another place—namely, food. I wanted some salami and co-jack cheese from the deli. The name Salami stuck. Salami is about nine years older than Felix.

My girlfriend and I picked Felix up last year at the Valley West Mall pet store. The pet store employee told us that “he was in perfect health” but within a week we noticed he was losing hair by his ears and in a couple of other places. We took him to a vet on the east side of Des Moines. The exam was free because they had an agreement with the pet store to look at any pets that were bought from them within a one week time period. We found out that he had ringworm and we were given a cream to put on the furless bare spots and some shampoo to bathe him with. Oh yes you know what that means—wet cat stench. As any cat owner knows, cats hate water. Felix still had his claws then and he proceeded to rip Carrie and me apart with them. We bathed him in the kitchen sink, and he had to have the shampoo on his body for at least ten minutes. Felix also had other health issues. He wet the bed as he had a really bad urinary tract infection. We discovered that he could have died from it if we hadn't taken care of it.

Then there was that time when Carrie's former roommate took Felix over to her parent's house to play with her cats. My poor cat came home not acting like himself. I knew something was up, but did not know just what. Later that night he started to howl like wolves at a full moon, and I noticed he was favoring his right paw. Around 1:30 a.m. Carrie and I took him to the emergency vet clinic which of course was in the hood. The vet said “he was running a really high temperature and it looked like he had been bitten by something”. We imagined it was the “play cats” he had visited who bit him.

Felix has brown eyes with a tint of yellow around the pupil, and Salami has green eyes. Salami sleeps more than Felix. If you disturb him while he's sleeping he gets really pissed off and will bite and hiss. When Felix sleeps and you wake him he wants to play and loves to be petted. I've never heard Felix hiss at anyone, but Salami does all the time when he is bugged. When people come over to my mom's house Salami runs to his favorite hiding place which is behind the toilet. No one can reach him there. Felix, on the other hand, comes looking for the attention he knows he's going to get when people are over at our apartment. Felix is a climber. He loves to be in high places even though he has no claws. It seems like four or five times a day he's on the refrigerator. Before we got him declawed we had a mattress standing up against our wall which he loved to climb and sit on at the top. Salami seems to be scared of heights. One day he ran outside after a bird and it flew into a tree. I thought I would help him because he had no claws. I put him in the tree and he went up higher than I could reach. When he realized he didn't have claws he panicked. He started howling and wanting help to get down. I was thinking, "what a chicken as he was up only six feet or so from the ground".

Felix doesn't seem to learn from his mistakes. He recently broke a pretty expensive lamp which was sitting on an end table in our living room. He got a bath and put in his room for two days as a consequence. Now that the lamp is gone he still gets up on the table. He also likes to get into things like the kitchen cabinets and the flower pots. Salami is too lazy to care about that kind of stuff. He gets a lot more space to roam around in if he wants to (a three level house), but Felix only has a five room apartment to do his roaming.

Both Salami and Felix like to lay on their backs when they want their bellies rubbed. If you rub Salami's too hard he will grab your hand with his front paws and start to kick with his hind legs and bite. I think if he had claws it would be a very bad thing for the person who was rubbing his belly. When Felix lies on his back he looks like he is dead to the world. I usually rub his belly, and when I rub too hard he will start to bite. Then I

will grab and drag him across the carpet to give his fur static electricity. It's funny watching everything stick to him.

Felix and Salami both hate to ride in the car. Felix has a box he rides in but he cries because he's scared of the sounds. He seems to be okay when you have the lid cracked so he is able to see you just a little. I usually let him out of his box to roam around which is not a good thing because he always goes right to my feet. I have a stick shift so he really gets in the way. Salami does the same thing every once in a while. He stays in the back mostly but howls like crazy.

I've had to transport both Felix and Salami to and from the vet. I've also taken Felix to the baby-sitters. This past summer Carrie and I went to Colorado for a camping vacation. Felix spent that week vacationing at Carrie's parents' house. Carrie's dad and brother both said jokingly that cats were useless and needed to be shot. After a day with Felix they had fallen in love with the little buster. They got a lot of entertainment from watching him act stupid. He would run under their davenport to hide but he would leave his tail sticking out. He also got himself into some trouble when he jumped up on the table and ate Carrie's mom's plant. Salami on the other hand prefers not to leave the house. I remember one time my mom's girlfriend was house sitting and taking care of him. She came over one day and heard him meowing. She spent an hour looking all over the house and couldn't find him. She left after feeding and watering him. The next day she came over and spent more time looking for him and still had no luck finding him. A day later she came over to feed him and he was sitting in his favorite spot—like he had been there the whole time. When I got home and heard what had happened I told her I bet he was up in the basement ceiling as it was not totally enclosed. Another time Salami trapped my mom's friend in the basement as he stared at her with evil eyes and hissed at her from the top of the stairs. That's when my mom decided to get a phone for the basement so if that happened again her friend could call someone to rescue her.

Salami and Felix are indeed an odd couple. Luckily they don't live together and have their own spaces to roam. But, enough about these crazy cats. I love them both!



ENGLISH 117

COMPOSITION I

On the Road Again
Gena Wilson

In Miggs Hubbard's class, students were asked to write a profile essay on a person, place, or activity. The essay should help the reader visualize the subject in a new way.

It's a tough man who can control two tons of steel balanced precariously on 18 wheels while it tries to slide off the icy pass that is completely whited out by the blowing snow around us. By the set of his jaw and the slight whitening of his knuckles, I can tell that he is aware of the hazardous situation he is in, and that he's been here before. We haven't seen another automobile for at least a half-hour. It seems no one in his or her right mind would be out driving in this, and yet here we are, Jim Wilson and I.

"Nobody's paying me to be late." is his only reply when I point out that there is a rest stop to the right, and we could park for a while until the worst of this Montana storm passes. You'd never guess that this gruff, determined looking man had, only hours before, spotted a five-pound farm cat trying to get her kittens across the road and had gently paused his enormous rig to move them to the shelter of a barn so they wouldn't freeze in the sub-zero temps.

Most of the time he forgets I'm here and is startled when I speak.

"Your mom used to ride along, and your sister grew up in the truck. She saw most of the country before she was two. At home we'd strap her into her car seat and drive her around town at night cause it was the only way we could get her to sleep."

He is fifty-five years old and has been driving a truck for nearly forty years.

"Your grandpa was a truck driver too, and when I was fifteen, he started having some health problems. Your uncle was older, but he was the school football star, so when dad couldn't drive anymore, it was up to me to take over."

I've never encountered anyone with such a strong sense of responsibility. In a day when pointing fingers and clawing others down in order to get to the top is common practice, and the majority of the world craves their fifteen minutes of fame, it's refreshing to know that there is still someone with a strong sense of pride and accomplishment that he earned by simply working hard at the same job for his entire life.

He is a proud man and has a lot to be proud of. He graduated high school and tech school, and put in two years with the army in Vietnam. He has raised four children and has been married for twenty-five years in February. He is an active member of his town's American Legion Post and a twenty-eight year member of Teamster's Local 247.

He seems to have seen it all and has driven through most of it: floods, earthquakes, blizzards, and droughts. His mind is an atlas that can dredge up information to Anywhere, USA, right down to the stop sign on the corner.

"It's easier to remember it the first time then it is to write it down and try to remember where you put the paper. You can never know when you are going to take that road again."

His advice is good when taken literally, but by the look he gives me, I can guess that he's speaking figuratively.

The silence that I have come to expect from him falls again, and I let it. I take this time to look around his "office." A roll of duct tape is the only thing on the floor, and I know it's used as a cup holder. The dashboard between the two scratchy vinyl captains' chairs holds a selection of odd-looking gadgets, most of which I don't recognize. A CB radio is mounted on the ceiling between us, its constant crackle the only reminder that we are not completely alone. A looped chain hangs near the door on the

driver's side ceiling, and now and again he reaches up and gives it a yank, much to the delight of the youngsters passing in cars below his window. Their little arms are bent upwards and punching the sky in that universal sign that every truck driver knows, meaning it's time to test the horn. A look over my shoulder takes in the "living quarters." A small refrigerator, a small TV and two platforms perpendicular to the wall that serve as bunk beds are the only essential items I see. A large net hangs from the ceiling and snaps to the bottom of each bunk, so when things go bump in the night nobody falls out of bed. There is nothing lying around, all personal possessions are tucked neatly away. This is work. A place for everything, and everything in its place.

I look forward again and can imagine executives in high-rise buildings that will never, in a million promotions, look out their windows and see a view like this; constantly, never the same. Rolling prairies in Nebraska, mountains in Utah, lush pine forests in Maine, and swamps in Florida: each day something new and each week somewhere better: bringing the corners of America together, a small connection in an otherwise separated country, but at the end of each trip is home.

"I'm always ready to be home. Six days on the road, and two days off. I've missed a lot that I maybe shouldn't have. It's hard on everyone, but it's almost over. One year, eight months, and seventeen days."

He'll retire with his full union pension, and he's earned every penny of it. He'll go to work somewhere close to home and be home every night, which his wife will be grateful for. When the last of their children are settled, they plan to buy an RV and set out to explore America, this time with no commitments to anyone but themselves.

Ironically, as I am thinking this, Willie Nelson's song "On the Road Again" softly plays in the background.

As we chase the last of the sunset over the tips of the Rocky Mountains, an almost welcome feeling of loneliness comes over me. I feel free, and inspired, and at peace all at the same time. I can suddenly understand the pull of the road, the hypnosis of the passing miles, and I am reluctant to turn back towards home. Home, where I'll go back to class every day and work every night, and wonder what I'll do when I "grow up." And Jim will go on connecting us all, bringing goods all over America, and with them, a little bit of hope to those of us who long to be satisfied with our lives.

Storybook Soldiers

Luiza Fritz

For Paula Yerty's class, students were asked to write an extended definition on a selected term. Students were to go beyond dictionary definitions by using examples, illustrations, and comparisons to terms with opposite meanings.

The band was playing The Army Song as we walked up the road to STARC armory, our home station. Hundreds of American flags lined the roadside, the crowd, and the building in front of us. The crowd cheered so loudly that they drowned out the cadence we were marching to. Butterflies swirled in my stomach, and tears flooded my vision. I felt the beat of the drums all the way to my toes. We had come home.

I had never known what it felt like to be a hero until that day. After being deployed for eight months to Germany in support of Operation Joint Endeavor, the name given to the latest effort for peace in Bosnia, we had finally finished the mission and returned home to everything that was familiar. When we walked up the road to our armory, the emotions overwhelmed me as I realized we had become hometown heroes to the entire state of Iowa. The media had kept up coverage of our movements and had brought our faces into every living room. They had made us into storybook soldiers, the idols of little boys and girls hoping to someday don the camouflage uniform of a United States soldier.

Was I really a hero? Had my actions as a soldier measured up to those of Hercules or Adonis, the ancient heroes of Greek mythology? Who's to say? In the eyes of all who looked on, I saw an expression of pure admiration and pride for serving our country so well. By definition, admiration is a key term in being classified a hero. "Hero", according to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, is defined as "1) a mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent

endowed with great strength or ability, 2) an illustrious warrior, or 3) one admired for his achievements and noble qualities.” On that day, we all met the requirements of at least one of those definitions. We were heroes.

Society has a way of making us heroes, whether we want to be or not. The same goes for those on the opposite end of the spectrum. Social deviates have made a name for themselves as criminals, drug traffickers, and low-lives. These people will never know the elation that comes from being admired by people they have never met. They are not heroes and never will be. Instead of being placed on a pedestal, they fester on the earth like dried scabs.

We, as soldiers, did not set out or intend to become heroes when we joined the nation’s finest. Legends of history never intended that, either. It is through selfless acts of devotion to a cause or to others that illustrious people have become heroes. Through my experience, being a hero in society’s eye gives the greatest sense of accomplishment to those who are worthy enough to be deemed as such. I am flattered to have ever been thought of as an illustrious warrior, a hero.

Scales of Justice
Shannon Westbrook

In David Gavin's class, students were asked to write an essay that described a significant event that somehow changed their lives and then provide an epiphany with it.

I ran around with a group of friends that some might say came from the wrong side of town. Although we came from all sides of the town, I suppose growing up in less than perfect homes without much money could constitute the "wrong side" in some eyes. We wore our hair long, and our jackets were black leather. We admired Harley Davidson motorcycles and showed our support by the T-shirts on our backs. Weekends were spent looking for parties, and when we couldn't find any, we created our own by either cruising gravel roads looking for abandoned houses or gathering everyone for an all-nighter at our friend, Kevin's, house. Money would get pooled together, and someone would head down to Chubb's, the local grocery store, where we'd find the best bargains on cases of Bush beer. Then the table would be cleared for the poker game that always lasted way into the next morning. We spent the holidays together and cooked Thanksgiving dinners. In many ways, we were the family we'd never had.

Kevin was twenty-two, the oldest, the most responsible and therefore, our father figure. He was soft-spoken but a man of his word. He possessed toughness in a quiet sort of way. Everyone came to him for guidance and he always did his best to watch out for the rest. Jeff and Jason were brothers two years apart, and both were probably the most antagonistic of the bunch. Jeff tried to be an intimidator, but no one took him seriously. He was always the first to lose his money at poker, which made it fun for the rest of us to offer up the number for 1-800-BETS-OFF. He would leave the table and

pout for a while before standing off in the corner and air-guitaring some old Ted Nugent song. Constantly getting into trouble for being at the right place at the wrong time, Jeff and Jason were no strangers to the local police. Jason would brag up the fact that he was the youngest kid ever to be put on probation. When he was five, he and Jeff stole their stepdad's bag of pot. Not yet sure of just what they were supposed to do with it, they cleaned the bag of pot, throwing out the pot and trying to smoke the stems and seeds. When it was apparent that was not going to work, they figured they could use what was left to give their cold trailer some heat. They put the stems and seeds into the heater register and lit it on fire. They did get heat, but a little too much. The trailer burned down and both were put on probation.

Tommy was twenty-one and already had become the loud, obnoxiously lovable drunk. He was always wanting to play drinking games and prided himself on being champion at "quarters." Tommy was also famous for sticking both of his boots in his mouth at the same time. More than once he and Jeff would start fights in the car on our way to some kegger, and we'd have to pull the car over so they could duke it out. Twice Tommy broke Jeff's nose this way, and I was always amazed at the way he would moon Jeff an apology and Jeff would accept by mooning back. Brotherly love.

On the night of November 7, 1992, we gathered at a recreation hall in Cambridge. Cambridge is a small town, and except for its famous strip bar, *Chris' Go-Go*, and the Kum & Go on the corner, the place is basically extinct on any kind of map. Two of our friends lived there, and we'd come to spend a lot of time in this town. On this particular night, we'd come to see those friends get married.

The wedding wasn't your typical wedding, just a small service with about twenty-five people attending. The minister was also a tattooist and a very large man, about 350 lbs. He wore his hair in a large braid down the middle of his back and a leather vest over a T-shirt. It was a casual affair. The guests, as well as the bride and groom, mostly wore jeans and black leather jackets. I came to see the wedding, but I also came to be with the people I loved.

After the initial ceremony, the keg was tapped and the celebration took underway. A few of the guys headed off to the strip joint to see what kind of luck they'd have with the ladies of the bar. Jeff always thought of himself as looking like a modern-day Tom Cruise. I remember going to a party one night when some girl told him he looked like someone famous.

"Yeah, I get a lot of that. People think I look like Tom Cruise," Jeff remarked, trying to show his best "serious Tom" face to her.

I will never forget the look of disgust on his face when she replied, "I was thinking more like Freddie Mercury."

In spite of the "ladies man" aura Jeff was sure he had, he came back to the reception a little earlier than the rest of the guys. I was standing next to the stereo talking to Jeff and watching him air-guitar along with Ozzy, when someone came charging into the reception.

"Jeff, get out here! Kevin needs your help!"

I took off outside to see Kevin exchanging blows with a couple of guys that had followed him back from the bar. They had started hassling him at the bar and were drunk beyond belief. Jeff had the bigger guy backed up against the car, and Kevin and Tommy

were kicking the other one. By this time everyone was outside yelling at the two to just leave.

Finally, the two guys got into their dusty blue car and started to drive off, but not until the driver looked at Jeff and announced, "I'm going to fuckin' kill you!" Just as I thought they were gone, they spun the car back around and drove into the crowd of people who were gathering outside the reception hall. As Jeff pushed the groom's sister out of the way of the headlights, the car struck him at the knees.

At this point it is hard to tell exactly what happened. I remember Jeff getting swept up onto the hood of the car, and I remember looking at his pale, white face as the car sped off with him on top of the hood.

