

Illuminations

A magazine of student, faculty, and staff creative expression
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Southeast Community College



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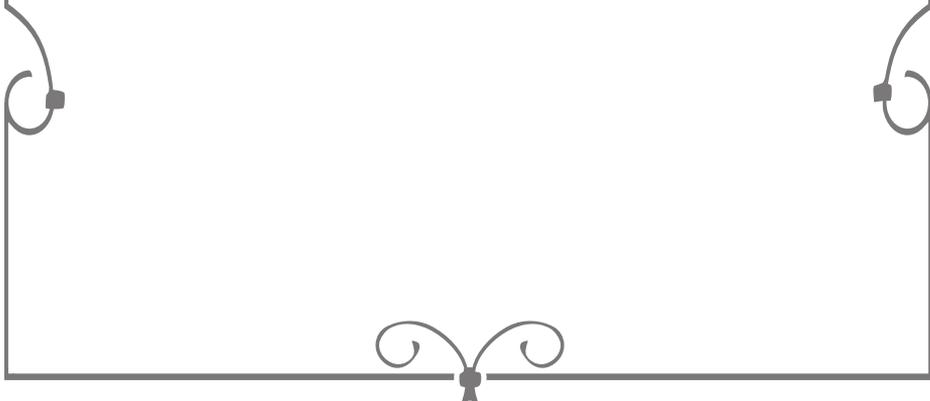
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My War — Our War (The Husband's View)

Jeremiah D. Behrends • Nebraska Law Enforcement

The heavily armored Humvees growl as they pass through the gate of our Forward Operating Base. I am instantaneously on alert. It is time to get serious, or there is a real danger of not making it back alive.

For the first few miles there are very few cars, people, or anything. The smell of trash burning and fuel from a station down the road mixes noxiously with the 135-degree heat.

Before I am altogether and ready, we reach the downtown area. There are people everywhere on the side of the streets at the street markets. The smell of bread baking and lamb cooking flushes out the earlier stench.

As the Humvee rolls down the crowded streets, I am sitting cautiously in the back. I am focused, as I scan my surroundings, looking left, right, and everywhere in-between. The enemy could be out here — and usually is.

I feel a bit of relief, as I see no obvious threats among the nationals. Looking to my right, I can see one of my best friends, Joe, in another Humvee. He sees me, and with just a nod of my head, I tell him that things are all clear.

Without warning, an explosion rings out.

The deafening roar shook my entire body. It took only seconds to realize that Joe's Humvee was hit. Panic, anger, and fear raged through me as I ran to Joe's Humvee. Expecting the worst, I was surprised when I saw that he was okay. What about the others?

Together, Joe and I cleared the area and used the radio to call for help. I stood ready for attack, guarding in the street while Joe searched for the rest of the soldiers from his Humvee.

Out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of a peculiar-looking man on the side of the road. He was watching us. An uneasy feeling gripped the pit of my stomach. It almost made me throw up. There I was, and there he was. My gut was telling me that that strange man was responsible for almost killing my friends and me.

My War — Our War (The Husband's View)

I whistled for Joe to come and told him what I felt. While deciding what action to take, I noticed the guy was starting to fidget around. There was something in his hand! The realization hit me as I saw the wires coming from his pockets. No!

All of my life, I have believed that killing another human being was wrong, but in that instant I knew what I had to do. My palms were sweaty, and my eyes were filled with tears as I grasped my rifle. As I took aim, I asked for the Lord to see why I was doing this and to forgive me. I looked at Joe as memories of my wife and children flashed through my mind.

"If you don't do it, I will," Joe whispered.

A drop of sweat ran down my face. I was locked on and ready to fire. The man wasn't looking at me, and I prayed that he wouldn't.

CRACK!

It was done. I lowered my rifle. I stood there silent, feeling the tears run down my cheeks, wanting to move, but not being able to.

I stood there.

When help finally arrived, those that were okay were taken back to the Forward Operating Base. We were debriefed and then given an opportunity to talk to the chaplain. I said nothing. I went to my bed, and even though my body was drained, I did not sleep. I just sat there all night thumbing through pictures of my wife and kids and praying for God to protect me long enough to see them one more time.

That was my war. 🕊

My War — Our War (The Wife's View)

Jamie L. Behrends • Radiology

My hands are trembling. My heart is pounding. My head is chaos. I smell the morning air. So what? I hear a dog barking. Who cares? Stop it, Jamie, I tell myself; calm down. You are being silly. It can't be him. I am standing, my hand gripping the cold wood on the back of the living room couch. I can feel my knees are weak, and I cannot remember the last time I took a breath.

“Mommy, what’s for breakfast?” Caleb asks. I try to open my eyes. Is the room really spinning? Confusion! Where’s Caleb? I hear him, but...as a huge breath fills my lungs, I see him waiting patiently in his dinosaur pajamas at the dining room table. My vision is clearer now, as I begin to feel the tears welling up in my eyes.

“Mommy,” Caleb says curiously.

“Just a minute,” I say.

As I feel my unborn child fluttering beneath my gray maternity shirt, I realize what has just happened. I suddenly remember the anchorwoman from the television. With perfect make-up and hair straight from a magazine cover, the anchorwoman has made a statement that could change my life forever.

“Yesterday, during a raid in northern Baghdad, another U.S. soldier was killed.”

In a split second I am remembering the last time I spoke to my husband, Specialist Jeremiah Behrends.

“Don’t worry, babe, but I will be going north to help with some raids for the next few days,” he said as though it was nothing to think twice about. I recall accepting that I would not be hearing from him for a while. Although he was never able to tell me exactly where he was going, I knew that “north” meant northern Baghdad.

As my mind finishes processing this flood of information, I decide that the odds are slim that the anchorwoman has been reporting about my husband. There are thousands of soldiers over there — but then again, one of them is my husband. One

My War — Our War (The Wife's View)

of them belongs with me, my son, and our soon-to-be second child. One of them, Jeremiah Behrends, has a new baby to greet in a few months and a lifetime of loving us left to do. He has to come home! Without him, our family would not be complete, and half of me would be gone forever.

The despair begins to take over once again. I am wondering, what I can do? How can I be sure he is okay?

The website! That's right! Fort Riley (his duty station) has a website. At the very least, it will tell me if anyone from that post has been injured.

Realizing I have not given Caleb anything to eat yet, I pour him some Cheerios and then head to the computer. As I sit down, I place my hand on my swollen belly. I hold my tummy tight as though the child growing inside is somehow aware of what may lay ahead. The keys on the keyboard are cold against my fingertips as I type in the address. I finish and wait as the out-of-date dial-up connection takes its time. Fort Riley's homepage pops up, and I click the link for Iraq updates. The page begins to appear a little at a time. It seems to take hours, but then, there it is: a headline confirming my worst fears — that indeed a soldier from Fort Riley has been killed the day before.

I instantly taste the acid from my stomach. NO! Please, no! I need him. I love him. We need him. Just as I am sure I am going to be sick, the rest of the page loads. The name of the soldier killed appears, and it is not my husband. Tears run down my face as the ache in my heart subsides. I am overjoyed.

Just as I am about to thank God for this gift, it becomes humbly clear to me that although it was not my husband, a soldier has died. The guilt shoves out every feeling of happiness I had a few seconds earlier. How can I be so selfish? Somewhere, someone is dealing with every bit of grief I have just escaped. For that, I am sorry.

Thankfully, my husband survived his tour in Iraq. Looking back, it is amazing the number of times I spent praying for the phone to ring or waiting for a new letter to come in the mail. I begged God for anything that would tell me my husband was

My War — Our War (The Wife's View)

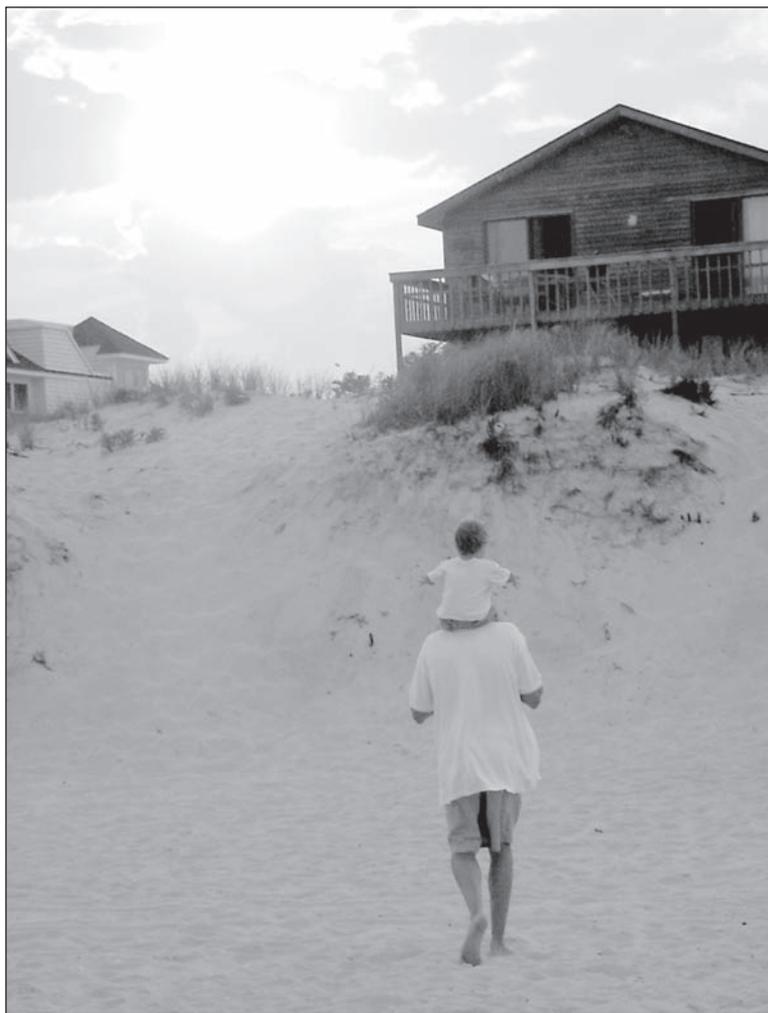
okay. The constant awareness that at any minute, my and my children's life could end as we knew it was overwhelming.

That emotional struggle was my war.