The car took off down a dark, freshly paved blacktop road on the backside of town. Half of the crowd followed behind on foot, calling Jeff's name. The rest of us jumped into Kevin's car and followed. The car with Jeff clinging to the hood was traveling fast and swerving like a mad snake. We tried hard to gain enough speed to catch up to them, but they were going too fast. The taillights were fading out of our reach, and I was praying to God and to everything above that he would be alright. Soon after, I noticed another set of lights. They were headlights coming from the opposite direction at the top of the road. I watched as the car came barreling down the road. Squeezing Tommy's hand, I gasped out loud. The car flew up in the air. It was at that moment that I knew.

As the second car moved towards us, Kevin pulled out in front of it, forcing it to come to a stop. The car was full of young kids, and the girl driving looked like she'd

seen a ghost. Thinking at first these were the guys that had our friend and then realizing we were wrong, we let the car go. We continued down the road slowly, and there he was.

Jeff was just lying there, slumped to the side and in a fetal position. I jumped out of the car and noticed one of his boots lying about ten feet away. In a state of shock, I ran to get the boot and brought it back saying, "Jeff, here's your boot; put it back on! Put it back on!" Maybe I thought by putting everything back just as it was, it would bring him back. I don't know. The last thing I remember is calling 911.

The police said Jeff was probably killed instantly when he was thrown from the hood of the car. Something, more than likely his boot or jacket, had gotten caught on the bottom of the car and he was dragged about 40 feet before being turned loose. The darkness of the blacktop and the fact that Jeff was wearing all black made it difficult for the girl who drove the second car to see anything on the road before she hit him.

Jeff's funeral was one of the saddest days I have yet to experience. Jeff looked nothing close to himself lying in that casket. His face was bloated from the formaldehyde and disfigured from the accident; his body gray and small. The only things that made him recognizable were the black leather jacket and black boots he loved and was buried in. My friends and I took up the first two rows of pews in the church that are traditionally saved for family. We wore our leather jackets as well, and when we buried him, we each placed a red rose on his casket before lowering him into the ground. After the service, we gathered at a bar to toast Jeff before heading to the tattoo parlor. There we each got the same tattoo in remembrance of the brother we lost.

I went to bed that night, trying to make some sense of what had happened. My friend was gone, and so was a piece of myself I have yet to get back. The incident was

brought before a grand jury, but because there were so many different accounts of what exactly happened, the charges of vehicular manslaughter were dropped. The two men, who turned out to be brothers, were charged with OWI, served a weekend in jail and paid a \$500 fine. I repeatedly asked myself the same questions anyone who has lost someone close in their life would. Why did this have to happen? Why did Jeff have to die so young, and why wasn't there any justice served?

I didn't have the answers then, and I probably never will. I have lost all faith in our legal system, but have gained a better sense of understanding. I understand that while things may happen for no apparent reason, there are always lessons to be learned beneath the tragedy. Over the years, I have learned the art of forgiveness. The bitterness and hatred I once had for those two men has dissipated. I cannot love and cherish the memory of my friend with the same heart that harbors resentment towards the two who took him away.

Olive
Diana Egan

In Mark Conley's class, students were asked to write an essay about someone who served as a positive or negative role model in their lives. The writer was to show how the role model might have lead the writer to change his or her attitudes about 1) school, work, or sports, 2) the willingness to be supervised, or 3) his or her ability to lead and inspire others.

In the early spring of 1978, when the smell of winter was still clinging to the crisp, cool air, I packed all of my belongings into an beat-up old car and moved across country from the peaceful, tree-lined streets of Mt. Pleasant, IA, to the traffic-crazed city of Anaheim, CA, where the streets are lined with palms.

A girlfriend who lived in Anaheim found a "grandma's apartment" for me as she was driving home from league bowling a month before my move. My landlady had made a large den in her home into an efficiency apartment with a small, honey-tiled kitchen and a bright, aqua-tiled bath. It had its own entrance and was located in a wing off the back of her beautiful, 1920's Spanish-style, two story, cream-colored stucco house that was surrounded by shade trees. Every time I came home, I entered the yard through an arched stucco gateway by opening an old wrought iron gate that creaked its welcome or warning, walked past three lush azalea bushes and stepped up on a faded red, flagged patio with an oval stucco goldfish pond, filled with yellow-crowned white water lilies circling a birdbath fountain to get to my door. It was a beautiful, quiet retreat.

I came to California to attend Anaheim Christian Theological Seminary. One day my phone rang, and a secretary from the graduate admissions office asked, "Would you be willing to let another grad student stay with you long enough for her to find her own housing?" Even though

my apartment wasn't made for two people, I volunteered, knowing how much I'd appreciated having a place to live when I arrived in California. She gave me the name and phone number number of my guest, an Olive Dameron from Charleston, S.C.

My preconceived idea of Olive Dameron, based solely on her old fashioned and proper-sounding name, was of a petite, redheaded, picky Southern Belle. I was a 31-year-old former hippie and wasn't sure how well we'd get along. I called her to find out her arrival time and her description so that I would know who to look for at LAX. With a resonant, honey-coated Southern drawl, she gave me her flight number and arrival time. Then she told me, "Just look for a large black woman wearing overalls." I discovered she was a recent college graduate in chemistry, younger than me by 8 years and the furthest thing from my Yankee biased, stereotypical notion of a Southern Belle.

Sure enough, two days later, there she was, standing before me in the Delta terminal, a 5'7", approximately 300 lb. young woman, wearing blue-jean overalls made for a man and a bright shirt full of many colors. She engulfed me in a big, warm hug, her dark, sparkling eyes full of good will and humor, her soft southern accent excited and nervous, her mind the quickest I had ever encountered in a woman. I liked her immediately.

As I drove my 1963 white Chrysler Newport south on the San Diego Freeway toward Anaheim, we got comfortable with each other by trading life stories and our Christian testimonies. She was an Army brat who had lived all over the world. She wanted to be an evangelist. Quiet and reserved by nature and nurture, I made acquaintances quickly but didn't trust easily and was slow to commit to a friendship. Ben Jonson once wrote, "True happiness

consists not in the multitude of friends, but in the worth and choice.” To me, good friends are like precious jewels. I treasure them. A few rare ones are better than many shallow ones. I like diamonds forged from coal, not costume paste which melts at low heat.

Olive was different. She radiated a joy in living and a sensitivity to others that was very rare. She was very rare. Far from being picky or anything like my preconceived Southern Belle, she was a genuine person; generous, outgoing, willing to adapt to new things and people. A reflective extrovert, she balanced my reflective introvert.

We lived in my tiny apartment for about a month before she found a live-in position caring for another grad student who was paraplegic. During that month, she gave me the first of three great, life-changing gifts.

I came from an abusive home where I learned early to skirt issues, feeling out any subject by talking around it and then touching on it briefly to gauge a safe reaction before actually bringing the issue to light. I learned the hard way that I could be verbally cut to shreds and that it was emotionally unsafe for me to voice my opinions. Living with me in such close quarters, Olive saw my pattern and said, “I want you to come straight out and say what you want to say. I promise I will never yell at you or hurt you when you do.” I trusted her to keep her word and began, after a lot of hesitation, to ask directly for what I needed. Things didn’t change overnight but in time I was freed to be myself and I was able to apply that freedom to other relationships. When I said something very bluntly about a year later, Olive jested, “Oh, no, I’ve created a monster!” The contrast in my behavior was that great. I am known as a diplomatic but straight talker to this day.

The second great gift Olive gave me was by being my very best and deepest friend in all the world. I have always had good friends, but Olive was my deepest friend and I was hers. Our friendship had what I assume a good marriage must have. Love, commitment through thick and thin, shared interest and warm laughter. We were like Jonathan and David in the Bible.

We became roommates around Christmas of 1978 when my landlady bought a six bedroom Craftsman-style house (with a goldfish pond on the patio) across the street from my apartment. She asked Olive and I if we would live there and supervise renting rooms to Christian women. The house turned into a ministry of discipleship and healing. Olive was the spiritual leader, and I took care of the practical concerns, like interviewing roommates, establishing rules, and placing ads. Between us, we counseled and prayed.

Together and with other friends, we hiked Ice Box canyon, went frequently to the beach and ate fresh seafood at the wharf in San Pedro. We rode the rides in Disneyland, enjoyed the apple festival in Julian, shopped in Tijuana, camped in Yosemite, and did low cost but fun things nearly every weekend. One year, we attended Church on the Way in Van Nuys, an hour drive from Anaheim. On the way home, we'd stop in L.A.'s Chinatown to eat at Chui's Dumpling, a restaurant with no atmosphere and wonderful food. Frequently, we were the only non-Asian people there but were so well known, our waitress knew us by order and we called her by name.

We saw each other through break-ups with our boyfriends. Olive fell hard for a fellow grad student, a soundman with a nationally known Christian rock group. I fell for the Ph.D. librarian of our school who had been a minister. We also disagreed and argued, but rather than leaving me after the arguments or freezing me out, Olive and I became closer when the air was

cleared. Our friendship deepened because we were very truthful with one another and we felt safe to disagree. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend,” says Proverbs 27:6 (King James Version). Together we learned to create a mature relationship.

The final life lesson she taught me was how to fight fairly. I am Irish-American. In my family, when tempers were unleashed we made grand exits; threw plants, crockery, keys, and other (always inexpensive) things; slammed doors; and in general were passionate in our anger. Olive didn't come from that type of melodrama. The first time I got up abruptly from the supper table and left the room in a huff, slamming the door behind me, Olive followed me to my room and put a stop to it. “I'm not used to that kind of behavior and won't put up with it. If you're mad, stay and talk about it,” she said. I saw my behavior through her eyes. It was childish and down-right embarrassing. She taught me how to stick it out until we either agreed to disagree or came to a mutually satisfying compromise. After three and 1/2 years, Olive moved to Houston. We remained best friends until her death in 1992 of an enlarged heart. She was 36 years old.

Other than my son and family, I have never loved another as deeply as I loved Olive Dameron. She was a Christian with a profound relationship with Jesus. She was a powerful prayer warrior who saw me through the anxious months leading to the birth of my adopted son. I respected her immensely and relied upon her strength, her love, her wisdom, her support and her friendship. I made Olive my son's “godmother” and dedicated my book to her, wanting to honor her in permanent ways since relatively few had been given the gift of knowing her. Olive had a permanent and lasting impact on me. When you see me, you see someone whose faith and character was changed by Olive Dameron.

On a level I don't pretend to understand, we are still close. Two weeks after I learned of her death, I dreamt I got a phone call from her. In the dream, the call came on a black, rectangular pay phones hanging on the wall of a long, gray dormitory hallway. I stood at that phone talking and laughing with her as we always did in our phone calls, and in the end, she advised my to eat fresh fruits and vegetables for my health so that I would not die and leave my son prematurely.

I have a new best friend now, a married, home-schooling mother of two teenagers who shares a surprising number of Olive's qualities. I still experience an occasional longing to speak with Olive, but I no longer grieve her death. I have an utter peace that she is with Jesus and much happier then she ever could have been on this earth. Several times in the past nine years when I've had a very rough time of it, I've dreamt of Olive, and although she seems to have to force herself out of a deep sleep, she's been there for me, as she was while she lived, with wisdom and support, my best friend.

Death Watch

Alexa Woldruff

For Scott Emmert's class, students were asked to compose a narrative of a significant event from personal experience. They were to make the significance clear to the reader through the use of detail and description.

“Death watch” is the term used in hospitals across the United States. Most people will experience this as they watch a loved one slip away, surrounded by the tubes and monitors of medical technology. Those who have watched death come will never forget the dry, sour smell, or the helpless feeling. Just this last summer, I became familiar with the smell of death, the bad coffee, and the hours of waiting in a hospital that become common as medical treatment advances.

James Stephens. He has the same name as his father, and the same small town attitude. Known as Jimmy to family, my uncle was a farmer, as well as a superintendent of the Hamborg School District. Around my grandmother’s farm, Jimmy slipped into the Southern Iowa slang that is so familiar to me. His laugh could shake the very foundations of the farmhouse where five children, the fourth my mother, grew up. He was not a tall man, but his presence filled the room like his bushy beard filled his face.

He was a man’s man, who did not need doctors and who dealt with pain. Jimmy was so tough that he sentenced himself to death with these words, “It ain’t nothing.”

That “nothing” was colon cancer that would eventually spread to his liver and intestines, taking away the vivacious man I knew. Left instead would be a body, racked with pain of cancer, and wasted with effort to live.

About a year after Jimmy’s tumor began to grow, his wife realized something was wrong. Jimmy was diagnosed with cancer and treated in several different fashions to slow the rate his life was slipping away, faster than any of us could handle.

He began to enjoy his life more than he ever had. Jimmy's daughter was married almost a year before he died. I saw the proud look in his eye as he walked her down the aisle, his cheekbones forming sharp cliffs on his face.

I visited him in a hospital with my mother and sister at the beginning of summer, and afterwards we all broke down and cried. This body Jimmy was trapped in held little of my uncle. My mother said Jimmy's health had been "good" that day. I was glad not to have seen a bad day.

At the end of the summer, I came home from work to my mother, frantically packing her clothes into an ill-chosen suitcase. "What happened?" I cried, as I forced her to stop the panicked actions. "It's Jimmy. He is in the hospital, and it's really bad."

With one look at her face, I immediately packed my clothes in an ill-chosen backpack. My mother and I made a strained three-hour journey to his bedside.

I could not accept that the body, barely alive and highly monitored, was my uncle. I was frightened, maybe by the smell of sickness, or by Jimmy himself. He was unconscious from the morphine, and as thin as a refugee. However, his legs and feet were swollen with the fluid his body was not allowed to drain. His hands were dry and feverishly hot. It was more than I thought I could bear, until I looked into the face of my grandmother. Her pain and loss tripled mine, and I knew one of the reasons we came was to comfort the living.

So the hours began, countless hours of watching his breaths, counting his heartbeats, and learning the nurses' routine. Every sixth hour someone would round up some food, and we would fall upon it like savage dogs, feeling guilty for such a healthy action. All this time, I began to realize that my uncle was not lying on the starch hospital sheets. This was Jimmy's last link to earth. His prison. And I became less afraid. I could smooth his thinned hair, hold his swelled hand, and look into his half-open eyes. Another realization came to me when I looked at the tired and tear-stained faces in the room. This was a tribute to his life, and Jimmy would

never be leaving this bed. And I came to terms with that. I could hold my grandmother's hand, and realize the pain of losing an eldest son, and I accepted Jimmy's fate. He had.

Death is a natural part of life and many, whose lives and hearts are full, will be ready for it. My uncle was. The time I saw him before his unconsciousness, Jimmy told me he loved me, as he held my hand. When I repeated these words, he visibly relaxed, that part of his life wrapped up.

My uncle held on longer than anyone expected. He was a "tough man" my mother said, and he did not want to give in. He just could not let anything go without a good and honorable fight.

But as was expected, one night when no one was in the room, Jimmy's tired heart stopped, and he slipped away with barely a flutter. This may be the quietest thing my uncle ever did. My family and I were glad that his suffering was over, even if it meant that Jimmy was gone.

The funeral, if possible, was lovely. People filled the pews and the cemetery and my aunt's home. But Jimmy filled our hearts. My family talked about his success as an educator. We told stories of his wild youth and his accomplishments and his sorrows. At times, laughter rang out, and that release of tension felt good, and we smiled.

Letting go is what a "death watch" is about. I found the strength within me to do just this, and even to understand a little more of the mystery of life. That time spent sitting in Jimmy's room, at the Grape Memorial Hospital, was time I spent growing up. To deal with the pain of a death is to deal with life, and how to let the pain go. I realized the importance of life, the value of the people in it, and the best way to honor it: to let life go on. I learned so much in a short period of time. With this lesson came the responsibility to live life to its fullest.

Like my uncle.

Reflections of Youth

Larry Cheely

For David Gavin's class, students were asked to write an essay on a person who had been influential in their lives.

Twice a year my parents and I came to my grand parents home for the family gatherings. My aunts and uncles pulled into the driveway of my grandparents home at preordained times. With their children in tow, they exited their automobiles and headed for the front door of the Tompores home. Those already here would form a line and greet the newcomers with enthusiasm. Handshakes and smiles would be the order of the day. Our family was the second to arrive this particular Thanksgiving. The laughter of children soon filled each room of the home, as all family members were now present and accounted for. It was the same every holiday I had been here, and today would be no different. The adults had settled in the living room discussing their life's events while drinking coffee and nibbling on Greek pastries. My grandmother had baked the Mediterranean butter cookies yesterday afternoon to insure the freshness of her labors. They were a symbol of ethnic pride for the man she had married so many years before, a man whose Greek bloodline passed from his daughters to his grandchildren, my grandfather.

His name was Anastasia Tompores, a name so difficult to pronounce for the people at Ellis Island in Nineteen Twenty we are unsure to this day if the spelling is correct. For the sake of simplicity everyone called him John. He had come to the United States at the age of seventeen. He was a young man in search of a better life for himself who had come here from a country that offered little to a person with dreams.

He had climbed an anchor rope to a cattle barge bound for America. Hiding among the cattle in the hold of the ship, he avoided detection by the crew. My grandfather had subsisted during his journey by coming out only at night to forage for any unattended morsels left by careless crewmen. Moving quietly through the lower decks, he packed away his palatable treasures until returning to the ship's hold to enjoy the fruits of his nocturnal journey.

When the cattle boat reached the docks of New York, my grandfather quietly disembarked dressed as a deck worker unloading feed for the livestock below. The next few years would be difficult for him. With no command of the English language, nor job skills for this part of the world, he was obliged to do manual labor for daily survival, from shoeshine boy to stock clerk. He spent only those monies necessary for day to day expenses. The remainder would be saved in a sock for his trip to a different area in his new country, Iowa. This would be his home for the remainder of his life, a home where he would marry, raise a family, and find his piece of the American pie.

He sat in his green velvet chair in the living room. A small man in physical stature, he wore his favorite faded gray sweater and worn brown pants, clean white T-shirt under the sweater in favor of a cumbersome button down shirt, for my grandfather believed in practicality before fashion. His hairline had receded to the point that only a sparse amount now existed just above his ears, a sign of the passage of youth and middle-age, giving its owner the memories of what once was.

I sat down in the corner of the room and watched my grandfather in awe as any ten year old would. I wondered to myself how this aged man had made such an impossible

journey. How he had accomplished so much in a foreign land without assistance. I sat motionless and did not speak for my grand father was in conversation with the other adults.

“How are the interest rates, John?” my father would ask.

“Wait a couple more months,” grandfather replied, “I think they gonna drop a lil’ bit.”

He talked of property taxes and interest rates at the bank. His knowledge of the business community seemed infinite to me. The adults would question him in reference to business decisions yet to be made in their lives. With a patient ear, he would listen quietly, then answer their questions in a terminology even I could comprehend.

“John, I’m thinking about adding on to the shop. Is this a good time?” my Uncle Jack asked.

“Jack, you gotta wait for the interest rates to fall and save money on the expansion loan.” Grandpa replied.

I would later learn that many people in the Des Moines area had sought out my grandfather’s advice prior to making business decisions.

My fascination with my grandfather would grow as the years passed. Not only an able businessman, he was also accomplished at restoring cane chairs, an art he taught me in my youth that has long since been replaced by more modern knowledge.

I would have the privilege in my early teen years of escorting him to downtown Des Moines in the later part of the 1960’s. These trips with my grandfather would be as much personal to him as they were business. We would ride the city bus from Sixty Eighth and University Avenue to Eighth and Walnut. As we traveled from one small store to the next, my grandfather would motion me to a corner chair to hear what most would

consider a privileged conversation. I felt I had attained a certain amount of status during these excursions. That such a young man, like myself, would be allowed to overhear private discussions that would shape the city in the years to come.

Not all of my grandfather's discussions were of a business nature. We would often stop at local shops downtown owned exclusively by Greeks and Italians who had come here in the 1920's as my grandfather had. These hard working individuals who referred to their homeland as the "Old Country." Their conversations would be of family and traditions that shaped the path for themselves and their children, how each one had found their niche in this newly adopted country, "Amerdika," as it was pronounced. Modern textbooks on Sociology would pale compared to the knowledge I gained in cultural diversity with my grandfather as my guide.

The years passed and with all things, a changing of the guard has taken place. My grandfather passed away in 1968, but not before leaving a legacy for generations already here, and for those to come. I think back in fondness of the time spent with my grandfather from whom I learned of business, and my heritage, at such an early age.

Lessons for a lifetime I have tried to apply to my own life in personal choices and business decisions. When confronted with an obstacle, find a way around it. If no other option can be found, compromise with those you do business with. The concept of compromise would be a tactic to be used in all personal contacts, whether business or home life. My grandfather taught me that all people should be treated with respect, regardless of their station in life.

"Never burn bridges behind you," Grandpa would say, "you never know when you gonna need 'em for a retreat."

This bit of information, clichéd as it may be, has saved me from a bad situation on more than one occasion. It's hard to cross a raging river when there's no way over the top of the water.

No Donuts Russell Lundquist

In Eden Pearson's class, students were asked to write a profile of a specific person, place or activity. In addition to conveying the significance of their subject, students were to vividly present their subject.

"I've got the best squad in the city," Sgt Russell Schafenitz boasted. "I don't just say that because I'm their supervisor, they are all just a great bunch of hard workers. This is not a job where you can put something off until tomorrow."

The south side of Des Moines is the area of patrol for Sgt Schafenitz and his men. It is the largest patrol sector in the city, the same size as all the other sectors combined. It is a difficult task to cover a lot of ground in a night's work, so there is little time for coffee and donuts. The chatter of the police radio is a constant companion. "It does take a little bit of time to get used to it," Sgt Schafenitz said. "There's so much going on at once, we almost never stop moving."

Meeting Sgt Schafenitz for the first time makes quite an impression; his uniform is immaculate, he is clean-shaven, and has an athletic build. He gives the impression of professionalism, a must for one of the most visible jobs in the world. The hiring process is very selective and the training is long and comprehensive. The first six months of training is at the Police Academy followed by one year of probationary training on the street, learning from senior officers. This is not a job for someone who is not willing to give one hundred percent in everything they do. Many officers have four-year degrees prior to becoming members of the police department and continue to receive more education while they work as police officers.

The Des Moines Police are busier than their counterparts elsewhere in central Iowa. The number of "trips," the term they use for a call for service, is higher and they

don't have enough personell to do all the jobs, so many officers have more than one position. "I'm not only the south side patrol supervisor for the third watch," Sgt Schafenitz explained, "I also work as a member of the bomb squad. Some guys are also on the tactical team, what some people call SWAT, others double as drunk driver testers," he continued, "there's plenty of interesting work to go around."

Our first trip was to a report of ten people fighting in the street. Arriving on the scene, we found out it was just a group of kids arguing and two of them got into a minor skirmish. Sgt Schafenitz and fellow officer George Simmer talked to the kids and the issue was soon resolved with a handshake and everyone going home for the evening. "When we get a trip we never know what we're going to have," Sgt Schafenitz said. "This time it turned out all right. One time I got a call for an abandoned car sitting in the middle of the street," he continued, "and when I got there, it was actually two guys shooting it out."

Next, we zoomed over to a fast food restaurant for a domestic dispute. A couple who had separated was arguing over a custody matter about their child. Showing patience, Sgt Schafenitz and Officer Simmer calmed the two emotionally charged parents and advised them how to take care of the matter the next day using the legal system. "You have to be able to talk to people in this job," Sgt Schafenitz said getting back in the car, "it's not just playing cops and robbers."

Dispute trips are common in Des Moines and can lead to serious harm for some people. A car full of teenagers found out how close they could come to getting injured just by being in the wrong place. Playing hack-sack outside of a popular arcade, they were harassed by another group of teens who tried to assault them and ended up denting

their car and breaking out a taillight. "You did the right thing by getting out of the area as quickly as possible," Sgt Schafenitz explained to the teenagers, "let us do the fighting for you. It's our job to take care of people like that."

A quick stop to get gas and wash the police car was the last task for Sgt Schafenitz before ending his shift on the street and go to the polic station to complete his paperwork. The days are busy, but there is no complaining. "It makes the days go by faster. . . and the years," he stated. "I get to learn something new every day and get to meet exciting people all the time; I love having this job. I believe that the vast majority of people are good and I enjoy being able to help them," he explained, "if they weren't inherently good, a million of us out on the streets wouldn't be enough."

My Neighbor Yun Liu

For David Gavin's class, students were asked to write an essay on a person who had been influential in their lives.

I came to America from China in August of 1996 at the age of twenty-two. During my first several months in America, I did my best to adapt myself to the new environment. My husband, Robert, told me to say “Hi” and “How are you” when meeting people. He told me that Americans were very polite and friendly, so I expected to see friendly faces everywhere.

Our house that Robert had just bought for our marriage was located at Stevens Creek Lane, Forsy, Illinois. The two-story brown wooden house was at the end of a half-mile lane. The lane is shaped like a “S”, and is lined with all styles of houses: two story, three story, beige wooden, gray wooden, white concrete, orange brick, etc. Behind our house was a half-acre of grass. Across the grass there was a clear green stream zigzagging horizontally to the east and west. On the other side of the stream there were leafy woods. The colors of those trees were gold, jade, emerald, and olive. I could hear the stream babbling and birds chirping as if hearing a splendid music of nature.

On the right side of our house was a light blue wooden house. A middle-aged couple and their child living there greeted me warmly when we first met. On our left side there was a red brick one-story house. Between that red house and ours there was a two-hundred-square-foot stretch of grass. The right half of the grass was taken care by us, and the left half of it belonged to the household of the red house.

One day, under the midday sun, I was watering azaleas in a tiny flower bed in front of my house. A fifty-year-old woman, my neighbor from the red house, walked with a swaying gait toward her mail box. She was about five-eight and stocky, wearing at least an “XXL” bright red tunic, plain white long pants, and floral slippers. Her short thick neck was bejeweled, pearls shining in the sun. Her oval face was topped by

shoulder-length and rust-colored curly hair. Her bulging eyes were surrounded by fake long eye lashes. As soon as she looked at me, I said, “Hi. How’re...” I had not finished my word “you,” but she already turned her pink and blushing face away from me. I thought she might not have heard me from where she was standing.

The second time when I met her outside of our houses, I waved my hand and said loudly, “Hi!” However, she only moved her brown eyeballs to me for a half second and averted them away quickly. Her indifference hurt me at that moment as if she had thrown cold water on me. I asked my husband why that neighbor ignored me. He responded easily, “Who cares?” I did care. I was very sensitive about other’s behavior towards me. The neighbor’s coldness made me confused about how to communicate with people appropriately.

Once a black terrier ran into my open garage. As I was wondering whose dog it was, I heard a sound. “Sparky! Sparky! Where are you?” My neighbor shouted and looked around. After realizing it was her dog, I picked it up and handed it to her. She grabbed her dog without saying thank you, as if I had caught her dog intentionally. To my surprise, she stared at me and asked in a hoarse voice, “You guys are Chinese, right?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“But why did you come here?”

“We, we, because, we, that...” I was stuck dumb by her sudden question and didn’t know how to answer it immediately, especially not with my faltering English. After hearing my broken English, she contemptuously eyed me up and down, as if she was thinking people coming from all over the world were supposed to speak English well, but how come this Chinese girl didn’t? I felt embarrassed and felt as if she was overpowering me. I didn’t like her question but couldn’t figure out what was wrong with it.

My husband said to me at home, half joking and half serious, “Yes, of course

there's an easy answer for the neighbor's question. Just tell her that I come because my husband is here. My husband is here because he was born here and his father chose to come here."

"that's a long answer," I laughed.

"Others' answers may be even longer," he said. "For example, they might say: I am here because my parents are here, because my parents' parents came here, my parents' parents' parents', and my ancestor chose to come here. Yun, people come here for the same reason - they choose to be here. The only difference is that who comes earlier and who comes later. You don't have to feel defensive about her question." I then made a self-criticism, thinking that I was defensive about it was probably because I was not confident about myself as a new immigrant. I really wanted to be liked by every one around me.

A golden sunset afternoon, I pushed the garbage can out of the garage. When I was ready to return to home, I saw a person at a distance fall down and remain on the ground on the left side of our lane. Unhesitatingly I ran to the fallen person but surprisingly found it was her, my neighbor. She sat there, holding a dog chain and moaning with pain. A fist-sized stone lay to the side of her left leg. I had come to her, so I would help to her feet.

"May I help you?" I asked with courage. She nodded. She didn't have any other choice. After getting her permission, I used all my strength to pull her heavy body up. She trudged ahead with my support and still moaned beside me. Her left elbow leaned on my right arm. My teeth were clenched together tightly as if my arm was supporting something was a thousand ponds.

Her dog was running in front of us like a guide. Upon reaching her red house, I was reluctant to enter; however, on second thought, regardless who she was, I'd chosen to help, therefore, I'd help to the end. I assisted her into her red house, stuffed with

numerous brown furnishings and diverse decorations: wood carving pieces, porcelains, chinas, flower vases, pictures, cloth dolls, etc. After assisted her to sit down on a Windsor high chair by a window with a white curtain, I tried to leave. I almost strode out of her front door.

“Thank you,” a shaky voice stopped me. I turned to her and saw a red sweaty face. “What’s your name?” She asked strenuously.

I responded, “Yun Liu.” My negative feeling towards her at that moment seemed to disappear totally. “Do you need an ambulance?” I asked.

She shook her head slowly, “No, Thank you, Yun.”

“Then do you wanna call your husband?” I asked.

She nodded, “Okay.” Then I walked into her kitchen and dialed the number she told me. I filled out a glass of water for her and dried her face with a towel. We waited together till her husband came back. Afterwards her husband sent her to hospital. That was the first time I knew her name was Karen.

Once when I saw her shuffling to her mail box, she greeted me warmly, “Hi! How’re you, Yun?”

“I’m fine and how about you?” I asked back.

“My leg is sprained, but it’s getting much better. I’m really appreciate your help that day,” she replied with a big smile that I had never seen before.

After three-months of living in Illinois, I obtained my first driver’s license and first car, a gray Lincoln Town car. I could drive myself to Riceland Community College for English classes. I was excited about being my own driver and couldn’t wait to be at school.

In the two-car sized garage, I sat in the Lincoln, being proud and enjoying the freedom I felt. After the garage door was opened by my remote control, I looked in the rearview mirror and began to back out of the drive way. My foot was stepping on the

break lightly, and the car was moving slowly. Then, in order to turn my car, I backed it to the side, making a “L.” In the rearview mirror, I saw our lane lined with houses and that red brick house. My neighbor was looking at me from her window. I lost my attention on driving. Suddenly I heard a sound, “Creak! Crack!” I quickly braked my car, pulled forward, stopped, jumped out, and checked to see what happened.

“Oh! My God! I’ve broken my neighbor’s wooden mail box rod,” I shouted to myself. My first reaction was to try to fix it, but there was no way to connect the rod with only my hands. I was scared to death as if my car hit a person. I was standing there, hands trembling. If there was a hole on the ground, I would have disappeared into it. I was ready for a bad consequence coming.

“Hang on!” A thunderous voice came from the red house. My neighbor moved her heavy body out. I thought I was in trouble.

“Sorry! Sorry!” I apologized without looking at her face like a first-grade student had made a trouble in front of her teacher. “I’ll fix it, or I can pay for it,” I added, looking at the rod and imagining her facial expression, as if I saw that she had cast an angry look at me with a frown.

To my surprise, she said, “Yun, don’t worry about it. It’s not big deal. I’ll take care of it.” I looked up at her face on which there was a smile. She added, “Yun, you are such a nice lady. I’ll not make any hard time on you.” I was very grateful when hearing what she said. At that day, my husband, Robert insisted on getting the rod fixed.

That same night, I made two plates of dumplings and brought over to Karen’s house. She invited me in and showed me almost all the decorations in her living room and told me where they came from. She explained about all pictures of her family on the wall. She said, “This is my son. He is studying in the University of Illinois. This one was taken during my wedding. I was skinnier at that time.” Then she pointed a picture in which a thirty-year-old man in an olive soldier’s uniform and said, “Yun, I’m sorry that I

was cold to you when we first met. I guess before I had bad impression about Chinese people because of my uncle's death, but anyway I like you. You're a nice lady."

I responded, "I'm sorry about your uncle. Too many people died in that war, both Americans and Chinese. That's a mistake of the history. We are friends, Karen."

After then we helped each other. One week that summer, it didn't rain. The grass between our two houses was extremely dry and became yellow. Karen was on her vacation, so I voluntarily watered the entire grass shared by Karen and us. When she came back home, she was so grateful about it.

During the time when I was pregnant, Karen came over and patiently told me about her experience with a newborn. She acted just like my tender-care mother. One night when she carried a baby doll to my house, I laughed and felt she was funny. She seriously taught me how to dress and put a diaper on a baby which was her doll. What she taught me really benefited me when I had my first baby girl.

Karen and I have become good friends. From our relationship, I've learned that one good deed deserves another. When I want to make friends, I need to do something good for them. Now if anyone has prejudice against me, I will not worry about it at all, but I will be fair and kind to every one. I remember Dale Carnegie's maxim: If you want to be liked by others, you have to like them first.

Fairy Tale Storybook Romance
Keri Michel

In Eden Pearson's class, students were asked to write a profile essay that would allow the reader to experience a familiar event in an unfamiliar way.