In the end, that experience changed the way I look at everything in my life. I will forever be grateful for the small things, and I will never take anything for granted again. There is just not enough time to forget the blessings we have in our lives. It has also instilled in me an enormous amount of pride for our country and for those who fight for it. The soldiers of the U. S. military have every bit of my support. For every one of those soldiers at war, there is a family somewhere fighting its own battle for which they deserve much respect. Pray for our soldiers, and pray for their families. Trust me; there are times when they have nothing else to get them through. 🙏

Keep an Eye on Summer

Carolee Ritter • English Chair



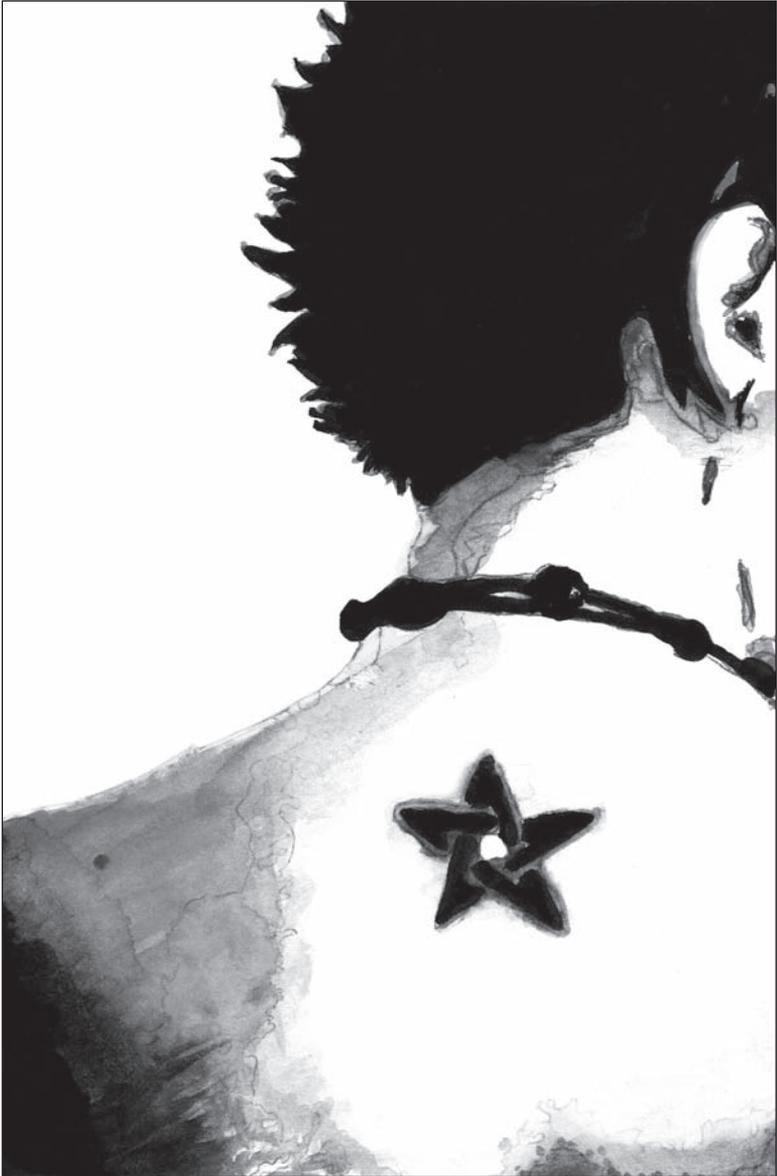
Some Days

Max Reis • Custodian/Physical Plant

I went for a walk today.
I got lost.
I left the house
Not knowing
Where I was going
And when I got there
I didn't know
Where I was.
It wasn't a good walk.
It wasn't a good day.
Some days
Are like that.

The Tattooed Girl (A Self-Portrait)

Maddie Bromwich • Graphic Design



The Singer in the Trees

B. Neal Kirchner • English Instructor

Time was, the singer leapt
Into a bounded heart
Like shards of mystic joy,
And bending over stones
The river knew, our faces
Skimmed the water looking back.

Now the singer, old like dust
Old like clay, sits ticking off
The days. Our faces
Need no river, rippled
As they are with time,
Looking back.

Skywalk

Heather Barnes • Academic Transfer



The Face

Heather Barnes • Academic Transfer



Daughter, Beware the Wrecking Ball

Stephanie Mitchell • Academic Transfer

The last day my father beat me was on Friday, in early April of 1998. I was 16 years old. Evening had long since passed, and a lightless black loomed through the windows of our small home. I was in the bedroom my sister Tiffany and I shared. Lying on my bed, I was re-reading my favorite story in a warped science fiction book. The book itself was ancient, radiating a pungent odor of neglect and mold that I found comforting, fond of the other-worldly atmosphere it constructed so vividly in my imagination. The house was peaceful, except for the low drone of the television wafting past my open door from the living room where my father and sister sat together.

Thirsty, I emerged from my room and passed them as I walked to the kitchen for a drink, finding my little sister, then age nine, sitting on the cushy chair adjacent to the couch where my dad sat. He was a thick, stocky man with muscles that stayed toned, ironically, with little activity. His hair was tousled, as always, and he paid no attention as I walked through the living room.

After grabbing a soda, I stopped in the wide arch between the kitchen and living room and looked toward the TV, curious as to what they were watching.

“You’re going to your grandmother’s tomorrow night,” my dad said through the din of a commercial.

I crinkled my nose in dismay. “I don’t want to. Tomorrow’s Saturday, and I’m going out with friends,” I complained.

His tone changed, assuming a low rumble of warning. “I don’t care. You’re going anyway.”

I was vaguely aware of his mood, sensing that he wanted time alone with his girlfriend, but I didn’t care. The fact he ordered my departure, with no regard to my feelings on the subject, tightened my throat in righteous anger. Although I loved her dearly, the prospect of spending the weekend with my grandma was abysmal when compared to spending it with my best friends — a fact about teenage life my father could never

Daughter, Beware the Wrecking Ball

seem to understand, as though he had forgotten his own lonely adolescence. That, or he couldn't care less either way.

"No, I don't have to go if I don't want to," I stated indignantly. "I heard that after you turn 13, you don't have to go to your grandparents' on weekends anymore if you don't want to."

Hearing that said before, but not knowing if it was true, I waited for him to take my word for it and allow me to stay home. I expected his consent, for he was most often very lenient.

"Is that so?" he barked, rising from the couch. He stalked toward me where I stood, dumbfounded in the archway. The hardness of his eyes made his intention clear, but I couldn't move, as though paralyzing venom had seeped through my veins.

Reaching me, he smacked the soda out of my hand. My gaze followed the can as it tumbled underneath the sink, hissing sharply as its guts spewed out onto the floor. I felt his fists connect hard with my bicep and shoulder, and I instinctually turned away to protect myself. He wouldn't cease punching me, trying insistently to jab his knuckles into the side of my head.

I was frightened beyond measure, never before witnessing such a feral craze, and over something so trivial. I backed up, but he followed me, never missing an opportunity to swing. Cornered by the cabinets, I crouched down and flung my arms over my head, trying to block his punches. But that position made it worse because he now stood over me, putting every bit of muscle and weight he could muster into the force of his blows.

I became aware that I was crying, not by the wetness of my tears, but by the sound of my cries of fear and pain as they met my ears. The world spun around me, like I was riding the teacup ride for far too long, and when I tried to look outside the cup, I could see only glimpses of my sister between my arms. She stood on the chair now, crying.

"Dad, stop!" she bawled over and over, but he wouldn't listen. I could hear her screams after I retreated back into the fold of my own arms, closing my eyes against my father's rage. When she realized she could do nothing to stop him, do nothing to help me, she leapt from the chair and ran out into the night, leaving the door flung open behind her.

Daughter, Beware the Wrecking Ball

My dad realized moments later that she had fled the house and stopped his onslaught.

“Go get your sister!” he yelled at me, backing away as I cowered on the floor.

I opened my eyes. “No,” I said shakily, but with as much defiance as I could muster. My fingers clutched at the counter as I pulled myself from the floor, my gaze fixed where my father stood by the dining room table, but never meeting his eyes.

“Get your sister!” he yelled again, stepping towards me. The floorboards protested beneath his weight, squealing at his slightest movement.

“No!” I screamed at him as I stumbled toward the living room, intent on reaching the safety of my room.

I could hear his heavy footfalls sprinting to catch me as I reached the hallway, and I could sense his hand in the air before it clamped around my arm and swung me around to face him. I flailed my arms in front of me, like some strange interpretive dance, to protect my face and chest when he resumed his violence against me.

“Go get her,” he ground out through his teeth, the sound like gravel sluicing down his throat.

“No!” I shrieked, pushing away. Blinded by my tears, I tried fervently to kick at him, aiming the best I could between his knees, desperately trying to free myself.

He jumped backwards as my knee flew through the air, and I missed my mark, barely grazing him.

“Bitch,” he seethed, his face a fiery red. Time slowed, becoming flashes of movement as his palm curled, his arm pulled back, his bicep tensed, and the spring of his shoulder released.

I closed my eyes tight as the wide arch of his arm pistoned towards my face. The velvety blackness behind my lids exploded, and I cried out in shock as a dozen supernovas sparked and died behind my eyes.

Panicked, I pushed myself away from him with all of my might and turned into the nearest open doorway, into the bathroom, but he didn't follow. He stopped at the doorway, glaring at me disgustedly as I stood in the center of the room.

Daughter, Beware the Wrecking Ball

“I said go fucking get her,” he spat, then pivoted sharply, walking back into the living room.

I followed, breathing in short, erratic gasps. With no intention of obeying him, I quickly snatched my keys from the kitchen table.

He saw me grab them and intercepted me as I walked through the living room, yanking the keys from my hand. My mental state was so tormented that I became like a caged animal, struggling blindly, for every instinct wrought into my bones instructed me to flee. To survive.

My dad picked up the phone, sat on the couch, and dialed the police as I tried urgently to retrieve my keys from his hand, but he resisted me, unfazed by my harried attempts to grasp them.

“Hello? Yes, I have a teenager that’s out of control over here, if you could send an officer over,” he said evenly.

Indifferent to anything other than leaving, I realized I was growling as I grappled over him desperately. The sound was feral, and more terrifying to me than my father himself.

In my rage, I looked at my father’s face as I bent over him and saw that he was grinning into the phone. The smile was twisted, contorting his visage as he laid the blame on me, freeing himself from any accusation. I realized then why he wanted me to get my sister back so much. She could tell on him.

Once the police were on their way, he relaxed, keeping his distance from me and no longer demanding that I go find my sister.

I abandoned my keys and sat on the chair, willing myself calm and waiting expectantly for the police to arrive. I would tell them the truth, and they would give me justice in return.

They arrived only minutes later, two men in their early thirties and dressed smartly in their crisp uniforms.

“What happened?” one of the men asked my father.

“She was out of control and attacked me,” he said.

“That’s not true,” I said, my voice cracking. “He beat me up.”

The officers turned their heads to look at me, their faces expressionless.

Daughter, Beware the Wrecking Ball

“It’s discipline.”

“No, it’s not,” I sobbed, raising my feet to the coffee table to expose my legs and baring my arms for them to see. The welts raised from my skin where he had hit and kicked at me were livid pink and contrasted starkly against the paleness of my skin. They felt itchy and warm, throbbing faintly beneath my flesh.

“It’s just discipline,” he reiterated, less confidently this time.

Angered by their cowardice when I needed them to protect me the most, I simply cried.

“We think you should spend a night away while things cool down. Is there somewhere you could go?”

When I didn’t answer, they turned to my father.

“She can go stay at her grandmother’s,” he supplied.

I got up wordlessly and went to my room, pulling out a suitcase from my closet. I heard a sound outside the open window and caught sight of an officer standing guard in front of it, preventing my escape. Irritated, I closed the blinds but left the window open to hear when my grandma arrived. Finished packing my clothes, I sat quietly on my bed, waiting. The breeze carried through the blinds was refreshing, soothing the ache I felt all over my body.

I heard my grandmother’s car arrive some time later and picked up my small suitcase. Walking through the living room I completely ignored my father and the officer that remained there with him.

As I walked down my yard, the officer that insisted I was disciplined and stood watch over my window followed me to the car, speaking to me as I loaded my bag.

“If you really feel you were abused, we can file a report....” he began.

“Forget it,” I said tightly as I sat down in the back seat, cutting him off as I slammed the car door behind me.