The wedding I attended looked like something out of a fairy tale storybook. As I entered the quaint, old-fashioned, stone-covered country chapel, I was struck by the aroma of cinnamon-scented burning candles and romantic music floating in the air. I was dazzled by the fresh flowers and sparkling lights that filled the church. As I took my seat, sunlight flooded in through the stained glass windows from the never-ending blue sky. Tall white candles, floral arrangements, and white tulle decorated the end of the pews. Draped tulle, greenery, flowers, tiny white lights, and a rose-entwined, white lattice archway decorated the candle-lit altar.

After the mothers were seated, the candles were lit, and the preacher, groom, and six groomsmen were standing at the altar, the beautiful melody of "Canon in D" filled the charming stone church. The six bridesmaids, each clutching bouquets of light pink and white roses entwined in lilac tulle, slowly made their way up the aisle. The bridesmaids, with their hair up in curls, were adorned in breathtaking diamond necklaces and antique silver-white pearl earrings. The bridesmaids wore sleeveless, A-line, plum French satin gowns, with a touch of crystals along the tip of the neckline. The flower girl and the ring bearer slowly made their way up to the front of the church. The ring bearer was dressed in a black tuxedo while the flower girl, carrying a basket of rose petals, was dressed in a puffy, white satin gown.

The swish of satin and the "Wedding March" song could be heard as the beautiful bride, escorted by her father, crossed the pathway of white carpet lined with soft rose petals. The groom was wearing a black tuxedo and his blonde hair was combed to the side. The moment he saw his bride, his bright, blue eyes lit up with joy. The bride's blonde hair was swept up in curls with a

diamond tiara and a white tulle veil. The bride, adorned with long white gloves, a single strand of pearls, and diamond earrings, wore a long, sleeveless, lace-trimmed, puffy, white satin gown, dotted with sequins and tiny pearls. Delicate embroidery graced the full, taffeta skirt with a chapel-length train that was picked up in gathers with bunches of satin flowers.

Hundreds of family and friends witnessed the couple exchanging vows. The bride and groom were holding hands and gazing into each other's eyes as they repeated the vows that united them in marriage. "I, Ryan, take you Hillary, to be my lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part."

"I, Hillary, take you Ryan, to be my lawfully wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part." The bride and groom expressed their love for each other as they slipped on the wedding rings, symbols of their love and stated, "With this ring, I thee wed."

The preacher declared, "I now pronounce you husband and wife; you may kiss the bride. Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce Mr. and Mrs. Ryan Kurtz." The newlyweds' faces were shining with happiness during this magic moment. The beautiful music of the pianist and violinist filled the chapel as the bride and groom, with big smiles on their faces, walked quickly down the aisle.

This Cinderella-style evening had a traditional, simple, yet elegant flair. Splashes of pink, purple, and orange were painted across the sky as we arrived at the reception. The reception took place next to a Victorian house with a wrap-around verandah, in a grassy courtyard surrounded by bright arrays of garden roses, overlooking the city lights. The fragrance of fresh garden flowers and splashes of plum, burgundy, rose, dark green, and white characterized the charming, colorful

summer celebration. The soft, beautiful music of a classical string quartet filled the enormous, white, outdoor reception tent, which was lit by thousands of tiny white lights. Lit-up green pine trees dotted the yard and the inside of the tent. Draped greenery, tulle, fresh lilacs, cranberry tulips, roses, and candles were placed everywhere for a dazzling effect. The flower-backed chairs surrounded circular tables that were dressed in white linen and were layered with gold-rimmed porcelain, china, silver, and crystal. The centerpieces, which added an element of charm and elegance, were an explosion of roses in the shades of light pink, snowy white, and deep purple displayed in antique cherub containers with matching ribbons and rose petals trailing on the tables. Frosted rosebuds and sugar blossoms danced around the five-tiered wedding cake that stood on a table lit with tulle and white lights. The murmur of conversation and laughter could be heard as guests mingled among rose-entwined archways, enjoying refreshing beverages. The mouth-watering aroma of the four course dinner sent guests dashing to the tables as they dined on hors d'oeuvres, roast beef or chicken, steamed vegetables, crisp garden salad, hot buttered potatoes, flaky dinner rolls, and delicious chocolate cake.

The warm, summer breeze was blowing in the air as the moonlit enchanting evening came to an end. Surrounded by two hundred family and friends, the bride and groom were showered with rice as they raced to a horse-drawn carriage. Before they got in, the bride quickly threw a bouquet of blush-tone garden roses, pink tulips, fresh lilacs, white irises, and sweet peas, while the groom whisked the garter into the air. Bubbles danced in the breeze while the sound of laughter and the soft clomping of hooves could still be heard as the newlyweds, with the look of love and joy in their eyes, left in the horse-drawn carriage, waving their farewells. Fireworks exploded across the sky in a beautiful array of color, signifying the end of the fairy tale storybook evening.

If you believe in happily ever after, start with once upon a time. A wedding is one of the most important days in a person's life. A wedding is a stepping stone, symbolic of the timeless essence of falling in love and the beginning of uniting two people pledging their lives to each other. A wedding is a memorable event that signifies true love. Marriage signifies two people finding their soul mates and spending the rest of their lives together. Ryan and Hillary have found each other and will live happily ever after.

A Rich Inheritance
Bethany Eising

For Sharon Witty's class, students were asked to write an expository essay under the umbrella topic "names."

We were sitting outside on the lawn during one of those incredibly lazy summer evenings. My mom's parents had come down from Canada for the week and as we often do when we have family around, we'd eaten outside. The three youngest kids sat up next to the card table while the rest of us sat in lawn chairs or on the grass, with our plates on our laps. I carefully balanced my cup in the grass, hoping that no crickets would decide it was a good day for a swim and hop in. The flies and mosquitoes provided the usual summer serenade, while a light breeze kept the air from being uncomfortably hot. Opa, Dutch for Grandpa, leaned forward in his chair as he watched my 9-year-old brother Luke playing with our dog, a friendly and kid-loving shepherd named Duke. "Bethany," he addressed me, "Did I ever tell you about the time . . .," and the whole family was off to 1940's Holland, or Canada in the 50's or perhaps present day Nebraska. History was and is fascinating to me and specific stories about real people even more so. But when I moved into my grade school years and began realizing these people were my own grandparents, or great-grandparents, or un-generationed ancestors, I fell in love with my heritage.

What is heritage? By one dictionary definition, it is the ". . . customs and traditions which are handed down from one generation to the next." Heritage is important to me. The stories told me by my parents and grandparents, the tales of how my ancestors lived, and the traditions my family holds to today, are, among a thousand other things, part of my identity. My heritage makes me proud of my family history and inspires me to show the courage and sacrifice my ancestors have shown.

My heritage influenced me first by making history exciting. Thanks to all the historical fiction and biographies I've read or had read to me from age five on, I find history easy to learn and interesting. The stories I've been told, however, make history come alive. My Opa, Jan Eising, was 12 when the occupation began and 17 when it ended. His father, Hendrik Eising, was one of his town's informal leaders. He was not silent as to what he thought of the Nazis however, and when folks needed help, or wished to plan an illegal action, they often came to Hendrik and met in his house. He soon came to be the 'official' district leader of the Underground.

Soon after the Nazis arrived, the German general assigned to oversee the province came knocking at Hendrik's door. Like much of the Netherlands, the province was below sea level and protected from the ocean only by a thick dike of earth. Worried that a flood would ruin his Mercedes, the general wanted it to be stored in the highest-elevated barn he could find. This happened to be the Eising barn, and whether they liked it or not, the family soon found themselves with a German car in their barn and a German chauffeur sleeping in their house. With a family of eight, the Eising family could spare no beds, and the chauffeur ended up sleeping under the table. According to my Opa the German was nervous at first, but the family knew that few of the German soldiers were actually Nazis, and they treated him well. Hendrik even enjoyed an occasional game of checkers with the chauffeur. Even with a German sleeping under his table, the brave farmer went on with his work. More Jews than my Opa counted passed through the house during the war years, sometimes staying in the attic for several weeks before they found a place to move on to. Hendrik also secretly fixed up their chicken coop to house hunted refugees and young Dutchmen fleeing German factories.

My Opa is still alive, and has more stories than these to tell. I may learn in school about the time the Germans occupied the low lands, and I may read books like *The Diary of Anne Frank*,

but nothing makes history come alive like eyewitness reports and thrilling stories by my own relatives.

Knowing family history has also made me proud that these people were my ancestors. My Mom's Opa, Roelf Suk, had nine children aged 0 -19 to care for and support on a lower class farm laborer's wages when the German occupation began. In spite of this he often participated in Resistance activities, and his wife and older children gladly shouldered most of the burden through many of the war years so he could be free to help. For almost a year Roelf worked in the back of a print shop putting out illegal news bulletins to counteract Hitler's propaganda. He was putting his life in danger by this activity, and he knew it, but Roelf felt that this was one small way he could help and encourage resistance efforts. After many months of operation the shop was raided and my great-grandpa was captured. He and several other caught with him were held for over two months. During this time they were all interrogated by the police. Roelf was released with little injury, but one of his coworkers was beaten to death, and Roelf had the sorry task of carrying the man's wedding ring home to the man's widow and children.

Stories about my ancestors can also give me inspiration and courage. Hundreds of years before my grandparents were risking their lives in the Netherlands, other ancestors were doing the same in France. In the early 1600's, when Protestants were gaining a foothold in many European countries, they remained a fiercely persecuted minority in Catholic France. Even as the burnings, drownings, and torture went on, the French Protestants, called Huguenots, continued to increase in number. The government-sponsored persecution subsided for a while and then rose up again when a protective edict was repealed in 1685. Even as thousands died, thousands more fled the country. Some went to the Netherlands, a famous haven for religious freedom, and settled there. Both of my grandmas have Huguenot background. Ancestors on my mother's side also fled to the Netherlands

from Yugoslavia in the 1600's seeking religious freedom. According to family tradition, these folks were Gypsies.

When I was younger, stories like these would excite my imagination. I would dream of secret places and smuggling, of prisons and daring escapes. In some ways, I know better now. I know how common and painful death was in those days, and I wonder if I would put my life on the line to save other lives or to worship how I saw fit. Some people say "You can only hope you'll have the strength," but I believe that many of those people were simply standing up for what they believed in. I follow in my ancestors' footsteps every time I risk losing my reputation or my comfort zone to stand up for what I believe in.

This is how my heritage inspires me and make me, in part, who I am. My last name is part of this heritage, and I'm glad my grandpa didn't change it when he immigrated. As soon as I learned that it was pronounced "eye-sing" in Dutch while the Americanized pronunciation was "eye-zing", I decided to always say it the Dutch way. I think this country ought to be more like a quilt and less like a melting pot, and that we all lose something when immigrants -- no matter where they're from -- try to forget and mask the old ways. Another way I protect my heritage is by saving all the information I can get. For a school assignment last Autumn I chose to write a mini-biography on my Opa Roelf Suk, and I hope to write down as many of these oral stories as I can so that someday my children or grandchildren can know them too. Then my descendants also can be part of this rich heritage which inspires and encourages me and helps make me who I am.

Why I Get My Heart Broken Every Time

Luiza Fritz

For Paula Yerty's course, students were asked to write an essay in which they were to speculate about the possible causes of a familiar phenomenon.

After being dumped yet again, I have spent many recent hours contemplating why, after thinking I had found the perfect relationship, it seems I am destined to be a stepping stone. The end of a relationship is never easy, but trying find a reason for that end is even harder. In order to satisfy the need to understand, I analyze every aspect of the past relationship. Every word that was spoken, every emotion that was felt, and every touch that sent butterflies through my stomach come to mind as I sit and ponder where the beginning of the end started. Was it my fault? Was there something I did to bring this pain upon myself?

I have always thought of myself as the perfect gentleman, the caring sensitive person that women have always wanted. I have gone to work everyday and worked long hours of overtime to be sure there is enough money to live comfortably. I have always believed in making everything in a relationship a compromise; therefore, I do my share of the work at home and help to keep things in order. I have always believed in bending over backwards for the person I care about, no matter what the cost. All I have ever asked for in return is the same. In my two previous serious relationships, I had given all I had and tried my best to show every day how I felt, but I never received the same in return. Each day, I hoped that something would change and the woman I felt so deeply for would realize that I needed to receive some sort of return of the love I had so freely shown her. But instead, I'm left alone again.

Through all of my deep thinking, I have come up with a few answers of my own that satisfy my mind and heart for now. One, I have realized that I seek out women with low self-esteem so that I can have the challenge of building that self-esteem. I look for young women with that hidden beauty and a personality just waiting to be discovered. Two, I seek the strong-willed, not-afraid-to-say-what-she-feels, fun-loving daddy's girl. She is sure about what she wants to say and how she wants people to think about her, but she still needs daddy's hugs and advice before making a sound decision. Three, I am a very stable, self-sufficient, motivated individual, with a self-confidence that emanates to those around me. I attract women who are looking for the rock they need for stability. But once I have worked a little magic and spent some time working on attitude and confidence, I become their stepping stone. I am no longer a companion, but now a mentor or teacher. Sure, it feels good to give someone the confidence she needs to progress in her life, but what about me and my happiness? I deserve to have someone show me that kind of love. The golden rule applies here.

Upon discovering my first answer, I developed more questions. Why do I seek those with low self-esteem? Why do I look for those with undiscovered beauty? Because everybody else looks at the obvious reasons to love someone. Yes, I like the girls with stunning beauty and the perfect face. But the only reason they are noticed is because their personalities allow them to be. They know they are every man's dream and that everybody looks at them, so they show it. The girl standing right next to them could be the one who has yet to find out that she has the same potential. It's just that no one has pointed it out before. That's what I am here for. I can look beyond the surface and find the most beautiful person. After I spend some time digging into the past and finding the reason why she is lacking in the ability to allow herself to be noticed,

somehow without my knowing it, I unlock a totally new woman. She discovers herself and then decides that I am no longer needed for that support they so desperately needed from the start. All of this after growing so close to each other and sharing our deepest darkest secrets, falling in love with each other. It all comes to an end when she discovers that she has the same potential as everyone else, and that I have given it to her. I get dumped and left to deal with the loneliness of being alone, a feeling I have grown to hate.

My second self-found answer also leads me analyze the reason why I look for the strong-willed, outspoken, fun-loving daddy's girl. I truly don't set out to find these types of women on purpose, especially the daddy's girl. I have found that I like having a woman with me who is not afraid to speak her opinion around my friends or family, with restraint. It shows that she can think for herself and is not afraid of what anybody will think of her. I am that way myself but would not want to offend anyone, least of all my girlfriend, by saying too much. Being a daddy's girl is not a quality I seek out in a woman. I think that it is great that she and her dad have a good relationship, but it makes it rather hard to get her to focus her attention on the relationship with me and the things we need to work on. It is also very hard to make a decent impression on her dad and be well liked. I have found that without her daddy's support, daughter is not going to make any decisions on her own, even after I give my advice. So, I lose in the end, and once again I find myself alone.

After thinking about the two above answers, I still was not satisfied. There had to be more to it than that. I developed a third solution. I come off as a very confident, self-sufficient, motivated, stable individual. Therefore, I attract those who are not. These are qualities that all

parents wish they could instill in their children, but who usually end up falling short in one or more of the categories. Without knowing it, unsuspecting young women search for someone to fill the void, or balance the scales, so to speak. Then they stumble on to me, the well-rounded all-around decent person. I identify their weakness to myself and begin to build what is lacking. In the meantime, while we are building trust, devotion, and all the other qualities of a good relationship, I am thinking that once their cup is full, the relationship will be the fantasy that everyone wishes for. Wrong again. Once again, I become their stepping stone. All the time and effort I have spent building my perfect woman and my perfect relationship becomes a piece of the past, and my heart gets broken yet again. They find the confidence they need and decide that it is time to try it on their own, leaving me to my endless thoughts.

Through my pain and loneliness, I have learned a few things that I hope to apply to my next chance at a relationship. I am young and know that I have a great deal to learn and many events yet to experience in life. So I will continue the search for the one who will complete me and who has already learned and experienced some of the same feelings I have. One day, the girl with radiating self-confidence, stability, and motivation will come walking into my life, and the only challenge I will have is to be the perfect partner. Someday....

A Legacy Passed On

Lori Chicchelly

In Nancy Condon's class, students were asked to write an essay that described a special person in their lives.

Her death came as no surprise. So, why was I sobbing uncontrollably? I was supposed to be as prepared as I could be for those final words. I had been thinking of her for the past two days. I knew she was dying.

As I sat back and thought about never seeing Aunt Jo again, never hearing her voice again, memories filled me with a warmth and a special bond I had felt only when my mom died less than a year earlier. This aunt of mine was so precious to me. I would miss her dearly.