That day was the first time my father had ever raised his hands so severely and the first time I had ever found the courage to fight back. It was a turning point that brought about my departure from my home. I left a day later, never to return. I will always remember those moments before I left... the smell of my

Daughter, Beware the Wrecking Ball

sister's hair as I hugged her goodbye, the sun warming my back as I stood waiting for my ride out of that life, and the regret that ate at my heart as my baby sister's image shrank behind me. And yet, from that day forward I would harness the power over my own destiny, and in time I would ensure that my sister would be free to harness that same power herself. 🍷

Text

Nicole Running • Graphic Design



The Nearest Faraway Place

Carolee Ritter • English Chair



Dad: Digger of Holes, College Professor, Role Model

Sam Christiansen • Academic Transfer

Crisp, clean autumn air fills my lungs. Trees are naked with not a single leaf left on them. My dad and I are outside doing yard work at my grandma's house, me in my sweatpants and three layers of coats, my father wearing his "work clothes," which coincidentally are his business and party clothes. His entire wardrobe appears to consistently be blue jeans, T-shirts, and an assortment of flannel shirts. Besides wearing a suit for church or sometimes to work, Dad never really "dresses up."

We had been outside for about an hour, raking leaves that had overpopulated the yard and were ready to take over the house. The sight reminded me of the movie *Gremlins*, with the billions of evil fur balls trying to take control over towns. Earlier, we dug up some old bushes, and I couldn't help but laugh. Dad had been doing yard work since he was a teenager. Digging holes, planting trees, laying mulch — this was my dad's profession beginning at age thirteen.

Dad is blue-collared to the core. Having grown up with a traditional family with traditional beliefs, Dad is a prime example of the working-class man. The perception, "If you wanted something, you had to bust your ass to get it," was all too popular when he was growing up. Doing hard work for many hours and being paid little money had a brotherly familiarity to my dad. This is one of the reasons why I admire him so much. So today, my seeing this digger of holes turned college professor return to doing something he loathed and loved was kind of funny. But people who meet him for the first time would not dare crack jokes about him.

To some, he appears to be a closed-off, angry person who would rather watch a football game than play a board game (which isn't true because he's the king of Clue and Monopoly). And to others, he is a friendly, outgoing guy who's willing to listen to and partake in almost any discussion. He's loud and demanding enough to coach a YMCA basketball team full of rambunctious fourth graders. Yet, he's calm and polite enough to

Dad: Digger of Holes, College Professor, Role Model

answer his team's questions on how and why his mustache looks like a pirate's.

We start talking about sports, how crappy raking is, anything. Talking is important when doing monotonous jobs. Conversation not only seems to make time go faster, but it distracts one from the dull work.

"Wow, Dad, do I have to do your share of the work, too? You're going really slow," I say to my father. I always get a kick out of annoying him when both of us are doing a simple but tedious chore.

Depending on the type of work needed to be done, Dad is usually nonchalant and relaxed about everything. But if, let's say, a pesky leaf refuses to be picked up, then Dad has one of those hilarious "grumpy old guy" moments. For example, one day Dad was getting frustrated with a gutter that had become clogged. To make a long story short, through many cuss words and threats at the gutter (not to mention him ripping it from the house a little bit), Dad finally got rid of the pile of slime in the gutter.

"Sam, you don't even have a single pile raked up. What do you mean, 'Do my work, too?'" Dad replies with a blank face, pretending to be confused about why I would make such a statement.

Dad rarely smiles, and when he does, it's more like a smirk, like a happy grimace. His grin, at times, can be like trying to find Waldo on a crowded beach. Facial features and gestures are few and none with Dad, which makes telling if he's happy or mad relatively impossible. Usually, he doesn't express emotion unless it's extreme. For instance, if the Nebraska football team's losing, you can tell he's thoroughly upset by his furrowed eyebrows or his smirk transforming into a sour, Grinch-like expression. A laugh from Dad is as surprising as receiving a "Happy Birthday" card from the Emperor of China. If Dad laughs at something, then that something would make any other person almost pee himself.

"You know, if you pack all the leaves in the trash can, you probably won't be able to lift it," I say, trying to pester Dad again.

"You know, if you keep talking and don't work, I might have to smack you upside your big, lumpy head with this rake," Dad responds and grins a tiny bit at his own joke.

Dad: Digger of Holes, College Professor, Role Model

“Yeah, right. Who knows if you even remember how to rake? Ever since you started teaching, your level of laziness has increased big time,” I remark back.

“Sam, I could have no arms, be in a wheel chair with one leg, and still rake faster than you. Hell, back in my day, we sometimes raked with our bare hands,” Dad says matter-of-factly.

We trade sly remarks back and forth, like two professional boxers in a title match. I know Dad has me beat in work experience and toughness, but I keep telling him otherwise. My mom is the only person that’s tougher than Dad. She can forcefully convince him to go shopping with her or attend a musical at the Lied Center. We are halfway done when Dad suggests I mow the leaves in the backyard.

“I think those leaves are fine back there. Anyway, nobody can see them,” I explain to Dad.

“What! Do I have to hold your hand and help you? Oh, sorry, the lawn mower’s too heavy for you, right?” Dad asks with a bigger grin, seeing that I’m gradually becoming annoyed.

“No...,” I stand there looking like a lost tourist on his first time in another country, trying to figure out the native language. “Fine, I’ll mow.” I finally say, unable to think of anything better.

“Wow, don’t think too fast. You might hurt yourself!” Dad shouts to me as I walk away.

“Man he is so, so, so, old,” I say to myself while starting the mower. “He’s lucky my brain’s too slow to come up with a good response, but just wait.”

I begin mowing the backyard, thinking about many things and reflecting on the past. After passing the same tree for like the five-billionth time, I hear my dad shouting. Even Tony Soprano would have thought the language was too much. Dad getting frustrated at a rake, threatening to turn it into a toothpick, was a joke in itself, one that I will use to annoy him many times.

My dad has put family values above work and his personal wants. He is patient, intelligent, tough, and so many other things. He has accomplished a lot, not to mention becoming a college professor. Supporting four kids, our church, and other relatives, Dad has gone out of his way to help others. He has

Dad: Digger of Holes, College Professor, Role Model

helped shape me into a kind, creative, and hard-working person. What type of clothes or car Dad has doesn't matter. A good person is a good person, and Dad is a good, no, great person. I admire, respect and can only dream of being half the man he is, even if he doesn't smile. 🙏

Squeak

Nicole Running • Graphic Design



The Beauty of Feet

Hannah Zetocha • Business Information Technology



Hold On!

Laura Drawbaugh • Visual Publications



Adjusting Beauty

Renee Krenk • Graphic Design



Mother

Mary Ann Rowe • Criminal Justice Instructor

Within our highly technological and scientific society, there existed a woman of unfailing strength and stature. She was not a tall woman; in fact, she was never quite tall enough to reach the dishes on the cupboard's upper shelves. But she was courageous. She was resourceful. She endured hardships and misery and sorrow and pain.

My mother was born and raised an Old Order Mennonite where they avoided everything worldly and everything fashionable. They did not buy insurance, they did not play musical instruments in their churches, and they did not go to court or to war. Yet there was a quiet contentment instilled in their lives. Hers was a simple life where a premium was placed on stability rather than on change or advancement.

She was taught there was dignity in a hard day's work. Rising early each morning, she toiled in the fields with her team of horses. Under the piercing heat of the sun, she worked. Sweat created large depressions on her dirty face like a hard rain produces gullies on a barren field. The hotter it got, the harder she worked. A large-brimmed straw hat protected her head from the scorching heat. Her skin was an olive tan. "If I could have real white skin — like my sister's," she said as she washed her body with a stiff brush hoping to remove that beautiful color. But she knew it was impossible. "The sun bleaches clothes and makes them snow-white. Instead of making me white, I get as brown as a coffee bean."

Mother's clothing styles changed little since the last couple of centuries. Her family had one pattern for the girls, and even the print in the fabric differed little. The dresses were long, hanging nearly to the floor, with high necklines and sleeves that covered their arms to the wrists. Theirs was a humble appearance.

"The women don't cut their hair, for it is a glory to have long hair," Mother said. Their hair was never curled by commercial means. Mother continued to teach this tradition to her

own daughters. I recalled she combed my hair with a hairbrush because it was too long and too thick to get a comb through. “I wish I could get my hair curled like some of my classmates,” I said, knowing very well that it was forbidden. Mother glared at me.

“Permanents break the ends off your hair, and they make your hair appear that you have cut it. Women are to have hair that is orderly and kept in a modest fashion,” she said.

“But I am not knowingly cutting my hair, just curling it,” I said.

“Makes no difference.” As I continued to challenge her, I would feel her taking her resentment out on my head. The more I pushed the issue, the more she pulled my hair while she was braiding. You do not argue with my mother, especially on something as important as a woman’s “crowning glory.”

At the mirror above the kitchen sink, Mother combed her own hair which fell past her shoulders. I stood and watched. Parting her hair in the center, she wet it and folded it flat at the sides like the wings of a bird and then wound it into a spiral and pinned it against the back of her head. She placed her dainty, white-organdy prayer bonnet on her head and fastened it with two straight pins. “It is in the Bible that women should keep their heads covered when they pray, and I might pray at anytime,” she said.

“So may I, but not right now,” and I dashed through the doorway dodging a flying tea towel that was being hurled at me. Common sense told me I had better move on before I got myself into real trouble.

One would assume that Mother’s family did nothing but work their years away. At times it did appear that way, but they were as much interested in fun and entertainment as anyone else. However, their forms of entertainment differed. Their activities were less boisterous and not as flamboyant. They entertained themselves doing constructive things with their friends and neighbors. Children’s toys were usually handmade without the frills and elaborate details. In their adolescent years, almost all of their play took place within segregated groups of boys or girls

Mother

– each group trying to outsmart the other with some practical joke. Most of the girls enjoyed playing dolls or hide the thimble, hopscotch, or rope-skipping. Occasionally they would head for the babbling brook in the meadow with a piece of string, a fish hook, and a tree branch for a pole. Being full of life, their patience would not wait for the fish to bite. They kicked off their shoes and went wading.

As they became teenagers, a tendency toward group games and organized competition prevailed. During school recess, groups of playmates played fox and geese, kick the can, and baseball. It was during this time the girls began to enjoy needlework and quilting.

Checkers and chess were popular, but card games were frowned upon. “Playing checkers was a favorite pastime for us,” Mother said. “But one time we tried to play when our work was not done, and Grandpa threw the checkerboard in the fiery cook stove.” Periodically, she would retell that story to instill in us the importance of priorities.

Most of the food used by Mother’s family was grown, canned, butchered, or baked. The pantry was stocked with colorful jars of fruits and vegetables, jams, jellies, and pickles. Her pantry shelves looked like the shelves of a modern supermarket.

Friends and loved ones enjoyed eating at Mother’s home. Her dinners were not lavish, but they were mouth-watering. “Teach me how to prepare fried chicken like you make,” a wealthy visitor pleaded. Reluctantly Mother informed her guest that her good chicken resulted from using a cast-iron skillet and a dime-store lid.

You could always find Mother out in the garden planting, picking, or pulling. One could see her “green thumb” at work within her home. Houseplant admirers brought their ailing plants to her for rejuvenation. I complained to Mother’s long-time neighbor that Mother did not have any houseplants when we were growing up. “I know why. With twelve kids, your mother grew only what you could eat,” he said.