Aunt Jo, Josephine, was short, like me. She was a small person who didn't move like she was in a hurry, unlike me. She was patient, happy, and very giving; I hope like me. She had blue eyes that twinkled, as if there was a secret behind them at all times. I am sure that there was. She had a cute little laugh, almost a giggle, which was endearing for a woman her age. By trade, she was a caring and very successful scrub room nurse. She didn't have a college degree like you would need now. She learned as she worked and became an instructor for many new students. At one time Aunt Jo was part of a notable heart surgery team.

Aunt Jo was very well-read. She would be reading many books at one time, devouring information on her special hobbies and collections, like the British royal family and the Kennedy family. She wasn't a good student in school but was constantly trying to better herself by reading anything and everything. It was one of her many joys in life. Aunt Jo loved cats. She really loved all animals, but she had a special affinity for

housecats. She contributed to the Humane Society in her town with money and volunteer hours. She donated money to her local zoo and was a member for years.

My Aunt was also an elf. I say that because of my earliest memories of her. She lived in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Every year, near the second week of December, the big brown truck of the UPS man stopped at our house. My siblings and I anxiously awaited the man who would appear with a huge box that held wonderful treasures for all of us. It was always a greatly anticipated treat as the UPS man never came to our house except this one time each year.

In this box, Aunt Jo would always have lots of little packets of homemade candies, cookies and breads. She probably never knew that our family of seven, in less than 48 hours, devoured this labor of love. There was a package labeled with our names and "DO NOT OPEN UNTIL CHRISTMAS" or "NO PEEKING" for each of us. These packages were shaken, poked, and fingered to the point of wear and tear on the paper in the days leading up to Christmas. When unwrapped, we always found some little matching gift for each of us children. Some wonderful, thoughtful trinket that Aunt Jo had made or found that year. We always knew it would be really neat. One year, my package held a knit scarf, mittens, and hat set. It was striped with two shades of purple. Each of my siblings received a set in other coordinating colors. I wore my gift proudly that year. Another year, when I was older, my gift was a towel set with a matching washcloth that had been embroidered with a design that was personally mine. Each of my siblings' gift was different, but uniquely theirs. This was awesome, since being in a family of seven and sharing one bathroom, few things were ONLY MINE!

Upon our high school graduation, we received a vacation in Colorado Springs with my Aunt as our own personal tour guide. Aunt Jo always had the most interesting places to visit, people to meet, and the "inside track" of this beautiful city. She knew the hidden treasures that you read about in guides about a city. She planned all the really fun things to see and do. It was during this trip that I learned why she had quit sending us packages. After so many years of sending us care packages, she stopped. We never knew for years that Aunt Jo had no idea the joy we received from those care packages. We never let her know how much they meant to us or that we even received them. How sad is that? We told her all about the excitement and anticipation that her gifts had created. She couldn't believe how much we loved them. I learned how important thank you notes and letters are to acknowledge someone's kindness. The art of correspondence is missing in so many people's lives.

This lesson was very helpful in my life as I became a Naval Officer's wife and moved too many times to count. Leaving so many places inevitably left many friends behind. I learned to write letters to close the miles between my friends and me. Writing letters has kept me close to so many friends that I see very rarely, but when we do get together, it seems like old times. If you want to get mail, you have to send mail. That was one of the many phrases I can still hear Aunt Jo saying.

I also think of Aunt Jo as an elf because, you really needed to be careful talking to her throughout the year. One year, dessert plates came for me on my birthday. She obviously heard me talk of all the dessert parties we had and knew that some fun dishes would be just the right thing. I used to have coffees with friends while the kids played around us. Aunt Jo mailed me beautiful china coffee cups and saucers for a Valentine's

coffee that I was planning. She also sent new puzzles for the kids to keep busy on that day. She listened so closely during the year that she jotted down these ideas. Many years, for my birthday and Christmas, I found that she had listened to me like no one else ever did. I received many gifts from her that I truly loved. That art of giving is what we all strive for, but most don't attain. She could surprise anyone. I found out when she died, that she had a "gift closet" filled with treasures with people's names already on them.

We became even closer once I had children of my own. Since Aunt Jo never married or had children, she was the most awesome aunt. She had time and money to spend like my own parents and I never had. She had the time to take the hobby classes we all wish we had the time and money to take. We were the lucky recipients of her labor: a ceramic Christmas tree that lights up, hand-made calligraphy notecards, a little treasure from her numerous shopping trips. My oldest daughter received a handmade quilt for her baby doll on her first birthday. My middle daughter was named my aunt's godchild and received a handmade christening gown to cherish. When it was time for my children's birthdays, Aunt Jo and I took great pleasure in talking long distance about the theme and how it should be incorporated to celebrate fully. She sent little trinkets to fit into the theme and to feel included across the miles. My children were now the ones looking out the window for that big brown UPS truck to bring packages for their special days. They called Aunt Jo their fairy godmother.

As I look back on the life that is now over, I realize all the gifts that I received from my Aunt. I don't mean the material ones. I mean the ones that I learned from her or discovered I inherited from her. I love parties and planning special events now. I

struggled to make and decorate cakes for my children. I had the desire but no formal lessons. Of course, for the next birthday, a gift certificate was included to take a cake decorating class at a local store. I try to make special days out of ordinary ones. My children love the red lunch on Valentine's Day. We eat only red things. Or the orange lunch for Halloween. We will spontaneously have a picnic dinner on the TV room floor some nights. I am sure that my spontaneity and creativity came from Aunt Jo. We never did those things when I was growing up.

We heard that Aunt Jo's heart was giving out and that there were no medical options left. I talked to her by phone every few days and learned that she was working diligently on her "legacy". This is what she called all the memorabilia and mementos that she was tucking in the hope chest that had belonged to her mother, my grandmother. There would be photos, objects from her past, and handwritten notes to explain their significance. It was taking months for her to complete her legacy, but she was determined to finish. I knew that I was as special to Aunt Jo as she was to me when she told me that she was leaving me her legacy. I would be in charge of passing her memory down to my young children, my nieces and nephews. It would be my honor to take care of this chest for my family. I was overwhelmed and proud.

When that hope chest was delivered to my home, it took a few months for me to get the courage to start looking through the legacy. It brought back so many memories, tears, laughter, joy and sorrow. I loved my Aunt Jo. I will keep her spirit in my heart and try to live the happy, elf-like life she did. She was my fairy godmother, too.

Fifty-Eight Seconds
Teresa Erickson

For Eden Pearson's class, students were asked to write an essay about a remembered event. They were to communicate the event's autobiographical significance while vividly presenting the people and places.

It was a perfect July morning. The sun was shining and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. There was also a nice, refreshing breeze. Our destination was Worlds of Fun. I was nine years old and my brother was ten. We were two kids who loved to have a good time. My parents got in the front of the car and my brother and I climbed in the back. We were off on yet another family adventure. We all anticipated the fun we would have that day, and although we were excited, the two-hour drive to Kansas City felt like an eternity. We managed to pass the time by listening to music and playing games.

We finally arrived at 10:00 A.M. The park was bigger than I had imagined. I looked all around and saw the huge rides. I saw little shops where people could buy souvenirs, game stations, food carts, and a train, which caught my eye. I was nervous, seeing all of the rides, but also excited for the day ahead. There were so many things to do. We got a map and wondered what to do first. Dad wanted to try the Orient Express; he loved the thrills of a roller coaster and had to try it. Of course my mom and brother were up for it, but I held back. I had never been on a roller coaster before and the thought of it made me quiver. My dad knew this, but told me that this one wouldn't be too scary. After a lot of work convincing me, I reluctantly agreed.

As we got closer, I could see it. The Orient Express was a huge crimson structure with lots of twists and turns. It also went upside down and sideways. I could hear the screams coming from the people on it. I am terrified of heights, so it seemed like a

million miles high. When we reached it, there was a long line, which relieved me. As we waited in line, I could see the joy and satisfaction on the peoples faces whom just got off. I knew it was going to be scary. I dreaded every step forward we took because it was like walking to my death. I wanted to be anywhere else but in that line.

We finally made it to the front of the line, and by that time I was terrified. Since we were in the front of the line, my dad chose to sit in the front of the ride. I tried to refuse, but it didn't work. He just told me to be brave, but all I could think about was the hill that went straight down. I looked to my left and saw a big white sign that said CHICKEN EXIT in large red letters. I wanted so badly to run out, but there were so many people around. I would have been too embarrassed, so I stayed.

Dad said the ride was only fifty-eight seconds long. That comforted me some. The worker came and strapped us in. I checked at least ten times to see if I was strapped in securely. I knew I was, but I still feared something would go wrong. By this time, my entire body was shaking and my heart was racing. With a sudden jerk, we started moving. We were going slowly, so I calmed down a little. Then, we started up the first hill and it was moving very slow. There was a very distinct clicking sound that I will never forget. We were getting closer to the top and I looked out and could see the entire park. All of a sudden, we dropped straight down. All I saw in front of us was the track, so I shut my eyes as tight as they would close. I tried to scream but nothing came out. Then we were upside down and I could see the back row of people under us. We kept moving and went sideways. Finally I could see the end and we were done. I was so relieved it was over. That was the longest fifty-eight seconds of my life.

I was very proud of myself for riding the Orient Express. The rest of the day was much more fun, and stress free. We rode the train, played games, and went on small rides. Later that night, before we left, we came back to the Orient Express. I refused to go and didn't feel guilty about it at all. I waited by myself while the rest of my family went on it again. I rode on it once, which was a big step for me. I didn't feel that I needed to do it again. I already felt a nice sense of accomplishment.

Feminsim – The Cry of the Man-haters
MaCay Wiesemann

For Paula Yerty's class, students were asked to define a concept by writing an extended definition using illustrations and examples.

I was sitting nonchalantly in Sociology class the other day, taking notes on something along the lines of social stratification and inequality. Along with everyone else, I was fighting to stay awake. Then the lecture moved past race to gender, and my professor whipped a fresh transparency onto the overhead – “FEMINISM,” it shouted in bold black letters. “Uh-oh,” I heard some guy say loudly behind me. “Here we go with the man-haters.” I couldn’t help but whip my head around in disgust.

It’s this stigma that keeps equality from progressing to its full potential – that of the “feminists,” supposedly a faction of butch, bra-burning women with androgynous names, short haircuts and unshaven legs and armpits; who think every man is the spawn of Satan. “Feminism” is seen as a bad word. Why? Because many still do not know what the term means. I’d like to set the record straight right now, by giving a few definitions of feminism, along with putting a few myths to rest about feminism and feminist ideology.

Let’s start from the beginning: what is feminism, exactly? I found, on the Internet, a few excerpts from a piece titled “What is Feminism” (Delmar) and got something akin to a description of fine wine. One blurb went something like this: “To accept, with all its implications, that feminism has not only existed in movements of and for women, but has also been able to exist as an intellectual tendency without a movement, or as a strand within very different movements, is to accept the existence of various forms of feminism.” (With grapes carefully selected from California’s finest

vineyards and aged in oak barrels.) Great, but that still didn't tell me what feminism actually *is*. Another site (postnet.com) gave me feminist criticisms of various literary works. Gee, if I had wanted that, I would have just asked my Literature professor.

Finally, I found it: "The principle that woman should have political, economic, and social rights equal to those of men." BOOM, there it was – right there in good ol' Webster's Dictionary. Hm. So much for the Internet.

I want everybody to pay attention to that last bit: "*equal to those of men.*" This seems to be the spot where most people get mixed up. Notice it says *equal*, not *better than* or *superior to*. If you simply believe that both men and women should receive equal treatment in all areas of society; then, my friend, you are a feminist, whether or not you care to admit it; whether you are male or female.

This leads to Myth #1: that *all feminists are women*. No man can be a feminist because he's – well – a man. Not true. *So* not true. The key word here is "feminist," not "feminine" or "effeminate." Web organizations and sites such as Men For Change and Meninist advocate feminist thinking and behavior. The credo at Meninist includes statements such as "We are opposed to all forms of macho behavior and obscene sexist attitudes; we respect all women.... We believe in a woman's reproductive freedom and right to control her own body.... We understand the need for men to participate in the women's movement and end 2000 years of men's patriarchy." However, there is a flip side to this, which brings me to my next topic....

Myth #2: *All women are feminists*. Also an untruth dispelled by a simple visit to the Independent Women's Forum. Their mission statement illustrates the fact that they embrace the idea of "reject[ing] the false view that women are the victims of oppression."

Various issues discussed in this forum cover things like Title IX (a law mandating gender equality in school sanctioned activities – specifically, in sports), saying it is “an innocently worded law... [that] has instead become a crusade to impose unfair quotas in schools.”

Anti-feminism in general believes that “sexual identity” has more to do with nature, rather than society – in other words, testosterone (the dominant male hormone) vs. progesterone (the dominant female hormone.) So women are biologically determined to be the softer sex.

Myth #3: *All female feminists hate men.* This brings me back to my fellow classmate’s flippant “Here we go with the man-haters” comment. I believe that “Feminazi” is another popular term associated with this myth. Oh yes, every feminist with a uterus is out to be raped and pillaged by every man alive; all those men think about is sex, sex, and more sex, those horrible slovenly beasts. No, girls, I can’t say I’ve ever had the pleasure of meeting a man who didn’t resemble Cro-Magnon.

Of course I’m being sarcastic. I am a feminist, and it just so happens that I enjoy men thoroughly. It’s hard to live up to the traditional feminist stereotype and have a slew of guy friends at the same time. In fact, my two best friends, whom I’ve known longer than anyone (outside of my family), happen to *be* guys. Also, need I mention Gloria Steinem, founder of *Ms.* magazine and one of the champions of the feminist movement? Ms. Steinem – the very same woman who looked down on marriage as an institution that would only make her “half a woman” – got married recently. I doubt she did so because she hated the guy.

The information I found helped to cement the real definition of feminism (and feminists) – strong, smart women and forward-thinking men pushing for equality of both sexes on all fronts. I realize that those who contribute to perpetuating these misconceptions may be in the extreme, and sometimes may be necessary to the progression of the feminist movement. However, I hope that in due time (read: *soon*) the feminist movement will be called by a new name: “humanism.” That’s what it’s really all about: recognizing each and every person as an equal, regardless of gender.

ENGLISH 118

COMPOSITION II

NFL Pros and Cons

Joe Zaun

In Judy Hauser's class, students were asked to write an essay that speculates about the possible causes for a current phenomenon. Students were required to support their ideas with information from documented sources.

NFL players committing violent crimes seems to be a reoccurring theme nowadays. When the media first broke the footage of the police chasing OJ Simpson in his white Bronco, the country watched in disbelief. Now, a news flash about an NFL player being arrested for committing a violent crime produces a reaction from most people that's either a yawn or a disgusted sigh.

Between April 1999 and May 2000, twenty-four different NFL players had been arrested for various crimes committed that ranged from petty theft to murder. From those twenty-four NFL players arrested, here is a list of those who have committed violent crimes: April 1999, Orlando Thomas, Minnesota Vikings: Arrested and charged with battery against his wife; June 1999, Leonard Little, St. Louis Rams: Pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter; August 1999, Denard Walker, Tennessee Titans: Pleaded guilty to assault charges filed by his son's mother; October 1999, Steve Muhammad, Indianapolis Colts: Charged with three counts of misdemeanor battery against his pregnant wife; November 1999, Rae Carruth, Carolina Panthers: Arrested for plotting the drive-by shooting of his pregnant girlfriend; February 2000, Ray Lewis, Baltimore Ravens: Indicted for murder in stabbing death of two men; April 2000, Todd Marinovich, Oakland Raiders, Arrested on charges of rape; and May 2000, Mark Chmura, Green Bay Packers: Charged with sexual assault against his seventeen-year-old baby sitter (Starr). This long list should seem rather alarming. It just doesn't make any sense for an NFL

player, who has been placed in a position of prestige, power, and wealth, to have to commit violent crimes.

There are some psychologists who claim the violent nature of football causes NFL players to become violent off the field as well. The first obvious problem with that claim is the game of football has always required aggressive and violent action from the players. And for the most part, NFL players have always been able to leave that violent aggression on the field once the game is over. How, then, can it be explained that NFL players have been prone to commit domestic violence in their homes or against their girlfriends? Sports experts have cited two specific factors that have contributed to most domestic abuse cases. First is the abuse of alcohol or drugs by NFL players, and the second factor is the use of steroids by NFL players (Holmstrom).

Since football has always been a violent game, other factors must be examined to determine the causes of this recent phenomenon of NFL players committing violent crimes. A look at an NFL player's social background would be a good start. It is not a secret that a lot of professional athletes come from humble backgrounds. A lot of their childhood friends and companions were raised in the projects, where crime and violence is a regular occurrence. It is quite possible that some NFL players have been influenced by still hanging around the wrong crowd. In the case of Ray Lewis, the Baltimore Ravens linebacker, he and two of his old buddies were charged in the stabbing death of another man. The two other men involved with the crime were Reginald Oakley, who had been charged with twenty-five criminal counts between 1985 and 1992, and Joe Sweeting, a convicted felon who did time in a federal prison (Starr). Clearly, this foul company was an influence to Ray Lewis, and fortunately for him, he was not indicted of the murder charges

because his lawyer was able to convince the jury he was caught up with the wrong people at the wrong time.