Mother’s religious training was important to her. In the Mennonite church, the women sat on one side, men on the

Mother

other. Chosen for life by lot from slips of paper drawn from a Bible, the preacher was also a farmer. He received no pay and prepared no sermons — his spontaneous word was believed to be inspired. Church attendance was required on Sunday morning with the sermon lasting a full hour and the Sunday evening service lasting about two hours. Most of the members attended a Wednesday night prayer meeting. Television sets, considered to be the work of the Devil, were not allowed. Mother had never seen a theatre movie. “I am just not tempted,” she said. Her faith in God had played an integral part in her life. It was her faith, her close relationship with God, that sustained her.

She lost two of her children in infancy, and later, her husband died of cancer. The hardest blow came when she lost her son in a car accident. We were not sure she would be able to withstand this sorrow, for everyone knew Larry was her favorite. She denied it, but Larry happened to be everyone’s favorite. We should not have worried ourselves about Mother’s emotional status.

Hospitals would have gone broke if they had depended on business from Mother. She was 65 years old when she went in for the first time for major surgery. “After all these years and twelve babies later, we have some repairs that must be made,” her doctor said.

“Just hurry things along,” she said, “because I have work to do.” It was years later that she told us her hospital stay was to remove cancerous tissue. Eight years later, she had another report. “I have cancer,” she said, “terminal cancer.” I thought for sure her time had come. Not for Mother. In spite of a report that indicated she had such a short time to live, she persevered. She was victorious. “All I want to do is plant my garden,” she said. She planted that garden. That year. The next year. And the next. It had been seven years since Mother got the report that death was knocking, but God had been good to her and to our family. Mother lived thirteen more years before God called her home.

She was 93 when she passed away. 🕊

The Stallion of 1989

Arica Z. Carlson • Academic Transfer

My sister and I wrestled our father.

He'd get down on his hands and knees like a pony.

He used to hold our arms and legs like a wrangled calf until my sister or I came to the other's rescue by crawling on his back.

He would snort and pant like we were exhausting him,
and for all we knew at 4 and 7,
we were.

He would buck us like a wild stallion, and we would gently and ungraciously slide to the floor, our summer dresses flying over our heads like inverted umbrellas, legs and arms splayed.

The sound of our tiny bodies falling
to the floor would rumble
through the boards
underneath the brown moss of carpet –
a sound hardly noticeable compared
to the shrill laughter of two small girls
having the time of their lives.

Simplicity

Connie Beall • Human Services



There on the Sand

Carolee Ritter • English Chair



Sigh of Relief

Matthew Eliker • Academic Transfer

Sweat poured down my brow into my eyes, making them sting once more. My armpits and my ACU's (Army Combat Uniform) were drenched as my heavy gear encumbered my movement. Over a hundred soldiers stood with me waiting for the okay to move towards the C-130 that would take us home to America. I looked up to the deathly sun and thought to myself, "Nine o'clock in the morning in the middle of November, already over a hundred degrees – damn, Iraq sucks." Just as I got done thinking this, I felt a slap up against my back plate (the Kevlar insert in my vest) and turned around to see Sgt. Baughn, my team leader, standing there.

"It's time," he said.

A huge smile crossed my face as we crossed the tarmac. "I never thought I would ever see this day," I explained to him.

"Shoot, me neither," he said with a grin. "It was one long year, and I'm just finally glad it's all over with."

As he said this, I remembered our very first mission. Our platoon was involved in various missions throughout our tour, but I remember the security missions the most. That day we were taking our Humvees through a rough part of Iraq.

"How you doing up there?" Sgt. Baughn yelled up the turret to me.

I held the butterfly handles of the M2, my .50 caliber machine gun. "Half my body is sticking out of the truck; if something happens I'll be the first to go," I yelled back sarcastically.

"Don't worry. You'll be fine."

Then a loud explosion pierced my ears as I ducked down into the truck. The blast rocked the ground, and as I looked up ahead, I saw a civilian truck engulfed in flames. Apparently, he must have hit an IED (Improvised Exploding Device). I hopped up and cocked the M2, ready for anything, but nothing happened: just the one IED, no ambush, no sniper fire, nothing. A sigh of relief came from me.

My focus turned back on the truck a few hundred meters

Sigh of Relief

ahead of us. Was the guy alive in there? As we crept forward in our truck, the shattered glass of the windshield and the spattered bloodstains left throughout the truck answered my question. He was dead. I took a closer look to notice the charred remains of an Iraqi man hunched over the steering wheel, still smoldering from the explosion. Like a rag doll, he lay there motionless. To my surprise, though, we didn't stop to check him out at all. I looked down at the passenger seat where Sgt. Baughn was sitting.

"You okay?" he asked.

"Yeah, I just think I crapped my pants is all," I jokingly responded.

What about the guy in the truck, I thought to myself? He was probably just going to work or going home from somewhere. He was not supposed to be involved in this; he was just a civilian trying to live his life. Sgt. Baughn looked up at me and saw my worried face.

"Better him than us," he said. "We can't do anything for him now. Stay alert, Elikor."

I responded with a normal military response, "Roger." We drove on.

Walking toward the C-130 nearly a year later, the bright sun blurred my vision. Only a couple hundred meters stood between my ride home and me. Butterflies filled my stomach; I knew I was going to see my family soon. I wanted to jump up and down with excitement, but the heavy gear and knowing I had to keep my military bearings for a little longer stopped me. I couldn't help but notice my other team member, Rocky, a North Miami, Oklahoma, chief of police, grinning from ear to ear as we walked next to each other. I had been in charge of looking out for him, and he had been in charge of looking after me in Iraq. I was struck by a funny time I remembered of him. My roommate and I were lying down in our heavily fortified room on one afternoon.

"Is that thunder?" I asked my roommate Ham.

"Sounds like it, I guess," he said.

Then the door burst open. Rocky was standing there.

Sigh of Relief

“Get down! It’s raining rockets out there!” he yelled as he dove to the ground.

“Holy crap! That wasn’t thunder!” I said. “It was mortars!”

So we picked up our gear and threw the heavy vest and helmet on. Then I walked over to the door only to notice huge clouds of dust coming in. Damn, I thought to myself; they’re hitting pretty close this time. The insurgents were never too accurate with mortars, so we never paid too much attention to them. I closed the massive steel door and helped Rocky to his feet. “Don’t worry; if one hits us, you wouldn’t even know because we would die so quick,” I said patting his back.

“Not freaking funny,” he tells me.

“It’s OK. We’re safe in our concrete house, dude.”

Shit, I thought to myself, standing there. A couple months ago I was at home skateboarding with my friends, just like any other normal 19-year-old would be doing. Now this, a constant threat of getting killed ran through my mind. I had to joke about dying because that is what helped me not worry about losing my life so much, even though I did worry. Over a period of a year, thinking this way can really get to a person, even a strong-minded person.

The huge propeller blades of the C-130 blew the hot air right into my face, which felt like a blow dryer hitting me nonstop. As we finally reached the tail of the plane, the ramp dropped down, awaiting us to climb aboard. I noticed Rocky turning his head and spitting on the ground. He turned his head to look at this vast wasteland called a country, holding his middle finger high in the air. “Screw off, Iraq.” He then turned his focus to me and that is when I put my hand out to congratulate him on a job well done. He slapped my hand aside, and I noticed a tear run down the side of his cheek from behind his dark sunglasses.

“I’m finally going to be able to see my son,” he said as he gave me a hug.

His son Lane was born while we were there, and this would be the first time he would see him, so I understood his excitement. He then turned and started up the ramp as I followed. I, too, was so excited to go home that I almost forgot about the

Sigh of Relief

ones we lost while we were over there. Knowing two of my good buddies wouldn't be returning back home on this flight with us even brought a tear to my eye.

This past year would be engraved in my mind forever – all the bad stuff I saw, and all the good people I met. This wouldn't be shaken from my memory no matter how hard I tried. Maybe even another deployment would be in store for me in the future, but I didn't care at the time.

I strapped myself into the seat, put my head back against the netting, and knew that this was it: I was finally going home. 🙏

Venice Water Ride

Tanner Peregrine • Graphic Design



Pink Flower

Danielle Beebe • Academic Transfer



The Familial Clutter

Matthew Hayden • Academic Transfer

Canadian winter is awake and waits to greet me as I carefully consider consciousness. Wrapped in a cocoon of Grandma's patchwork quilts, I'm warm and content, crammed into the bottom of a child's bunk bed. It sighs and creaks under my adult weight, and I swing my feet over the side. Stretching and shivering, I grope on the floor for the grey sweats and black T-shirt in the heap where I left them last night.

I can hear Dad in the next room. His snore, rough and staccato, resembles an agitated rhinoceros. Yesterday at this time, I was sitting in his room at Foothills Hospital. Dad's herniated belly button, which resembled a flesh-toned, sightless third eye in the middle of his abdomen, had been scheduled for repair. I was acting as a grinning lackey and chauffer.

"You'd better make sure the doctor's careful," I told Dad, while tying the opaque, patterned hospital gown over his stocky, pear-shaped body. "If he lets you go after your belly button is untied, you'll shoot around the room like a balloon. Pbtbptbtpbtbptbtpbtbtpbtbtpbtbtpbt!" I sputtered, tracing his flight with my finger.

Dad looked at me from the corner of his eye, a speculative, brambly eyebrow raised. "If I can get him to control the leak, maybe I'd lose some weight."

Dressing in the dark, I recognize how distant the previous day's jocularly seems. Since our post-operative journey home, belly button intact, an anesthetic haze has kept Dad gruff and severe. My attempts at conversation have been one-sided.

I am emphatically reminded that this is not Nebraska where the winter mornings attack with a small stick. Canadian winter beans me over the head with a cricket bat. I cannot understand how I spent my childhood in this meat locker without socks. It is no wonder my parents always wore sweaters and slippers around the house.

I rummage through the closet in search of a parka, mit-

The Familial Clutter

tens, and Dad's fur KGB hat. Gone is the familiar clutter. Bolts of fabric, boxes of patterns, and Mom's half-finished sewing projects used to fill every free space in the house. The closet now contains a box labeled, "Jason and Matthew's stuff," a moth-eaten tweed jacket, an old, frayed, purple terrycloth bathrobe, and a pair of brown, fuzzy moose slippers. The robe and slippers allow the hypothermia to recede.

Finally clad for indoor activity, I open the front door to retrieve the newspaper. The *Calgary Herald* for Saturday, December 22, 2001, is stiff from exposure to the tundra-like porch. I grasp the paper, and my fingers instantly numb to the level of dipping Oreo cookies into milk. I glance up at the pre-dawn world. It's 8:15, and the sun is still absent, but the street lights and the permanent cover of snow radiate a pink glow. The weeping birch sways, its branches rustling in the winter air.

I shuffle down the hall to Dad's dim, cluttered, desolate room. His breathing is deep and even. The rhino is gone. His face reflects up at me, suggesting to me how I will look in thirty years.

"Dad, I'm up," I mumble. "Do you need anything?"

He does not hear me.

"Okay," I reply, "I'll be in the shower."

I leave the room and head downstairs into the basement. At the end of the hall is the boxy, claustrophobic bathroom: a sink, shower stall and toilet wedged into a four-by-six closet. I step into the steaming shower, enveloped by warmth and the persistent tap-tap of droplets on my shoulders. My mother, I am reminded, last entered this room a little more than two years ago.

I can imagine Mom, shivering, making her way downstairs. The December morning has greeted her as it greeted me this morning. She lets the steam and hot water engulf her, easing the chill. A white shock of hair curls across her wet forehead, a first sign of age. I see her, wrapped in a white bathrobe, brushing her hair in warmth and contentment, preparing for her day...

...A graying, slightly woolen-haired man, clad in a purple bathrobe and fuzzy moose slippers, descends to the basement of his house. He has been in the kitchen, cooking oatmeal for breakfast and reading

The Familial Clutter

the Calgary Herald. He has heard a faint crash in the basement.

“Sandy, are you all right?” he inquires.

She does not hear him.

“Sandy?” he calls.

Still, there is no answer.

“Sandy, are you all right?” he repeats with a slight edge in his voice, opening the door to the small bathroom.

A woman lies motionless on the linoleum. Her hair is damp, and a white bathrobe drapes around her shoulders. There is blood from a cut where her ear has struck the floor, though the embolism has rendered any seriousness of that injury moot.

The actions of the man are a blur. Pulse is not found. Eyes are fixed and dilated. An ambulance is called. The man attempts to resuscitate his wife. He works efficiently, performing the necessary cardio-pulmonary functions that she is no longer able to perform. The man is knowledgeable of the field of medicine. He is aware of what the vital signs mean. His emotions attempt to burst through, but he concentrates on the task at hand.

The man’s wife does not respond; he continues CPR. Time passes.

Four minutes after the call, an ambulance arrives. The man’s wife is taken away...

With damp hair, I sit at the polished dining room table, eating shredded wheat and reading the newspaper. I am reacquainting myself with the idiosyncrasies of Canadian politics and hockey culture. I am slowly adjusting to the weather forecasts referring to minus fifteen as a “mild day.”

I watch the sun as it begins its slow, brief arc across the southern sky. It reaches my eyes, distorted by the ice that covers the bottom three-quarters of the inside of the large picture window. I can see the top of the blue spruce, peaking over the window ice, in the far corner of the yard. The tree was ten feet high when we moved to the house. Twenty winters later, the forty-foot spruce survives, oblivious to the cold and desolation surrounding it.

For lunch, I make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and pile my plate with greasy, no-name brand potato chips I find in the pantry. The jelly is really jam, homemade from the raspberries

The Familial Clutter

growing under the big spruce. I am pleased that Dad has carried on Mom's recipe for jam. The jam is pourable and thick and sweet and tart. I bite into the first sandwich and feel a familiar surge as my cheeks and arteries fill with jam.

When lunch is over, I look in on Dad. The room is dark, apart from a tiny gap of sunlight that breaks through the curtains. I sit down beside Dad on the unoccupied side of the bed. The thin shaft of light is warm as it projects across my cheek.

Dad is awake. He shifts in the bed and grimaces slightly.

"Does it hurt?" I inquire.

"Yeah, a little," he croaks, his voice drooping in unison with his face.

"Do you want something for it?"

Dad sits up a little, wincing. "I suppose I should."

I find his prescribed horse pill of Tylenol with Codeine and a glass of water from the kitchen while Dad waddles to the bathroom.

"Thank you," he slurs, sipping at the water.

"Drink all the water," I chide, channeling Mom's "you're sick and you need plenty of fluids" voice.

Back in the bedroom, I am startled by the black and white picture of Mom on the mantle. She is twenty-two in the photo, which was taken a week before her wedding. She smiles back at me, her eyes young and dancing, her chin-length hair wavy and lustrous, her face...

...It is night. The man paces the dark house alone in his thoughts. He clutches a silver framed, black and white picture of his wife. He presses her young, glowing image to his aged, tear-streaked face. Family has been notified; his sons will arrive in the morning.

Tonight he spends his first night in thirty-two years without his wife. She is everywhere. Every feature, every echo in the house reminds him of what he is without. He whimpers and wipes his eyes on the sleeve of his purple robe and again crushes his nose against her face....

...Dad has floated back into his post-operative glaze, and I drift into the living room and fish in my backpack for my book. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is my mother's favorite book. She first read

The Familial Clutter

it to me when I was eight. Now I read it twice a year, and the pages are becoming dog-eared and yellow with use and age.

I am in no need of a reading lamp. I draw open the curtains, letting the glaring whiteout bathe the room in light. Stretched across the couch, Scout and Jem, Calpurnia and Atticus hold my interest for the rest of the afternoon. The metronomic ticks of the wall clock keep my brain in a hypnotic cadence. When I finally snap out of my trance, it is dark. The natural light is gone. I have been aided for over an hour by the timer-controlled lamp above my head.

I flip on the burners on the range and set two pots to boil. Dad shuffles into the kitchen behind me. His homemade, flannel night gown is wrinkled and worn.

“Hey,” I say, “you want anything?”

“What are you making?” he replies, itching his wooly scalp.

“Hot dogs and pierogies.”

“No,” he frowns, making a sickly face. “Yuck.”

I carry the boiled feast downstairs on a tray with a gallon of milk, rounding the corner and heading to the large, open rec area in the basement. Passing by a white, paneled wall pocked with hundreds of black marks, I am reminded of the thousands of violent floor hockey games the wall has faced. As I stare at the deep gouges in the wall, I feel the wind as Mom smacks me in the back of the head.

I enter the expansive room. Novels and biographies and heavy biochemistry volumes fill the bookcases on the far wall. I deposit my dinner on the peeling and cracked card table and sink into the massive, second-hand, rust-colored couch which expands across the opposite wall. The T.V. is in the far corner beside the wall of books, and I find the remote in the couch cushions.

I flip to channel six, to the CBC, crown jewel of Canadian broadcasting. *Hockey Night in Canada* has just begun, and I hear the opening strains of “O’ Canada.” I listen with amusement as a Calgary youth choir butchers the easiest anthem in the world....

... The man sits in the front pew of the Queen’s Park Funeral Chapel on 32nd Avenue and 4th Street. The sons, who share his sloped shoulders and stocky build, sit on either side of their father. The offici-

The Familial Clutter

ant is reading from Ecclesiastes, but it seems to remind him of an old song from the sixties.

An entire community has filled the chapel. Their community. He knows many of the people. Others are less familiar. They have come because of her; they love her. They are also there for him.

He stands with everyone and starts to sing, but he does not know the words to the song. He fumbles and stumbles through two verses. Finally, flustered, he blurts out the wrong line during the refrain. His sons look at him; smirking, eyes uncertain but dancing, snorting as they try not to laugh at their mother's funeral.

The man clears his throat and gives them a wry smile. His sons cover their mouths and start to giggle silently. The man feels the wind as his wife smacks him in the back of the head....

...The hockey game ends with a Calgary victory. It reminds me of Mom's red-clad, fanatic lunacy in the spring of '89. I get a warm feeling, thinking about Mom whooping and jumping around as the Flames won the Cup.

I have devoured the American and Ukrainian contributors to world cuisine, as well as half of the milk. The empty dishes are dumped in the sink upstairs, and I scuff down the hall to check on Dad.

"Hey Dad," I call, "Flames won."

"Mmmm," he replies weakly.

"You okay?" I ask. "Are you leaking air? Gone flat yet?"

Dad rolls on his back and looks up at me, his eyebrow raised again, "Well," he starts, "air leaks out of your ears all the time, and your head's not flat."

He is feeling better. I lean forward to kiss him on his expansive forehead.

"G'night Dad. I love you."

"Goodnight, Matthew, I love you too."

I cross the hall and make a pile on the floor with my clothes, replacing the purple robe and moose slippers in the closet. 🧦

Jacob Glass Type

Jacob Thomas • Graphic Design



Dog House

Max Reis • Custodian/Physical Plant



Stranger

Jordan Carman • Academic Transfer

A stranger lies next to me in the dark,
and for a moment I can feel his breath
hot on my skin.

The stranger rolls over –
and pulls me to him.

I lie so still,
afraid of what I might become.

He whispers my name –
softly –
but my heart knows him not.

So I do not respond.

In the morning he eats eggs and beans on my good plates
while I smoke cigarettes
and send smoke signals his way.

The stranger laughs,
but in his eyes no color do I see.

So, I search, longer, harder, stronger.

When he leaves for the day,
I throw his plate in the trash.

Erin

Renee Krenk • Graphic Design



The Basketball Game

Ashley Wooton • Academic Transfer

The polished wood floor creaks under the slightest pressure. The tangy smell of new varnish and the musty odor of sweat fill the room. The fluorescent lights illuminate the court. At opposite ends, backboards hang from the ceiling, their orange hoops catching the dangling white nets.

Black lines race across the floor, arching and crossing over and under each other. A heavy line splits the court sharply in the center. A large rectangle encompasses the court.

When entering the room, the sound of sneakers scuffing across the floor can be heard, accompanying the rubber dribbling of close to fifteen basketballs. The squeaking of shoes seems to bother no one. The intensity is deafening, and the adrenaline is running high.

Looking on either side of the court, the bleachers rise menacingly from the floor level. The tiered steps house hundreds of fans, all screaming for their teams.

On one side, a sea of orange T-shirts stamped with black and black face-paint, can be seen. Signs with the aforementioned colors flash on the white poster-board. The band plays its fight song, swaying in unison as the crowd joins in with the chorus. The fans pump their fists as they sing along to, "Fight, fight, fight!"

On the opposing side, forest green and gold mar the deep, dried blood brown of the bleachers. The fans hold repulsive dandelion foam fingers emblazoned with crisp white lightning bolts. The students stand out in shirts of black. A large "X" is printed in green across their chests. As the home team's band plays, those in green boo, rumbling the bleachers.

The blare of the horn signals the ball players to their respective benches. The neon red, peg-like lights of the scoreboard flash a double zero in unison with the horn. The sweat glistens off the players in black, the home team, as well as those in green. Their jerseys are soaked through by now.

The announcer grabs the microphone, his voice booming

The Basketball Game

through the speakers that are meticulously perched high in the rafters. As he calls out each player, his voice grows thick with enthusiasm. Upon hearing their names, the respected players jog to the center, shaking hands with the opponents. As the announcer continues, his voice bounces off the accustomed walls. Everyone present knows this is a tradition that has come and gone every year. Each year, the rivalry between the teams grows. Every year is always “the” year, the one chance to prove themselves worthy in the endlessly bitter feud.

Finally, the National Anthem is played and the teams make their final gathering together before the start of the big game. The coaches’ voices ring out above the crowd, shouting words like “Defense!” “Motion!” and “Team!”, though each coach presents himself differently. The home team’s coach squats in the middle of the group, surrounded by his players, his glasses sitting back on his forehead, whereas the opposing team’s coach stands with his team facing him from the bench.

At last, the ten starters congregate at the center circle, shaking out their nerves in wild, crazed motions. Both sides of the gym fall deathly silent in anticipation for the opening tip-off. Suddenly, as if on a whim, the fans in orange begin the slow clap. With each strike of their hands, the tempo increases. Finally, the clapping becomes a deafening roar, enough to excite the people out in the concession stand.

Among the chaos, a cheer is barely audible from the home-team cheerleaders. The faint sound of plastic pom-poms adds to the noise. The light catches on the shimmering plastic strips, reflecting the beams in orange and silver tints.

The opposing cheerleaders try to combat their rivals by doing their own version of the same cheer. The orange student section boos loudly, standing on the bleachers. The cheer is drowned out entirely by the stomping going on across the court.