There is further evidence to support that the NFL players' family backgrounds can contribute to the tendencies to commit violent crimes. Here are quotes from two Miami Dolphin football players that were given during a press conference on domestic violence in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Troy Vincent said, "To see my mother get beat was just part of my life. It was part of the community to beat your wife or your girlfriend." Irving Fryar added, "I was from a dysfunctional family, and we are all products of our environment" (Holmstrom). These personal accounts of the childhood backgrounds some NFL players have had are alarming, which proves the background of NFL players can contribute to their violent and aggressive behavior off the field after achieving or developing successful careers in the NFL.

However, the humble backgrounds of some NFL players cannot be considered the determining factor in this recent phenomenon of violent acts committed by NFL players. The history of the NFL has always had athletes born and raised in the projects and the humble backgrounds and influences can only be considered a small piece of the puzzle. In fact, the leading cause of this phenomenon must be looked at from the opposite direction of player backgrounds. Most of the blame has got to rest on the large contracts, prestige, and growing egos that come as part of the package of playing football professionally. After all, could our sports-crazed culture be partly to blame? Lew Lyon, a Baltimore psychologist who works with pro athletes says, "We put these people on a pedestal and give them more than what is their due. Everyone tells them how good they are, and they believe it. There's this sense that they're above it all" (Starr).

Simply put, NFL players are regarded in too high of esteem. Because they are only human beings, the sense of superiority begins to be engraved into their minds and egos and, consequently, these feelings and perceptions of themselves can result in feeling invincible and being above the law. Another part that needs to be factored into the equation is the fact that prestige, money, and attention are gained too easily and too quickly. Because the recent development of extremely large multi-million dollar contracts and media exposure are handed to these talented football players on a silver platter, the young athletes are unable to handle the sudden luxuries in a positive and mature way.

NFL football is a big money business, which is one way to explain why NFL players are committing crimes and athletes in other less popular sports are not. The quick and sudden rise to prestige and money are simply too much for these football players to handle responsibly. While some NFL players come from humbling backgrounds and have been influenced by friends from the past, this is also true in many other sports of lesser prestige and is only a small piece of the puzzle. Football is a violent game, but the responsibility of some NFL players' recent actions needs to rest on the large egos created by our culture and NFL franchises.

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Stop The Rage Evie Tiffany

In Judy Hauser's class, students were asked to write an essay that argued possible causes for a current phenomenon. Students were required to support their ideas with information from documented sources.

Schools across our nation have been tormented by a series of violent acts committed upon them by none other than the children who attend. "In a national survey of 1,261 school administrators, 97% indicated that school violence was increasing across the United States and their neighboring school districts" (Furlong). Palm Beach County schools reported 17,647 incidents of crime and violence for the 1999-2000 school year (Colavecchio). Children are frightened to go to school for fear of becoming a victim of yet another violent act. Most children do not view school as a safe place to be anymore; instead, one out of every 12 kids that does not come to school regularly does so out of fear (Step). This increasing phenomenon has had a tremendous effect on education and teachers today. "Teachers can't teach and students can't learn in an environment of intimidation and fear" (Step). What causes these outbursts of murderous violence? This is the question I will answer in the following essay.

An obvious cause for school violence is the readily available supply of guns. Every day in America, approximately 10 children are shot and killed. Children 15 years and younger are murdered with fire-arms at a higher rate in this country than 25 other industrialized countries combined ("National"). When three inner-city Los Angeles high school students were asked about the availability of guns in their school, the reply was

alarming. Obtaining a gun only required some cash and the knowledge of what kind of gun you wanted (Furlong). Guns are very much available to kids of any age.

Another obvious cause for violence to erupt would be bullying. One in six students is bullied at least once a week, and fewer than 20 percent view school as a safe place (“Early”). Many children endure the pain of the verbal and physical abuse inflicted upon them by unrelenting bullies. Some children suffer more than others, and stopping the bullying is not always easy. Bullies are devious; the most torturous behavior usually occurs out of sight from any one who can help -- at the bus stop, on the bus, in the halls, on the grounds, etc. (“Opinions”). Some children do not fit in with the “group” as well as others for reasons mostly having to do with the physical appearance. Some kids with poor parents have to wear the same clothes every day, and their hair is sometimes messy and soiled. Other kids have speech impediments that cause them to stutter or slur their speech. Still others have disabilities such as hearing, which could cause them to talk louder than the usual child and have a hard time hearing people speaking to them. The child may also walk funny due to a deformed limb at birth. A child may be even be average looking but doesn’t fit the classic model of beauty. All these reasons that a child may be different are also reasons that a child may be laughed at and ridiculed on a daily basis. After putting up with such abuse from classmates for a period of time, these kids may snap and take all the pent-up anger from being abused repeatedly and blast it out in one murderous act of violence. For example, a child who had a slight speech impediment was taunted over and over. One day, this same child came home bloodied after being kicked and punched by a bunch of bullies. Later, the child was arrested for reading to the class a story he wrote about a boy who envisions blowing up the whole school. His 14-year-old brother was

also arrested for uttering threats to fellow students after being tormented on the bus (Beltrame).

The third obvious cause for violence is learning to be violent from watching it around one. Many believe young people are learning from exposure to a steady diet of violent images on television, movies, video games, music, and other media. Children are immersed in a constant flow of this unhealthy media, and it influences their mind, producing thoughts of violence (Geiger-Miller).

The availability of weapons, bullying, and violent images can all be causes to the violent acts committed in schools today, but they are not the main cause. As stated earlier, guns are available to most students, one out of six kids are bullied at least once a week, and the majority of children have been exposed to violent images on TV or through music. Most all kids have been subjected to these things, but not all of these students buy a gun and kill those tormenting them by rehearsing a scene from the latest violent movie. Not all children who are living daily with these things react in violence. Instead, these elements contribute to a possible act of violence (Holland).

Probably the biggest problem we have is hidden; it is the amount of alienation and rage in our young people. Focusing on guns is too narrow; it has gone beyond guns (Holland).

One needs to have a lot of anger built up inside of him/her to commit an act so murderous as a school shooting. After bullying and harassment comes anger and hurt. After years of such treatment, this anger can control a child's thoughts, leading to violence.

Some may argue that many children have rage inside them but do not channel that rage through aggression towards their peers. Every child has been temporarily angry and felt temporary hatred in his heart at some time during his life, but he/she has dealt with it

before acting violently. While it holds true that a child can experience anger at one time or another and not act violently; it is also true that every child who does act violently has extreme rage built up inside of him/her from something. One does not go out and shoot fellow students in the head because they are temporarily angry. Young people commit acts of violence towards their peers because of hatred and instability (Ko).

In order to stop the rage, we must not put a band-aid on the wound but go to the source of it. Guns, bullying, and violent media can be influential on a child's decision to strike out, but hateful anger is what causes the violence to become reality. Without anger and rage inside one's heart, one would not think of committing violence towards another.

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**Mandatory Education: The Key to the Eradication of
Female Genital Mutilation**
Julie Spencer

In Judy Hauser's class, students were asked to write an essay that argued a possible solution to a current problem or issue. Students were to provide some background about the problem and then present a solution that they felt would be handled the problem.

Imagine for a moment that you are a six-year-old girl growing up in a rural village in Africa. You have been told that you are going to become a woman soon, and you are very excited. You are not sure what this entails, but you know that your mother, sisters, and friends have all "become" women, and you are anxious to join them. You are then taken to a midwife who spreads your legs, and using no anesthesia and a dirty knife, she cuts out your clitoris and labia and sews your vulva closed, leaving only a small opening for urine and menstrual blood to pass through. The pain is tremendous, and there is a very strong possibility of long-term scarring, pain, and infections. When you marry, your husband will cut you open in order to have sex with you, but he will have the option of sewing you shut again if he has to go away on a long trip. When it is time for you to have children, the possibility of you or your child dying during childbirth is very high due to the procedure you just had done.

The procedure explained above is called infibulation. A less invasive and more common form of this procedure, called excision, involves only cutting or removing the clitoris and possibly the labia, but the vulva is not sewn shut. There are an estimated ninety to one hundred million women and girls living today in African countries who have had some sort of female circumcision (Nichols 1).

Female Genital Mutilation, or FGM, has been going on for as many as 2,000 years and is believed to have linkage to the religion of Islam. However, there is no recommendation of FGM found in the Qur'an, only permission from the Prophet Mohammed to perform the procedure that was already taking place in these countries ("Female" 5). Members of the Islam religion, therefore, insist "FGM is a social practice, not a religious one" ("Female" 2). They further back their claim by pointing out that members of all religions in Africa, including Christianity, have been known to undergo FGM.

Although both men and women in these countries believe in the practice of FGM, it is the women who encourage their daughters to undergo the procedure, often performing the mutilation on their daughters by themselves. In some cases, a father may not know whether or not his own daughter has been mutilated or not. This may lead one to believe that this is a problem that only involves women, but men do play a role in keeping the practice alive as well. Men are less likely to marry a woman who has not been circumcised, because she is considered impure and more likely to commit adultery. Therefore, mothers will encourage their daughters to undergo FGM in order to increase their social standing and improve their chances of marrying.

There are several other myths about FGM that keep the practice thriving as well. These myths are so strongly believed by men and women alike that they have kept this painful mutilation going on for thousands of years, encouraging women to undergo tremendous suffering, for fear of what may happen if they refuse. While fidelity is strongly linked to infibulation, other claims in support of FGM are as follows:

- The clitoris is dangerous and must be removed for health reasons. Some believe that it is a poisonous organ, that can cause a man to sicken or die if

contacted by a man's penis. Others believe that men can become impotent by contacting a clitoris, or that a baby will be hydrocephalic (born with excess cranial fluid) if its head contact with the clitoris during birth. Some believe that the milk of the mother will become poisonous if her clitoris touches the baby.

- Bad genital odors can only be eliminated by removing the clitoris and labia minora.
- FGM prevents vaginal cancer.
- An unmodified clitoris can lead to masturbation or lesbianism.
- FGM prevents nervousness from developing in girls and women.
- FGM prevents the face from turning yellow.
- FGM makes a woman's face more beautiful.
- If FGM is not done, older men may not be able to match their wives' sex drive and may have to resort to illegal stimulating drugs.
- An intact clitoris generates sexual arousal in women which can cause neuroses if repressed.

These claims appear to have little support outside of countries where FGM is common” (“Female” 4).

Several suggestions on how to stop the practice of FGM have been made. When people who are not familiar with the myths that have kept this practice alive for so many years first hear of the horrible torture that these young girls are subjected to, their first response is to have the practice banned immediately. The United Nations did just that in October of 1999 when they “approved six draft resolutions calling upon states to prohibit traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls” (“Discussion” 1). These resolutions were put in place to discourage Africans who have immigrated to countries who belong to the United Nations from practicing FGM. Since the practice of FGM is not common in these countries, it is difficult to determine if this ban has helped to eradicate the practice or if it just helps these countries to feel as though they have done their part in stopping the mutilation.

The ban on FGM does not stop with the United Nations, however. FGM has also been outlawed in many African nations such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, and Senegal. In urban areas, where physicians have traditionally performed FGM, the number of reported cases of mutilation is declining. Bans on FGM are not as effective in rural villages however, because “1) Reform is often a top-down process in which national laws are developed to change rather than reflect local attitudes, and 2) African states tend to work around local communities by adopting bureaucratic policies to combat FGM” (“National” 1). In other words, these people do not want the bans to be put in place, and the local communities override these laws in order to meet the wishes of the villagers, making the laws ineffective. This brings about the point that it is crucial to change the attitudes pertaining to FGM before bans against the practice will truly be effective.

WIN NEWS is attempting to change the attitudes that are associated with the female body, by providing The Child Birth Picture Book (CBPB) Program to “traditional attendants, midwives, healers and other practitioners of traditional medicine, to demonstrate the harmful effects of FGM...” (“Progress” 1). After these practitioners gain education about the female body, it is assumed that they will pass this education on to their patients. CBPB’s are “flip charts consisting of five sections: pictures, text, discussion guide, glossary and resource list” (“Progress” 2). The pictures in the CBPB’s show the female genitalia as well as the female reproductive organs. In areas where there is no knowledge of the female body, CBPB’s are very helpful in educating women as to why they should not have their bodies sewn shut. CBPB’s are also effective in teaching women that a newborn’s contact with the clitoris is not harmful to the infant. However, they do not take away all of the myths associated with FGM. Myths about fidelity,

cleanliness, and beauty are left intact, leaving excuses for women to be mutilated for fear of rejection.

Education is the key in preventing FGM, and CBPB's are a good start in getting the information to the rural villages in Africa. In order to help eradicate the practice of FGM faster and more effectively, however, it is important to educate men and women alike on the all of the myths surrounding FGM. "Specific attention must be given to the effects of genital mutilations upon reproductive processes, the birth of the child and the marital sexual relationships. Men need to understand that their marital sexual relationships and happiness will be significantly enhanced when the female genitals are not mutilated. Finally, the education of women must be accelerated if these objects are to be realized" (Badawi 5).

WIN NEWS's approach to educating the practitioners of FGM is a reasonable starting point in spreading anti-FGM education. Rather than only focusing on female reproduction, though, all of the myths about FGM must be addressed. Some myths, such as FGM preventing the skin from yellowing and promoting beauty, will be difficult to disprove, but they should still be addressed as myths and not truths. The myths that can be disproved with medical facts should be backed by these facts in order to promote the idea that all of the myths are untrue.

Once the practitioners are educated on the truths of FGM (these truths being that the myths of FGM are untrue and that the health risks to women do not warrant keeping the practice alive), it is important that every female wishing to be mutilated is given all of the information dismissing the myths of FGM and the dangers that go along with the practice. The husband or father of the female should receive the same education at this

time. As more men learn that FGM is not necessary, it is likely that fewer women will endure the torture.

Enforcing mandatory education will be difficult to track in rural villages due to poverty and lack of education in these areas. A solution to this problem is to enlist three simple ledgers. The first ledger will be signed by the female wishing to receive the mutilation, both of her parents (if she is a minor) or her husband. The second ledger will be signed after the education about FGM has been received. A supervisor can come in every six months to ensure that all of the names are appearing on both ledgers. There should be reprimands made by the supervisor to the practitioner if discrepancies appear. This will ensure that the practitioner is actually educating the patients. A third ledger will list the names of the women who actually receive the mutilation after they have received the education. This will be an effective way of tracking the number of mutilations performed each year, as well as the decline in mutilations performed over several years.

It is important to realize that some women will still wish to be mutilated after they receive the anti-FGM education. Practitioners must be educated on safe and hygienic methods of performing the mutilation in order to reduce the risk of permanent damage to the patient. Practitioners should also urge the patient to undergo the less invasive procedure of excision rather than infibulation, which will also reduce future harm to unborn children. It is hoped that as anti-FGM education becomes more widely accepted and the myths of FGM are eradicated, non-mutilated women will become more socially accepted and the number of women requesting the procedure will decline.

“Attempts and initiatives have been adopted by health care providers and agencies to curb this practice. Legislation, health education and female education have been

consistently mentioned as ways of its eradication” (Igwegbe 2). Although education has been mentioned and attempted as a way to eradicate FGM, the education has not been mandatory, and it has not been directed toward both men and women. Mandatory anti-FGM education fills in the gaps that previous attempts toward education have missed in the past. It is not assumed that mandatory anti-FGM education will immediately eradicate FGM. A practice that has been alive for thousands of years will take time to eradicate. It is assumed, however, that mandatory anti-FGM education has the potential to reach more people and help them to make better choices concerning their bodies. By making better choices, it is hoped that these young women will be able to live happier and safer lives.

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Valley Junction Speedway
Heather Wright

For David's Gavin's class, students were asked to write an essay which proposed a solution to a problem.

Have you ever driven down a residential street and realized, after glancing at your speedometer, that you were going fifteen miles an hour over the speed limit? It's easy to do. When you are in a hurry or traveling a familiar route, it's simple to forget that there are people and children living just feet away from potential danger. The Valley Junction area of West Des Moines is subject to hundreds of drivers who seem to have forgotten about the residents. Drivers consistently drag race, run stop signs, and exceed the speed limit through this well-established, primarily residential area. The city of West Des Moines must take measures to ensure the safety of our children and the peace of mind of the residents. I propose increased traffic monitoring by the police, more stop signs, and automated machines to check speed.