The bleachers ring with the echoes of the cheers and vibrate with the pounding of hundreds of feet. As the band starts up its final song before the game, the metallic bleachers pick up every reverberation and pitch of the horns. The band instructor cuts off the playing, looking over his Hawaiian print shoulder at the

The Basketball Game

pending game.

The referee enters the court. His attire is starched and contrasts sharply with the wrinkled, lustrous shine of the jerseys. Vertical black and white stripes dominate his outfit. The shine of his black shoes matches the shine of his bald, sweat-covered head. Already, his whistle is poised between his teeth, ready to win or lose a game for either team.

In his hands, an orange basketball awaits to be offered to the gods of the sport, the knights of the court. The whole gymnasium seems to be entranced by this simple object, like it was a piece of sacred treasure. No one's eyes leave the ball.

As the referee inches closer to the center, the athletes can hear their hearts pounding madly in their ears. Already, their faces are flushed crimson, the adrenaline overcoming them.

Situated at the center, the referee gives each player one final glance and mumbles, "Keep it clean, boys," before releasing the ball into the air, accompanying the shrill blow of his whistle.

Both boys reach for the ball as they become airborne, clawing at the other in hopes of gaining control of what is promised to be a fantastic game. Now, the game is literally in the players' hands. 🏀

Trouble in Mind

B. Neal Kirchner • English Instructor

No railroad satisfies me now.
The trains are not running, the tracks
Are gone. We walk on dead-end
Afternoons past trees the passengers
Once ticked past and ignored.
Somehow the newspaper, dated 1942
Or 1925, drew down the eye
From this lush green. Somehow
The folds of her soft hands in his
On the way to visit a dying aunt
Kept the attention mercifully there
In the little car, sweeping past
This anguished growth. You
With your practiced speech of leaving;
Me with my mind on elm, on oak
On dogwood. A cottony drift
Sifts slowly down on this afternoon
I don't want to remember.

Caterpillars

Danielle Beebe • Academic Transfer



Evening

Sarah Butts • Visual Publications



The Man That Walked (A True Story)

Maddie Bromwich • Graphic Design

The man walked. It was all he had left in his life and all he wanted to do. Through the coldest and hottest of days, he walked. At least, this is what he told me.

I saw this man. I met him. I don't know his name or whether or not his story is true, but I believe him anyway. His story is not one that someone could just dream up and lie about. His story is one that would haunt me for weeks and months to come.

I was at work when he walked through our little town. He came in, a gust of cold wind blowing in through the door. His windbreaker jacket was dirty, and the baby blue blanket he clutched at his side was even filthier.

"Where are your travel-sized toothbrushes and shampoos?" he asked. I remembered that his eyes were very blue and very weary.

"Um... I'm not sure that we have any, but I'll help you look."

We walked around the store, looking for mini toiletries, and I couldn't stop wondering why this man, who looked practically homeless, needed these things. Then again, I wasn't sure if homeless people actually washed their hair. I'd never really met a homeless person.

I wanted to make conversation, and I asked the most generic question I could think of. His answer, however, was anything but plain and ordinary.

"Where are you from?"

He looked uncomfortable for a minute and then said, "Los Angeles. I... I walked here."

I'm known for my poker face and my ability to keep my thoughts and emotions in check, but I couldn't stop my jaw from dropping, not this time.

"You're kidding."

This man had to have been walking for months! Not to mention it was January. Who in their right mind would walk through



The Man That Walked (A True Story)

the Midwest in the winter?

I left it at that, not knowing what else to say, and we continued looking. We didn't have anything but travel-sized toothbrushes and toothpaste. He said he already had those things.

"Well, you can keep looking around the store if you like," I said, "I need to get back to checking."

He wandered around the store for a while, and I went back to the checkout counter. The customers, most of them regulars whose faces I knew, looked concerned with my state of being. I was still very shocked and confused. Some of them asked me what was wrong, and I couldn't help but enthusiastically blurt out what he had told me. Most didn't believe him. Should I?

Finally, the man came to the counter with a few purchases. I can't remember what he bought. I just remember the conversation that took place during our transaction.

"Why exactly did you walk here, if you don't mind me asking?"

He smiled and let his eyes drift dreamily over my shoulder.

"I was a businessman. I had a great job and a steady income. I pretty much had it all."

His features then began to darken. He took a breath and steadied himself, as though what he would say next could cause him to fall. I almost did.

"My little boy died, my only son. Two weeks later, I buried my wife as well. I just thought, 'What's the point?' So, I took all my money, the clothes on my back, and I walked. I'm headed to the east coast. I don't know if I'll make it. In fact, I doubt I will. But hey, what else is there for me to do, right?"

He smiled at me again and handed me the money for his purchases. I gave him his change. He said goodbye, and he left.

I never saw him again. I never heard from him or anything about him. In fact, I completely forgot about him until this very moment when you asked me to tell you a story. I feel guilty about forgetting. My life had changed from that moment on. I just forgot how and why. I've realized that you need to love like you'll never love again, and live like it's your last day on earth.

The Man That Walked (A True Story)

This story isn't about me, though. It's about the man who walked, the man that appeared and vanished, like a ghost in the fog of a cold, early morning. I wish I knew what became of him. I guess all I can do now is hope and pray that he made it and that he's doing okay... but something inside me knows he's not. I believe he's dead. After all, what else is there to do? 🕯

Omniscience

Ashley Wooton • Academic Transfer



Low Rain

Jordan Carman • Academic Transfer

Thought to be only
a feeble branch
of your burly
family tree.

Low and fine –
you stood
tall and proud,
living only off
your rationed Dopamine.

Never saw you
crying in the shower.
Six living beast –
and memories in the grave.

Work. School. Homework.
Sewing. Fixing. Cooking.
Breakfast. Lunch. Dinner.
Smoking. Drinking. Bathing.

You were all grown up
at eight years old,
and *Gone with the Wind*
was playing at the theater.

Personal Canvas

Renee Krenk • Graphic Design



Five Pieces

Jeanine Jewell • English Instructor

His hands are large;
palms broad like open leaves,
fingers elegant as flight.

He buttons his shirt and tucks it in –
such fussy, everyday work
assembling his worldly self;
labor as ordinary and beautiful
as replacing bulbs
in the City of Light.

I want to ask him if
he's ever been to Paris
but feel myself tighten with desire
as he gently knots his tie,
those long fingers pulling, tugging.

He sees me in the mirror and smiles.
“You look so far away,” he says,
smoothing his collar into place.

Rocky Mountains Bear Lake

Leo Sougey • Custodian



Intense

Connie Beall • Human Services

Sweat pours out of my tiny bruised body; my heart pounds through my puny chest. I am weak from the pain of the stabbing in the small of my back and the extreme pressure of the millions of pounds upon my thighs. A sore throat and the crackling in my voice get worse as I continue screeching in anguish, pulling myself up for an instant release of pressure. Finally, for a brief moment, I close my tear-filled eyes and take a breath. Within a second, I am up again in a panic; the sharp pains seem to be getting worse. I can hear voices saying, "You will be OK; try to breathe." But I cannot breathe because I feel exhausted and afraid that I am going to die.

I am a sixteen-year-old rustic girl with light brown scraggly hair and ailing pale skin – a hungry child bound by fear and addiction, loved by my perpetrators and hated by my mother. I walk with my head down from the shame that has replaced my innocence. Love and pain have become one in the same. Not wanted by any, but controlled by many.

Actually, I am just a nobody who is about to give birth to a somebody.

I open my eyes as I hear a woman's voice; it is unclear what she has said, but she rolls me to another room. Now I am surrounded by white lonely walls. I see no pictures and no colors, only a huge screaming light above me. I have become more afraid than ever. It is happening. My heart is pounding, my weak body is trembling, and the voices that I hear seem to be an echo. The tears roll down my cheek as I look up and see that I am about to endure this miracle with only this heartless man beside me – no mother, no father, nor a husband, only him.

He's the kind of man with whom you look in his eyes and think of how kind he must be. He has a distinguished and well-rounded persona, like a father perhaps; he feeds you, protects you from other harmful people, and comforts you as he is tearing away at your soul. I try not to look at his face, for I cannot endure the disgust as I feel his huge clammy hands on my forehead as he

Intense

tells me it will be fine. His voice is harsh and firm, and I believe that someday I will die in his hands.

It is time. I hear the doctors say to me, “OK, you need to push.”

“I am!” As I am screaming, the pain is more than I knew was possible to endure by anyone. I am sweating and crying, pushing and pulling, and praying for this to be done. I look up into the mirror above, and I see her head, and then I begin to cry, for the pain has seemed to have disappeared; finally, one more huge push, and out she comes. I am holding my first love – the only person who I know will love me forever. 🍀

My Memory of Him

Heather L. Barnes • Academic Transfer

As long as I knew him,
two packs a day was
what he smoked.

He kept them in the chest pocket
of the flannel shirts that he always wore
like they were his skin.

Marlboro reds
floated on a sea of cherry cough drops
in that pocket,
one or the other always in his mouth.

I would hug him,
relishing in the smells that were him
and the softness of his shirt.

Even after the railroad of stitches
zigzagged across the back of his shaven head,
the cancer removed,
and he was absentmindedly feeling the front
of his thin gown for a pocket
that was not there,

I would hug him and remember the smells
of smoke,
of artificial cherry menthol,
and the feel of the flannel.

Clay Sunset

Ashley Abramson • Academic Transfer



Wild Milkweed Pod

Claudia Reinhardt • Mult-Academic Center

Between a dusty road and a sagging fence,
rustling prairie grasses surround
a solitary milkweed plant.

The silver brown pod
curves like a horse's nostril
and flares to catch the scent of fall,
then exhales a silken cloud
that drifts across open pastures,
whispering of butterflies
and passing seasons.

Rurouni Kenshin

Jenna Peterson • Graphic Design



The Death of Aslan

Jenna Peterson • Graphic Design



Bright Eye

Nicole Running • Graphic Design



Wetback

Luis Rios • Academic Transfer

Who am I? Am I a criminal? Every time I see the snow falling and the weather get cool, I remember the day that I became a criminal. I haven't been caught yet, but I am sure that it could happen any day, any time, and any place. I am not safe anywhere, but I am not afraid to face the facts.

In the winter of 2001, I was walking with my father, a cousin, and 23 other people whom I didn't know. A gallon of water, a bag of flour tortillas, and four small cans of fried beans was the food for two people that we were carrying for three days. We were walking in the desert of Arizona, sleeping on the cold ground. Sometimes we had to keep walking during the night because it was so cold that we couldn't sleep. I remember on one of the cold nights, I touched my hair and it was spiked, not because I used gel but because it was getting frozen. After all, we made the trip, a trip from Piedras Negras to Phoenix. Does this mean I am criminal? According to the new law, I am.

*

I am a criminal; close the doors when I walk by. Do not answer the phone when I call you because something can happen to you. That is the feeling that I have from some organizations that I have been asking for help. Of three older brothers and one younger than me, I am the first one in my family to go to college. I found a cheaper college more affordable to my wallet. Even though I am not a full-time student, I am in college. I have to pay everything by myself; plus, I am paying out-of-state tuition.

I remember the first time that I registered for classes. I was so happy because it was my first time to go to college. I had a big smile on my face from side to side. There were three people in line, and as I was getting closer, I was getting more and more nervous. Then it was my turn. I gave my registration paper to the lady at the front desk. She started to fill out the form on the computer.