Within a year of moving into my house on this busy street, I saw rescue workers and an ambulance attending to a little boy who had been hit by a car while riding his bike on the sidewalk. The driver, in the middle of the afternoon, had driven at least twenty feet into a front yard and through a fence. Just recently, I saw an elderly man slip on the ice while crossing the street because an oncoming driver failed to yield. I have considered putting up the old Burma Shave type signs along my street. They would read: "Would you," "be driving," "this fast," "if your child," "was playing," "on this street?"

Drag racing, second gear scratches, and revving up engines at stop signs are obnoxious and dangerous behavior. For whatever reason, these drivers feel compelled to

show off their souped-up cars and parade them past the houses whose owners also have souped-up cars. My neighbor is a mechanic. He has a souped-up Chevy. He is fond of parking various cars in his front yard. This is an advertisement to the other car fanatics in the neighborhood of his personal interest in high performance vehicles, resulting in a year round parade of showoffs past his house. During the summer, when the windows are open, the sounds of engines being revved in front of my neighbor's house can completely drown out a conversation. What is it about a 1969 Sublime green Dodge Super Bee with a 426 Hemi four speed that turns a normal person in to a maniacal showoff and, consequently, a traffic hazard?

Running stop signs and speeding is by far the most annoying traffic crime in this neighborhood. The Valley Junction business district has numerous lively, well-organized events. People are usually in a hurry to find a parking spot, causing them to commit these ostensibly minor violations. There seems to be sufficient parking for these events. If I drive, I never have a problem finding a parking spot. But, I do come across rude people willing to do whatever it takes to get the closest spot possible, so they don't have to walk to get to an event that involves a lot of walking. They rush through stop signs, cut people off, and yell and make obscene gestures in their quest to visit the latest quaint antique fair or sidewalk sale. My daughter and I have learned to walk to this area to participate in any of the festivities. We thoroughly enjoy strolling down fifth-street in the middle of summer to buy fresh fruits and vegetables at the Farmer's Market. My daughter particularly enjoys the festivities for the holidays of Halloween and Christmas. Her first horse drawn carriage ride was through the beautifully decorated bustling Valley Junction streets during a Christmas event. While I would never ask the city to stop these

wonderful events, surely there is a way to make the non-stop traffic, at these times, less of an issue to the surrounding residents.

My three-part suggestion is simple and relatively inexpensive. First, improve police monitoring of the well-known trouble spots at highly traversed intersections and streets. Obviously, when people see a police car they behave themselves. I have lived here for five years and in that time have deduced that there are only two spots in this area where the police park to check speeds by radar. We need a greater police presence, especially during the summer and the times when the business district holds events.

Secondly, more stop signs should be put in place along the direct routes to the business district. This would keep drivers from reaching higher speeds simply because they would have shorter distances in which to reach high speeds. I occasionally find myself annoyed at the frequent stops I make driving the two blocks each morning to my daughter's school. However, if additional stop signs could slow the overall speed of traffic and make our streets safer, I would dig the potholes myself.

Finally, at certain busy intersections or stretches of street not interrupted by stop signs, the city and police department should set up video monitors. These monitors are equipped with radar to check speed and a video camera set at the correct angle to take a picture of the license plate. If a driver has been recorded speeding, a ticket is issued and mailed out to the registrant of the license plate. While it may not seem fair to a person who has lent his car to a friend and the friend had been speeding, it should only take one time to get the speeder and the owner to slow down in that area.

The city may think the automated machines are too costly. The cost of the automated cameras may seem high, but revenue from the tickets generated by the machines would cover the initial expense. The proprietors could argue that there should

be as few obstacles retarding the flow of people—and cash—to their doors as possible. Non-residents who regularly attend the functions in the business district may agree with the proprietors and think these suggestions are too stringent and inconvenient. Nevertheless, I fully believe that as long as the Valley Junction businesses continue to hold events, people will continue to attend—and spend, regardless of a slight increase in travel time.

I think my suggestions are reasonable and necessary. Valley Junction is primarily residential. We have three schools, numerous daycares, and hundreds of children and elderly. My daughter has never been allowed to play in her own front yard without me right there with her. It was my personal choice to live on this street. However, I fully believe it is the responsibility of the city and *all* its residents to make every area of the city as safe as possible.

Western Assimilation
By Matthew C. Tonelli, Sr.

For Nancy Condon's class, students were asked to write an opinion-based essay on race and class.

A controversial subject deeply embedded in the media carries overtones of prejudice, discrimination, guilt, blame, hatred, and contradiction. With the last four decades have come long-due rights and opportunities for America's minorities, but "as the Equal Opportunity Act and the Equal Rights Amendment have been enacted into law, the interpretation of these laws remains as a major cause of social conflict" (Macionis 261). The civil rights movement's fight towards racial equality is only possible in the areas of opportunity, treatment, access, and values, but it will not work in the areas of status and class, as the political and economic system of the United States is based upon achieved status. Social change cannot be rushed, as complete assimilation can only be accomplished to the degree pluralism will allow. Further investigation into the history of race, the definition of equality, and the political and economic systems of our country will lend authenticity to this theory.

"Race: Family, tribe, people, or nation of the same stock, a division of mankind based on biological, hereditary traits" (Webster 275). The many races of mankind predate written history, and the division of these distinct groups is one of the mysteries of mankind's origin (Boyle 214). The mingling of cultures and rich ethnic diversity was an often-overlooked gift to the advancement of civilization, but this gift was not without a price. With the expansion and population growth of the numerous racial factions came conflict and great assimilation resistance as the landmasses were divided. "Extreme variances and beliefs, norms and values along with the power struggle caused by

boundary disputes over parcels rich in natural resources, turned conflict into war” (Boyle 216). War bred prejudice and hatred between the conflicting races. Conquering empires born out of the unequal division of power resulted in the genocide of entire tribes and racial factions on every continent. Empires rose and fell in direct relation to their achievement of assimilation, social integration, social structure, social change, and stratification (Macionis 247). As empires developed sociocultural evolution with large populations supplied by less populated agricultural areas and other areas for the remaining resources needed, such as lumber, clay, stone, etc., the ascribed statuses of early caste systems were replaced by class systems. Class division resulted from the specific roles and acquired status by the individual (Macionis 263). “As higher thinking and ideology became valued roles, language, mathematics, science and theology led to discovery and technological advancements that built powerful nations which resulted in global economic inequality seduced by modernization” (Macionis 269).

“Equality: Of the same quantity, quality, number, treatment, class, or status as another” (Webster 112). The definition of equality, when in relation to race, gender, economic, social, or global terms, can only pertain to quality treatment and opportunity, because the caste system is obsolete, leaving the vast majority of independent nations relying on the class system and achieved status. Class equality is only possible in theory, as Communism idealizes a classless society as the potential for a political and economic system. “Karl Marx viewed socialism as a transitory stage on the path toward the ideal of a communist society that abolished all class divisions. In many socialist societies today, the dominant political party describes itself as communist, but nowhere has the communist goal been achieved. Socialist political officials have enormous power and

privilege so that they replace capitalists as the new social elite who dominate society” (Macionis 99). These socialist political officials of the Communist party resemble much too closely the ruling class that Marx describes as being responsible for the oppression of the working class. Now that we’ve defined how the equality of any minority cannot be correlated with class or status, let’s see how it pertains to current issues.

The vast majority of national and internal news media engage in collective behavior by bombarding the American people with left-wing viewpoints as they ride the liberal bandwagon, taking pride in their role as spokespersons for “Special Interest Groups” and “Political Action Committees” (Stang 316). A large number of these SIG’s and PAC’s represent the political interests of the ever-growing number of minority groups demanding social, racial, and gender equality as they ride the coattails of the civil rights movement of the 1960’s. As the “unbiased” national and worldwide media print, “information presented with the intention of shaping public opinion” (the coincidental definition of “propaganda” given on page 491 of the glossary in the current Macionis sociology textbook). New terms and the correlation of terms slipped from the lips of the political activists land in every major newspaper in the country, having been found of major newsworthy importance by their affiliated, numerous “journalistic spokespersons.” Among these new correlations and terms, my list of favorites includes “power-elite,” “ethnocentrism,” “anticipatory socialization,” “environmental racism,” “Afrocentrism,” “relative deprivation,” “routinization of charisma,” “urban ecology,” “welfare capitalism,” “democratic socialism,” and my favorite ending to many of Bill Clinton’s public addresses: “As we work towards a ‘New World Order.’” With the current issue of an impending “Racial Reparations” lawsuit against the federal government, a group of

extremely successful, publicly-recognized lawyers of minority descent are attempting to tie up the courts long enough to gain a Congressional hearing to force the government to create a new agency to institute and enforce very controversial, untried social programs until the percentage rates of blacks match equally or better the percentage rates of whites in socioeconomic status (SES). Forcing the government to enact another social program in order to speed what they deem as racial equality is ridiculous. Forced segregation and desegregation by law was a flop that resulted in more social conflict, just as Affirmative Action is not working now.

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**Why Children Seem to Have Something to Say Only
When You're On the Phone**
Diane Launspach

For Sharran Slinkard's class, students were asked to speculate about the causes of a trend or a phenomenon.

It never fails. My children can be hanging out, watching television or reading, and any attempts at conversation are answered with one word (yes, no, fine or something similar).

However, as soon as the phone rings, and it becomes obvious that I am involved in a conversation that might last some time, they suddenly have questions, comments about the events of the last three years, or some other topic that must be told immediately.

I suspect that this phenomenon has been occurring since the invention of the telephone. For generations, as soon as the adult gets on the phone, children just *have* to tell something *right now*. Whatever it is, it cannot wait until the parent is off of the phone. Even more perplexing still, is that it normally takes wild horses to drag a conversation out of them (particularly teenagers). But get on the phone, and they suddenly want to tell you everything down to the last, minute detail.

Determining the causes for this phenomenon takes years of experience as both the offender and the offended. I delve into my memories as a child, knowing I was guilty of interrupting my mother's phone conversations. And I observe my teenagers as they carry on the "tradition;" seeming to pounce on me as soon as they hear the informal "hi" that signals the potential lengthy conversation.

One possible cause for children's need to talk to their parent who is on the phone is that children seem to want their parents available to them at all times. If parents are not distracted, and want to sit and visit with their child about his or her day, the child seems to have more

important things to do. Talking to Mom or Dad, knowing that her or she is available for discourse at will, is not a priority. Once the parent is otherwise occupied, though, the child realizes that he or she doesn't have Mom or Dad's immediate attention, and the child takes the necessary steps to have his parent's attention directed back toward him.

Another possible cause for children interrupting their parent's phone conversations is natural curiosity. Invariably, one of the first questions out of their mouth is, "Who are you talking to?" or "Who's that?". Children have an innate curiosity about the things around them. Who is monopolizing Mom or Dad's attention on the phone is no exception to the things kids want to know.

Children's curiosity manifests itself in another form: what Erma Bombeck, renowned columnist and author, famous for her ability to satirize life, calls "the teenage disease of convenient hearing." In Bombeck's book, "Just Wait Till You Have Children of Your Own!," she describes symptoms of the disease:

He could not hear you ask him to take out the trash

When your lips touched his ear.

He overheard your discussion of his report card when

You talked in a whisper in the northeast corner of the garage (141).

When children are curious about what their parent is talking about, and with whom, they suddenly have an incredible sense of hearing, especially if they believe their parent doesn't want them to know what the topic is. And then, if they ascertain what the topic is, they seem compelled to get the details, then and there, in the middle of the phone conversation.

Children's insecurity about their world can also cause them to feel the need to interrupt their parent's phone conversations. When determining my causes, I decided to seek an expert's

opinion: my seventeen-year-old daughter, Jessica. She is the master at interrupting my phone conversations and having something to discuss that *cannot* wait until I am off of the phone. I asked her what causes her to *have* to talk *now* when five minutes prior to my phone call, she had nothing to talk about. She responded that as soon as I get on the phone with family or friends, and it is apparent that I want some peace and quiet to talk, her natural assumption is that I am talking about one of my kids. She believes that by interrupting me with inconsequential questions or information not remembered ten minutes ago, but must be conveyed immediately, she will prolong, or terminate altogether, what she considers inevitable. . . I will begin talking about my kids and revealing some anecdote that will embarrass them.

I believe it is a natural reaction for children to assume that a parent would talk about them, and possibly in an embarrassing manner. During adolescence and teenage years, it seems that children have a difficult time realizing that their parents' lives do not consist solely of them. Children seem to live in a bubble of sorts, not able to see outside their world. Therefore, it seems to them that their parents would have nothing else to discuss with their friends and family other than the kids.

One cause that could be argued for is that the child that interrupts her parent on the phone is not getting enough attention from the parent. On the web site "Parenting Tips," child psychologist Dr. Scoresby states that children exhibit undesirable behavior "as a guaranteed way to get you to listen." (1) Although I agree that children do need attention from their parents, I don't believe that giving children more attention can control the phenomenon of interrupting a parent's phone conversation. For example, I have spent many an afternoon playing games with my children, taking them to movies, running errands with them, all the while talking and giving them opportunities to share their day with me. Even after they have had my undivided attention

for a considerable amount of time, the minute I am on the phone, they will find a reason to interrupt. In her book, Motherhood, the Second Oldest Profession,” Bombeck relates a story of a mother who didn’t work outside the home. When the mother’s children got home from school, she would put cookies and milk on the table and ask her children to sit and visit about their days. The kids always had something they would rather be doing than visit with their mom. In this mother’s circumstance, as soon as she got a job, her children began complaining that she never spent any time with them (145-146). My experience tells me that getting on the phone will result in the same reaction from children. Only when they can’t or don’t have your undivided attention, do children want it.

Is it their parent’s availability that children seek, comforted by the knowledge that should they want to hold a conversation or ask for something, an immediate answer is possible? Or perhaps it is curiosity that will impede the conversation, as parents are forced to play twenty questions with their children while trying to have a conversation on the phone. Maybe it is a child’s insecurity that he or she is the topic of conversation that will spur the immediate need to share some long-forgotten item of news. Whatever the cause, parents can be assured that all that is needed to invite opportunity to talk with a child is to pick up the phone.

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Fight On
Robert O'Callahan

For Eden Pearson's class, students were asked to write an essay to convince on the issue of poverty.

The sink has a leak. The kitchen, beautifully decorated and laden with the finest ware, is perfect except for the constant drip, drip, drip from under the sink. Sometimes the leak is just a trickle, barely noticeable and causing no great disruption, but at other times it pours and floods the kitchen out. Regardless, it is always there. Such is the case with poverty in America. Today, in light of recent economic success, the country leans more toward the trickle side of things, so much so that the issue is dropping out of the spotlight. This could be a mistake. The best time to attack a problem that fluctuates is when it ebbs. With the economic conditions so healthy, with the government dealing with surpluses, and with jobs prevalent throughout the country, now is the time to strike.

Can poverty be cured, can a deathblow be dealt to this elusive enemy? Not really, but that thought should not hinder our efforts. Poverty is a most relevant thing and exists in varying degrees. For example, the poor in Detroit, as strapped as they may be, are a lot better off than the poor in Calcutta. Historically, the poor have always been around and it is very likely that they always will. As long as someone owns something, someone else will own less. National morale in combating poverty is low in part because it has been around forever and because it seems likely always to be so, despite whatever efforts are made. It is important to understand, though it's relative nature may make it hard to see, that poverty is being beaten (at least here) and that it can be beaten down even more. In 1994 the national poverty rate was at 14.5% and in the years since has sunk even lower

(Channell 246). Also it must be considered that though the poor here have incomes that are low by our standards, many nonetheless make thousands. Yes, our poor are poor, but they aren't dropping like flies from starvation. Progress has been made.

Another spike to the will-to-destroy is that most see battling poverty (the unbeatable demon) as throwing money away. People think, 'Okay, you want me to take more money out of my pocket and give it to some crack whore and her twelve kids, and do so all in the spirit of fighting poverty - no thanks.' Such a response is understandable. People do not want to give their money to someone else, especially if they believe the problem to be under control.

For all intents and purposes the problem in America is 'under control,' but this is all the more reason to resolve the issue even further. Connections have to be made in the American mind that go beyond simple pleas for pity. People have to want to rid the nation of poverty not only because over 38% of the poor are under 18 (oh, those poor kids) but also because many of those under 18 poor kids will grow up to foster poor families and many will turn to drugs and crime along the way (Channell 248).

Des Moines has a very low murder rate, so low that when it happens it's a big deal. Des Moines also has a low poverty rate. New Orleans has a murder rate that on really good years wins the city the title of 'murder capital of the world.' New Orleans also has a much higher poverty rate. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to draw the correlation that poverty and murder rates (as well as other crimes) go hand in hand. Man is human, but nonetheless animal. When necessary, he is more than willing to take extreme action. Poverty, for humans, is often that push into taking extreme action. The

complacent, hard-working taxpayer has to see the connection between his or her well-being and the national poverty level in order to even want to help.