“You are missing your Social Security number. Do you have

Wetback

one? Do you pay taxes? How did you get accepted to the college?"

I felt like an idiot; I didn't answer any question. I thought that I would love to see the earth open a hole and eat me entirely in the same moment. I was in shock, but another of the registering ladies, who noticed the problem, came to the one that was helping me and took her to the back. For minutes I didn't see what happened in the back, but at last the lady that was helping first came to me and gave me my schedule. She didn't say a word when she gave me the schedule, and I didn't say anything back to her.

For a moment, I thought that my life in the USA would be over, but it didn't happen. Is this the way that I have to pay for being a criminal? Then I thought to myself, is this going to be worthwhile? Will I be able to work in a career when I finish college? I might just be wasting my money. Is this the price that I have to pay for being a criminal?

*

The color of skin tells many things about a person, some good and some bad. But can the color of the skin tell anyone whether you are a criminal or not?

I stood at the front door looking at the people who were inside of the bar. What is the point of going to a place where there is a lot of alcohol? I don't like to get drunk. I might have one or two drinks, but I do not get drunk. One time, one of my friends was turning 21, and he wanted to have a good time. He invited me to celebrate among other people.

It wasn't the first time that I had been in the bar, so I decided to go. Many of my friends were inside of the bar at the time when I arrived. I got in line, pulled out from my pocket a Mexican Consular ID Card, and I gave the ID to the security guy at the door of the bar.

"Well, we don't accept this kind of ID. Do you have your green card?"

I didn't say any verbal word; I expressed no with my head. I didn't have any other kind of ID with me. It was the first time

that someone said “no” to my Mexican Consular ID Card. I had been in the same bar many times before, but this time was different. From inside the bar one of my friends was looking closer at me, but he didn’t walk to me or ask any questions.

Did my friends know who I really was? Did they notice that I was not the person I am? Would they even care if I told the truth? I don’t know. Life is uncertain. Now I am here, and tomorrow I could be on the other side.

*

How can criminals work? How can they work if they don’t have a Social Security number or other kind of ID? As a criminal, I found people that made fake papers such as the green card or Social Security card. I have to get those in order to find a job. Sometimes I have to face the facts of who I am in the work place. Even the best workers have difficult times.

“Luis, you are the best!”

“Good work! You are always keeping up!”

“You are one of the best closers that we have. I don’t have to check you out; you are good to go home.”

Sure, am I the best? I don’t think in that way of being the best; I could not be the best because then there would be nothing left to beat. I am just working for the money that I get paid, and also I like to work.

On one of my jobs, I went too far; I went from co-worker to manager. But as manager I noticed how people were exploited. I was helping out people that didn’t speak English with translations. But sure, I saw too much abuse of those non-English speakers, things like missing hours in their pay check. Sometimes managers gave extra work to non-English speakers because they couldn’t argue back and they didn’t want to lose their jobs. I tried to help all of them, and I ended up going to the Commission on Human Rights. I tried to sue the company. I got facts and arguments to prove the exploiting. The person in the Commission on HR was really nice to me and told me that she would do everything to help me out. The judge would be the one that had the last word, but in the same way, I would have to reveal my true identity.

Wetback

“I will do everything for you, but the fact is that you are an illegal; I can’t do anything about it,” the lady at the Commission on Human Rights told me. Then she added, “We can’t do anything to keep you here in this country. The judge might or might not send you back to your country.”

I went home to think about it. The Commission gave me time to decide. I decided not to sue the company, and also I left my job and the people that had a hope in me to help fix their problems.

*

How do criminals make friends? If a person kills other people, others will stay away from him. If you steal, people will not talk to you; if you are illegal, what will people do?

What makes good friends? I am sure that everybody knows that good friends are built with trust and respect. But did I have good friends, or did I have fake friends? If I am a fake person, I make fake friends; that is my rule. I don’t tell people who I am.

*

Sure I am a lawbreaker, but I am a good person, too. I think I am a good citizen, even though I don’t belong here. I don’t want to make anyone change their minds; I just want to show my personal life living as an illegal immigrant. Sometimes I feel that I can’t live with everything. I want to escape in the easy way, the suicide. But then I look back and I see all the things that I have done – things like going to college and keeping food in the table for my family back in Mexico. Those things are the ones that keep my life going because there is a reason for me to be here. Sure, the winter has bad memories to me, but I am here. ☹️

All Alone

Chris Jensen • Graphic Design



Calamity Strikes Song

Ashley Krska • Academic Transfer

Note

The spring day is cloudy

Tap, tap, tap ... rain falls against a tearful window pane

Trees gently sway to answer the wind's seductive call;
new leaves dance and sway to a yet unknown song
whispering across the lush, emerald countryside

Kah, kah, kah screech charcoal crows, as if a trumpet's
pitch squeals from the depths of piercing hell; whoo
whoo the wind murmurs against thy petite chapped ear,
portraying melody from a spiritual flute, electric lines
rivet in a horizontal pattern like a man's arm gently
stroking his guitar strings

A rusty brown scrap of tin flails helplessly atop a
shuttering, abandoned house, rocking back and forth by
a fragile breeze singing alone, soulful melody
understood only by nature; in the distance a jagged
liveliness traces a flash of light across a blackened sky,
its brilliance shocking the senses like a clashing cymbal
against another, a forewarning of the impending
calamity coming nearer, in thunderous, colossal, black,
clouds forming on the horizon and marching steadily
forward – an unflinching drum line stepping in sync
harmony as their footsteps strum out a strong, steady
beat of warning for what is to come

Calamity Strikes Song

Each stanza falls gently in place, unveiling long-concealed
passions,
gently, timidly, gradually,
then with greater force elevating them,
and the human heart to new heights

Clapping, the audience applauds with delighted gratitude,
souls swept clean

Flowers blossom with glorious intensity

Symphony

Hidden Beauty

Erin Kelly • Academic Transfer



The Back Roads of Me

Ashley Abramson • Academic Transfer

I am from a two-horse town, nestled between rows of yellow
corn and the gentle flow of the Platte –
where grain elevators roar,
tractors plague the empty streets, and the local bar is a place
where families eat and drunks retreat.

I am from a small canyon lake where summers were spent with
loved ones (and wet dogs)
at a sunny yellow cabin on Mallard Beach –
where two skis dropped down to one,
and you always were sun-burnt when the days were done
as jars of captured fire-flies lined the top of the stove.

I am from antiques and junk and a license plate reading, “ABE”;
the annual harvest parade,
Sunday cruisers on worn-out gravel roads,
and fifty-one classmates I’ve known since first grade.

I am from five tombstones laced with snow,
five friends who lost their lives too soon –
fallen tears wiped away from yearbook pages confining
their young smiles, braces, and freckled faces.

I am from cold stadium bleachers on a Friday night,
maroon and yellow pom-poms lying on the hardwood floor –
pleading with the crowd to give a little more.

A Child's Questions

Adriane Emily Richwell • English Instructor

Not by grace alone, by Hubble's grace
we dream the archeologist's dream
of light, the lost manuscript of dawn.

What time is it on Arcturus?
How ductile is light?
What's the muse but spooky action at a distance?

It's never time to read Dickens,
and on Arcturus it's still not time.
"In fact it's earlier," writes Dame Obedience

to Doctor Science, as her twin rides an intergalactic wheelchair
through dirty ice and hidden matter.
Headed toward different nebulae, people don't grow

in tandem, not even twins.
Later, these two women will lose track of themselves
in each other's eyes; all because of shadows

an hour cast on distant sundials, their faces
can no longer show identical wrinkles.
Time to recast the seasons under heaven —

Seed your quietude with ceded dreams.
Our nerves conjure ghosts. Before longing
recedes to memory, learn to map these photons.

A child's questions will illumine you.
Why is spider silk stronger than iron?
Are blue and red shifts all we can know of love?

What time is now on Arcturus?

But I Call Him Hero

Kayelon Easterday • Business Administration

No mission too difficult, no sacrifice too great. The war cry of the First Infantry “Big Red One” rings out. However, great was their sacrifice. No words of any tongue can ever fully commemorate the struggles, the hardship, the pain, and ultimately the sacrifice made by the soldiers of World War II. Often lost or hidden, their stories of heroism and courage, strength and faith are, at the least, awe-inspiring.

There is a gentleman with one such story that I have been so blessed to hear. He is a man dedicated to his country, his wife, and his children. Although he is seasoned with time, he is young in spirit and vibrant in heart. His name is Dean Weissert, but I call him “Hero.”

As I focused the camera, slowly zooming in and out, I couldn’t help but smile at the man centered in its view. He was crisp from head to toe, and on top of his head he proudly wore his “Big Red One” cap. Eager to hear his stories, I pressed down the record button. With the camera light blinking, he began, and I was immediately captivated by his grueling tales of the ugliness of war....

“In March of 1944, we were told we’d be among the first troops to land at Omaha Beach, so we trained and trained and trained. We made several landings on the southwest coast of England where the terrain was similar.”

Training commenced until one day the soldiers noticed something being built right outside of their camp. “When we were training one day in May, I noticed – well, we all noticed, that they were building a prisoner of war camp right next to our camp there at Weymouth. We just thought, well, ‘D-Day is coming pretty close.’” Pausing, Dean took time to explain that D-Day stood for Designated Day. “We just thought the camp was for the prisoners of war that we would be taking when we made the landing. But it wasn’t for that. One day they came and gave us orders to pack all of our stuff into our duffle bags, everything we had. They didn’t say what we were going to do, but when they

But I Call Him Hero

got us out into the courtyard and told us where to march, we marched right into that prison camp. They had machine guns up all around, and we were in there for two weeks. And that's when they told us when we would be landing."

For two weeks, the soldiers were kept in complete isolation from the rest of the world. Not even a single censored letter was passed out from within the tall walls or barbed wire fences. No longer able to train, the commanders worried that the soldiers might lose their edge. "We did calisthenics for two weeks straight and went over all of our plans and studied them."

Nerves built, and prayers were shared amongst the soldiers in the "prison camp." After receiving orders the previous day, at 2:00 a.m. on June 4th, Dean and the Big Red One marched out of the prison camp into Weymouth, England. In fear of the Germans spotting their location and movements, England was kept in utter darkness. "In England, there were no lights at all unless planes would come over and bomb. All their windows were covered with black sheets. They wouldn't even let you smoke cigarettes on the street. That's how it was all the way through the war."

Just at the break of dawn, the entire 1st Infantry Division was loaded onto ships in the Weymouth harbor, which then took them to the waiting LCI's. Able to hold roughly 300 men, the LCI's, or Landing Craft Infantry, had flat bottoms that enabled them to retain maneuverability in shallow waters (*The Coast Guard during World War II*).

The attack, which was scheduled to commence the following day, June 5th, was delayed until the next day due to the storms that were ravaging the shorelines. "When we were in the harbor in England, the guys were a singing and playing cards, waiting. When it came over the loudspeakers that when it got dark we would be pulling out and landing on the beach, it was just dead quiet. It was just when the sun was going down behind the trees; that's really when you thought whether you would ever see that again."