If perchance the want is there, if the country's morale is up and the fight is on, how can this dastardly thing known as poverty be effectively dealt with? Just as common sense can allow one to draw connections between the effects of poverty and poverty itself, one must do the same in attempting to find the causes, or at least the perpetrators, of poverty. It's like the leaky sink. If electrical tape is wound around the leak numerous times the dripping will stop, but only for a while. Eventually another slow leak will form and, if left unattended, will grow once again. The cycle continues; tape, leak returns, tape, leak returns, and so on. That's not the way to do it. A real fix must be applied, the troublesome pipe needs to be removed and replaced. How can this simple rationale be applied to the issue of poverty? Well, the core problems must be identified. What element of life makes one, or keeps one, poor? Look to the statistics for the answer. Age: 38% of the poor are under 18; family status: 39% of female-headed households are poor; education: 32% of those that have less than a high school level education are poor; location: 33% of the poor live in central city areas (Channell 248).

Obviously if a kid is living in the central city area, and is part of a female-headed household in which the female head has less than a high school level education, it is likely that the kid is one of the 40 million or so poor (Channell 246). A good place to start in combating poverty is with just such a kid. Consider this, only 11% of those who achieve the high school level of education are poor (Channell 248). If it can be assured that the aforementioned kid can get a decent high school level education, then his chances are that much better, he's gone from one out of three poor to not poor ratio to a one out of

ten. He's got to like those odds. If he can make it to the college level, he drops to an incredible one out of thirty three chance of living in poor-ville (Channell 248). The education of poor children is an essential element in keeping poverty levels low. Smart people don't stay poor.

What about the females in the outrageously high female-headed household statistic? How are they helped? The nation can help them best by educating their children. Adequate childcare, better yet, above average childcare, will enable these females to work as well as start their kids on the road to getting smart. If the children can progress on to decent elementary schools, high schools, and beyond, then eventually they will be in a position to assist their mothers. What the nation needs to provide more than anything else is the clear path to a good education. This can be done by giving the mothers enough to get by on, some vocational training so they can get a job, and childcare so they can keep it. Ultimately the mothers must understand that the secret to their success lies in the education of their children.

Poverty is down and the poor here do occasionally eat Twinkies, but we're not out of the woods yet. The national surplus is a sign that we are doing well, it is not a sign that all is well. In order for future generations to be free from the blight of poverty this generation needs to suck it up a little bit more. Expenditures into education, especially in poor communities, needs to be seen as a worthwhile investment, not a waste. Providing childcare to single females who are seeking jobs, training for future jobs, or are currently employed, needs to be seen as necessary, not pointless. Poverty in some places is fat, nasty, and flourishing, but here it is quivering, frail, and waning. Now is the time to land

the fatal blow. America should not relax its stance on poverty, rather it should step up the assault and be done with this demon.

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Choking on Tobacco Smoke

Krissy Kriegel

For Sharon Witty's class, students were asked to write an argumentative essay on an issue of their choice. In addition, they were required to use at least three outside sources.

How many hours do people spend in public places each day? Think of all the time spent at public worksites, restaurants, schools, malls, and athletic stadiums, the list goes on and on. With all of these public areas that still allow smoking within their buildings, many adults and children are exposed to high levels of poisonous environmental tobacco smoke every day.

Now think of an unpleasant experience that a non-smoker has had due to environmental tobacco smoke. Perhaps in a restaurant, smoke was blowing in a woman's face for two to three hours at a time. And how about the baseball game where the person next to a child was blowing smoke in his face for more than three hours while he was supposed to be enjoying the fresh air and sunshine? Has a mother ever worked at a position where a co-worker was spreading the carcinogens and toxins of environmental tobacco smoke 40 hours a week into her eyes, nose, and lungs? In order to protect the health of that man, that child, that mother, and all people from the effects of passive smoke, smoking must be banned in all public facilities.

Passive smoke, also known as environmental tobacco smoke, "originates from the smoldering end of the tobacco product in between puffs, known as sidestream smoke, and from the smoker's exhaled smoke" (National Research Council 14). According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "environmental tobacco smoke is a mixture of irritating gases and carcinogenic tar particles" (qtd. in Koven 148). With the evidence that there are thousands of harmful particles in

passive smoke, undoubtedly these harmful particles are dangerous to health and cause the short and long term effects of environmental tobacco smoke.

The most common side effects of passive smoke are irritation of the eyes, nose, throat, and lower respiratory tract (Douville 8). These common irritations, often accompanied by nausea, dizziness, and wheezing, can affect a non-smoker every time he/she is around another person who is smoking. Imagine a non-smoker who is going out to eat at a restaurant. As he opens the door he can see a cloud of smoke and the strong odor of tobacco smoke fills his nose. As the waiter brings his meal, his eyes become red and begin to itch. When he leaves to go home, he notices he has a headache and his throat feels dry after coughing. Feeling nauseated, he decides to go to bed, and as he brushes his teeth, he coughs up a dark glob of sputum. No one, smoker or non-smoker, likes to feel ill in this way, so why should non-smokers have to feel any of the unnecessary short-term effects because other people have been poisoning the air they breathe?

Many non-smokers deal with these short-term effects, but what they may not know is that environmental tobacco smoke threatens their long-term health as well. The long-term effects lie hidden inside their lungs and hearts and other organs until it is too late to stop the devastating effects. Until recently, scientists were unsure of the long term effects, but since 1993, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, there is strong evidence that environmental tobacco smoke poses a cancer threat to adults and other health threats to

children (Koven 148). Also as a result of environmental tobacco smoke, every year there are an estimated

- 3,000 lung cancer deaths
- 150,000-300,000 respiratory infections in babies
- 8,000-26,000 new cases of asthma (Koven 148).

There is also evidence that passive smoke can lead to respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, and ear infections (National Research Council 163). Over time, the hidden effects of repeated exposure to environmental tobacco smoke can lead to these long-term effects even though they may not show up for 40 years or more.

With so many different side effects, it is important to understand that the effects of environmental tobacco smoke are dependant upon many factors. Some people may ask if passive smoke is dangerous to health, then why are so many people around tobacco smoke still healthy? I ask these people to consider those who do smoke. How many smokers show all of the worst symptoms of smoking? Just like smokers, non-smokers who inhale passive smoke all respond in different ways. Some show the side effects right away, while in others it takes years to develop the long-term effects. And just as it depends on the number of cigarettes smoked per day and the number of years one has smoked, for passive smokers the effects depend on how often one is exposed and the amount of environmental tobacco smoke in an enclosed area.

The amount of environmental tobacco smoke in any given area depends on the rate of smoke being put into the air compared to the amount of ventilation. In public areas that still allow smoking, ventilation is the key. For example, some people argue that non-smoking sections are made for people who do not smoke. But as I have

witnessed, many places are so small and poorly ventilated that there is no real separation of smoking and non-smoking sections. The air circulates in a room and people sitting in non-smoking sections are still breathing smoky air. Often times the smoke is so thick that there is a cloud or haze over an entire room; even firefighters, who fight smoke all the time, wear oxygen masks to protect their health from smoke. Should all people start wearing oxygen masks when going out into the public to protect their health? With so many public facilities that have poor ventilation systems, the only way to completely make a smoke free environment is to ban all smoking.

As long as there are places that allow smoking in their buildings there will be many non-smokers put at risk for the side effects of environmental tobacco smoke. People may argue that these diseases, just mentioned, can be caused by any combination of things. This is true, but within this combination, they must recognize that smoking, and now environmental tobacco smoke, increase the risk of developing these diseases. Because of this increased health risk many people have chosen not to smoke. When people are allowed to smoke in public areas, they force others to breathe environmental tobacco smoke, thereby putting their health in danger. Smokers know the health risks and can decide for themselves if they want to continue to smoke, but they have no right to put other people's health in danger by smoking around them in public places.

Now that we know tobacco products are dangerous, something must be done to protect non-smokers from breathing environmental tobacco smoke. Many times before, people have been warned about dangerous products, such as defective toys and contaminated food by having them recalled. Before going to the extreme of recalling all

tobacco smoking products, I suggest that we protect the health of those people who have chosen not to smoke. In their own homes, non-smokers are protected from tobacco smoke, but they cannot be expected to stay in their homes forever. When they go out to public places, nonsmokers should not have to fear feeling the ill side effects of breathing environmental tobacco smoke, and the only way to stop that risk is to ban all smoking from public places. Even though we are not able to stop all people from smoking, we can still provide smoke free facilities for non-smokers who have decided to protect their own health by not smoking.

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The Excursion of the Sport Utility Vehicle

Adam Sitzmann

In Sharran Slinkard's class, students were asked to write a semiotic analysis of the mass popularity of sport utility vehicles and the impact of sport utility vehicles on popular culture.

Since the beginning of time, man has dreamed of travel with ease and comfort. A philosopher and scientist by the name of Roger Bacon foreshadowed the future of travel. His incredible hypothesis in the thirteenth-century could not have been more precise. Bacon hypothesized, "Humanity shall endow chariots with incredible speed, with out the aid of animal"(Goewey 105). Nearly seven hundred years later, this hypothetical dream transpired into reality with the creation of the automobile.

Throughout the twentieth-century Americans grew to love their newfound friend and travel aid, the automobile. America latched on to this new product and integrated the vehicle into the rapidly growing popular culture and hunger for more. Soon Americans assimilated their concept of more into the automobile industry. This led to the creation of a dinosaur species of transportation, the sport utility vehicle. The popularity of these vehicles has exploded in the last few years. In 1998, sport utility sales were projected to exceed 1,000,000 units! To understand the motivation behind this phenomenon, a semiotic interpretation of the advertisements, marketing techniques, testimony of SUV owners, and cultural history of the American people must be taken.

Everyday people are bombarded with advertisements. The art of advertising creates a euphoric vision of what people want to have, feel, or be. Jib Fowles summarizes these advertising techniques in his essay titled "Advertising's Fifteen Basic Appeals". Fowles proclaims that advertising's immediate goal is to tug on our psychological

shirtsleeves and slow us down long enough for us to hear what is being sold (61). To complete this task, advertisers use many combinations of these fifteen steps Fowles noted:

1. The need for sex
2. The need for affiliation
3. The need of nurture
4. The need for guidance
5. The need for aggress
6. The need to Achieve
7. The need to dominate
8. The need for prominence
9. The need for attention
10. The need for autonomy
11. The need for escape
12. The need to feel safe
13. The need for aesthetic sensations
14. The need to satisfy curiosity
15. Physiological needs: food, drink, sleep, etc. (Fowles 65)

Many of these appeals are the basis for SUV campaigns. The automakers build companies and fleets of vehicles around these emotions and feelings. Let's use the new Ford Escape as an example. An advertisement for this vehicle often contains a scenic backdrop of mountains and trees. These backgrounds are intended to spark a vision of the wild frontier and wild gaming. One ad in GQ Magazine focuses on a middle-aged man fishing in the mountains with his new Ford Escape. The stereotypical frontier gives people the notion of ever-abundant opportunities and riches available to only the brave and ambitious people that are strong enough to explore them (Goewey 107). The implications made by this ad follow a variety of the advertising appeals listed above. The ad, aimed to appeal to a person's need to escape, dominate, and achieve, stimulates many emotions of the human brain. The name of the vehicle is an appeal in its self.

Name recognition is one of the biggest aspects of product marketing.

Manufacturers use catchy titles to subliminally send messages in the products advertising. The name of the product is the ultimate seller. Americans, as well as other nations, associate simple names and words with feelings, emotions, and locations. Look at the names of the most popular SUVs: Explorer, Pathfinder, Cherokee, and Blazer. All of these names incorporate the visions of wilderness and the wild frontier. After conducting a semiotic analysis, many contradictions would arise within the context of these names. The Jeep Cherokee was one of the first SUVs on the market (Goewey 108). The Cherokee, introduced in World War II, sparked the onslaught of mass production of SUVs. This innovative automobile was the “backbone of all Allied military transport” (Goewey 109). After the war, the Cherokee carried strong militaristic connotations of patriotism. The name also carried a subtle nuance of the conquering evil.

A large contradiction exists between conquering evil and the name Cherokee. During America’s expansion in the 1800’s, the Cherokee Indians were considered evil. These native people were forced off their land or killed. Now the Cherokee name on a vehicle carries a sense of patriotism and respect that the originators of the name never received. America is a country that loves to forget and constantly pursues the ideological dream of Manifest Destiny.

This dream of conquering the wild frontier still lives in the heart of our modern society. Matt Graham, a loyal SUV owner, recently traded a Ford Excursion, for the purchase of a new Mercedes sport utility vehicle. After discussing the attributes and qualities of his new acquired luxury vehicle, I prompted the question of why he elected to trade his fully loaded Ford Excursion for a smaller luxury SUV. Graham’s response was

one that advertisers would find very pleasing: “I bought into all the advertising, I didn’t need that much vehicle. I thought it would be nice to have for hunting and off road use, but with gas prices escalating I could not justify keeping it around.” His newly acquired vehicle contains all the bells and whistles. Loaded with leather, heated seats, a navigation device, and a slightly lower mpg rating, I find Graham’s response contradictory. Graham stated that he overbought on his Ford Excursion, yet some how he justifies a navigation device for suburban Iowa. Once again I think the advertisers/ salesmen got the best of Matt Graham.

The idea of strength and power integrated itself in suburban America. Ron Blair, a local Ankeny resident, has owned an SUV his whole driving career. Blair recently purchased a 1998 Chevy Blazer. Due to the massive popularity of SUVs, the resale value remains quite high. There were many less expensive vehicles that would have fit Blair’s driving needs, yet he elected to spend the extra bucks for an SUV. After discussing Blair’s new wheels, I prompted the question of why. Why do you continue to be an SUV owner with these outrageous gas prices and the inflated cost of insurance and sticker price? At first Blair had no response. He seemed puzzled by the question. After a few seconds of mental deliberation, Blair responded, “I purchased the car because I thought it was cool.” Not shocked by his response, I inquired what was so cool about this gas-guzzling machine? Blair said he liked the interior design, the smooth ride, and the use of four-wheel drive in the snowy winter months. There was no mention of off road use, or wilderness innuendos. Some people find their own reasons to purchase SUVs, and not the reasons advertisers spoon-feed them. Although Blair never noted off road use, he alluded

to the fact the SUV gives him opportunity to conquer freshly fallen snow with four-wheel drive.

The idea of conquering coincides with the dream of Manifest Destiny. This ideological dream is the belief that Americans have the God given right to deploy the virtues of democracy, freedom, and civilization from coast to coast (Goewey 107). This idea of Manifest Destiny transpired into a contagious infection. Soon this egocentric belief mutated into an enormous plague of more. This created the need for an automobile dinosaur. The common sedan was too small for the patriotic American. Americans, placing there since of scale ahead of quality, needed to create a gigantic, gas hungry machine to fit the needs of more. The sport utility vehicle gave the citizens of this great country fuel for their fire of more.

This eternal flame of more sparked the massive popularity of these vehicles. The SUV has become a part of the American dream. Jack Solomon illustrates this argument in the essay titled, "Masters of Desire: The Culture of American Advertising" (137). Solomon describes the American dream as a paradox. A mythic promise of equal opportunity transpired into ferocious competition for privilege and desire for unequal social rewards (Solomon 138). The SUV has adapted to the concept of these unequal social rewards. The introduction of the luxury sport utility ignited the flame of hierarchy that created status in SUVs. The Mercedes-Benz SUV, the M1400, had an opening sticker price of nearly \$45,000. Vehicles such as these create a social hierarchy that directly correlates with the type of SUV one owns. This subconscious cast system encourages the purchase of sport utility vehicles. One may argue the hierarchy does not

exist in the purchase of SUVs, but with names like Lexus, BMW, and Mercedes-Benz pumping out large numbers of SUVs economic segregation has to exist.

The sport utility has become America's automobile past time. SUV owners have now become victims in a mass marketing world. Many potential car buyers find their selves choosing SUVs over the regular sedans. Advertisements, marketing techniques, testimony of SUV owners, and cultural history of the American people have manipulated the minds of car buyers. To overcome this obstacle, one must semiotically analyze every aspect of the desired vehicle and look past the stereotypes and cultural biases of America. Understanding the concepts of advertising will boost one's confidence in car buying. Humanity has now endowed chariots of incredible speed with out the aid of animal, and taking this for granted would be a crime.

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2001
Fall
Vol. #13



The photograph for this year's cover was taken by Shawn Rife, a photography student at DMACC. He hopes to open his own studio someday. Shawn decided to present a unique view of the Skunk River by shooting a winter scene from a spot on the river. As far as we can tell, this is the first time that a winter shot has been used for this anthology.

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