With each crashing wave against the boats, the soldiers' already weakened stomachs ached for relief, only to be disap-

But I Call Him Hero

pointed. "That night was kind of a hectic night. We were told to get some sleep...but it was pretty hard. The LCIs were not big boats, and they were being tossed around in the rough waters. I had to hang on just to stay in my bunk. I finally figured out that I could wedge my rifle to hold my pack between two bunks, which would keep me in my bunk. I managed to get a little sleep that way, but I think most of the others didn't get any sleep at all."

On June 6, 1944, as the thousands of ships spilled into the waters off the shores of Normandy, horrifying thoughts spilled into the minds of all those aboard. "These guys that had made invasions before, they were pretty nervous. Course I didn't know anything about it and thought, well, these guys have made two landings, and a bunch of them are here yet. And we should make it, but things didn't work out at all the way they planned." Aside from not landing at the correct location along the shoreline, the battle at Omaha Beach only got dreadfully worse.

The 16th Regiment of Dean's division was the first to land on Omaha Beach at a section of the beach called Easy Red. Their landing was timed to follow an intense aerial bombardment that was expected to seriously weaken the German defenses. Unfortunately, the dense morning fog prevented an accurate targeting of the defenses, leaving the beach virtually untouched. What lay ahead of these courageous souls was nothing short of an earth-shattering nightmare. In the treacherous waters ahead of them, mines were scattered beneath the surface. Past the water, along Omaha's four-mile-wide beach, the soldiers faced a 300-yard dash to the base of the steep bluffs. Strewn with belts of barbed wire, landmines, and endless gunfire, the sandy beaches appeared to be a death sentence.

"This guy in front of me had gone through both invasions, and I asked him, 'Well, how's it look?' And he says, 'It doesn't look good.' That's when I started to get nervous." Amidst the turbulent waters, the 18th Regiment, Dean's regiment, was forced to watch as the 16th Regiment, which was only prepared for scattered resistance, was decimated by intense and devastating fire from the largely unscathed German defenders. Within only ten minutes, the 16th regiment had become an ultimately ineffective

But I Call Him Hero

fighting force.

Dean's regiment, the 18th Regiment, was the next in line to hit the beach. Climbing down from the LCI's on rope ladders, approximately twenty men would load into the small assault boats called Higgins boats. "You had to be careful when you came off of the LCI; the water was really rough, and the boats were going like this." Motioning with his hands, Dean demonstrated how the boats rocked together and then would be vastly separated from the rough waters. "And you had to jump from one to another when they were together. If you jumped when they were apart, you were a goner, and you just went down. Some of them died that way; they just didn't make it."

"While we were waiting 'til things were ready for us to come through, all of these mines in the water had to be cleared before the boats could go in, and that took a couple of hours. And we just circled. It was nerve-racking. Finally they signaled us to come in." Between 10:00 and 11:30 a.m., Dean's regiment began its invasion of Omaha Beach. Obstructing the path, mines – along with sunken tanks and boats – made it impossible for the regiment to attack as it had planned. In virtually a single-file line, the 18th Regiment advanced toward the shoreline. The floor of Dean's boat was covered by a tarp. He recalled pulling back the tarp to find the entire floor filled with crates of explosives, for a reason unknown to him.

Forced to wade ashore, Dean and his regiment were accompanied by the hundreds of dead soldiers that littered the waters and blanketed the beach. Whichever way he swiveled his head, the entire chaotic panorama of the invasion encircled him. To his front, nothing but gloom and despair as he witnessed men dying in agonizing pain on the horrific, eruptive shoreline. Surrounded by violent blasts from the blazing boats and vehicles, Dean made his way to the beach. Above him, amidst the steel gray clouds, hundreds of warplanes crisscrossed the leaden sky. "Every square inch of the beach was covered by machine-gun fire, and our objective for the day was about five miles inland."

In an interview with the *Highline Enterprise*, Dean was asked whether any modern day films accurately depicted the

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scene on D-Day. To that, Dean responded, “Probably the one to come closest is *Saving Private Ryan*, but even that movie couldn’t really capture the whole feel of it. The movie pretty accurately portrayed the sights and sounds of the battle, but the real experience was an assault on all five senses. The movie can’t let you experience the smells and the tastes — the smell of gunpowder and the smell and taste of blood in the air and water. It can’t let you feel the concussion waves from the shelling. And it can’t let you feel the rush of adrenaline that takes over your body when you’re faced with death” (Kanwischer 1+).

“When we ran across the beach, we thought we were going to run just right up the hill. We were told to run, that was your only chance, run just as hard and as fast as you can run.” However, being weighted down by wet woolen clothes, 75 pounds of gear on his back, an M1 rifle, a belt of ammo, and half a mile of telephone wire, running fast verged on impossible. “They informed us that we would be seeing a lot of dead people. They told us that you can’t let your emotions get the best of you. You can’t stop and help these people that may have lost a leg or whatever. You want to help them. You want to comfort them, but you just can’t. Then you were neglecting your job and might lose more men on account if everyone did that. So we just had to grit our teeth and go on. But that was hard. You just felt like sitting down and crying, but you just went on.”

Dean saw men falling all around him from the unyielding machine gun fire and being blown apart by landmines, but he kept running without hesitation, never looking back. “Adrenaline helps you do things you never thought you could do. You couldn’t go back; you had to face it. You seen guys falling. When you got a little time, you did a lot of praying.” The run for his life was halted, however, when he and the rest of the 18th Regiment came face to face with yet another unexpected obstacle. “But then we came upon a swamp which we didn’t know because it wouldn’t have been there if we would have landed where we was supposed to — all slimy water, green filthy water. I had two lifebelts, and I inflated mine and floated on across. The taller guys didn’t have to inflate theirs, and they were fine.” With their packs and boots

But I Call Him Hero

now full of that “slimy water,” Dean’s regiment raced halfway up the hill. “I guess the Germans found out we were making it up the hill. So they backed up with their shells, and we had to hit the ground.” While lying there Dean made the mistake of looking back for the first time. “I’ll never forget what I saw. About thirty feet behind me, a lieutenant dove for cover from the shells, but his stomach landed right on a mine, and he was completely ripped apart. The beach I had just run up was littered with dead bodies, body parts, and blood. And in the water, I saw an LCI get hit by a shell. Hundreds of men died instantly, and I saw bodies, arms, and legs flying through the air. It’s a sight that still gives me flashbacks to this day.”

Exemplifying his unprecedented character and compassion, Dean expressed his sympathy and thoughts to those who suffered on the beaches that day. “I’ve often thought of since, how you would feel being five, six thousand miles away from home and having no feet, and you couldn’t get up and run. That’s a strange feeling if you can’t get up and run. Now I got up and ran.” With a cracked voice, Dean continued, “I thought about that afterward, about how so many times, them poor guys sitting there lost their feet. And how long it took for the medics to take care of them, and whether some of them even lived for the medics to take care of them. They lost so much blood, you know. It was pretty rough looking back and seeing all the guys laying there and some of them weren’t moving at all, although they were probably luckier than the guys that had lost their feet and were suffering.”

Once Dean and the other survivors of the 18th Regiment reached the top of the hill, they had hoped the worst was behind them. “When we got up above the hill, we were out of the mine field, but we had snipers. There were snipers sitting up in the trees camouflaged, and they took their toll on us, too.” Amidst the deadly accurate snipers and relentless shelling, Dean laid eyes on, for the first time, dead Germans. “The first dead German was a young girl. They had a machine gun, and they had sandbags around them...for protection. The barrel of the machine gun was sticking up, so I figured that they were dead,

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whoever was in there. So I ran over there and looked, and it was this young girl. She probably wasn't more than twenty-one years old, but I think she was an officer of some kind; she had a uniform. Well, the two boys, I would guess them to be twelve, thirteen years old; they were the ones filling her machine gun belt with ammunition. I think our guys threw a hand grenade in and killed all three of them."

All day and well into the night, the 18th Regiment slowly pushed inland against ferocious resistance. Their first day's objective was five miles inland; however, by 2:00 the next morning (June 7th), they had only gone approximately one-and-a-half miles. The colonel called a halt to their advance, realizing that the men could use some rest. Dean, who stayed up and guarded the first hour, along with half of the other men, finally had his turn and bedded down beside another man. Exhausted, he quickly fell asleep. When he awakened only a short hour later, he made a gruesome discovery; the man he was sleeping against wasn't a member of his regiment, but the cold lifeless body of a dead German soldier.

Dean survived what became known as the largest invasion force in human history. Bringing together the land, air, and sea forces of the allied armies, Operation Overlord delivered five naval assault divisions to the beaches of Normandy, France. The beaches, which were code-named Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword, were attacked by an invasion force that included 7,000 ships and landing craft manned by over 195,000 naval personnel from eight allied countries. Almost 133,000 troops from England, Canada, and the United States landed on D-Day. Approximately 34,250 Americans landed on Omaha Beach (*The Dwight D. Eisenhower Library*). Casualties for D-Day were estimated at 10,300, while 2,000 of those were suffered on Omaha Beach alone (*D-Day Casualty Estimates*). By June 30, over 850,000 men, 148,000 vehicles, and 570,000 tons of supplies had landed on the Normandy shores (*The Dwight D. Eisenhower Library*)....

On September 11, 1945, Dean left Germany for France and boarded a ship home. By September 20, 1945, he was back home in Eustis, Nebraska. Finally, on October 29, 1945, after serving

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for four years and fourteen days, including 26 months in the states, 22.5 months overseas, and 318 consecutive days in combat, Dean was discharged. Dean received a number of decorations and citations for his service. Among these were the Bronze Star for his actions in D-Day, five Battle Stars, a Presidential Unit Citation, the French Fourragere, a Combat Infantry Medal, a Good Conduct Medal, and the European Theater of Operation ribbon.

Unfortunately, no amount of awards could remove the mental scars of his wartime experiences. Dean reflected on the feelings he and the men had towards the Germans. "First, when we got into France we figured the more Germans we killed, and the more that we could take prisoners, the sooner we'd get to go home. So that was on our mind pretty much all the way through France and Belgium, but once we hit Germany, the German people treated us so nice." Softly, Dean went on: "In the early part of the war, we felt good about the more we could kill, but they all had mothers, they all had sisters and brothers at home. You know, war is terrible when you think about it that way. People are getting killed; they have families."

Dean suffered from flashbacks, nightmares, inability to sleep, and depression for nearly fifty years after the war. Only recently, with the aid of anti-depressants, has he finally started sleeping normally. Out of respect for the families of the deceased, Dean never spoke of the war or the gruesome memories that, to this day, played in his mind. Only after encouragement from the Eisenhower Foundation and best-selling author Stephen Ambrose did Dean begin to make his past known. Humbly downplaying his role in the war, Dean told the *Highline Enterprise*, "Please don't make me out to be a hero. I was just doing my job, like all the guys behind the front lines were doing" (Kanwischer 1+).

As I stopped the video camera, I watched as Dean, once a young, brave soldier, walked away from the table as a courageous, 89-year-old man. From the back room, he emerged with boxes of photographs, including those from his recent trip back to Europe. One picture depicted the men of Dean's 18th Regiment at a

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reunion, celebrating the 40th Anniversary of D-Day. Dean said to me, "It is hard for me to think that out of all of these guys, I am the only one still alive." Basking in mounds of history, I was mesmerized. Dean even got out his uniform for me to see and touch.

As I flipped through the pages of his handwritten photo album, I noticed Dean scrambling through the kitchen cupboards. He told me, "I have something for you." Opening his hand he presented me with a jar of sand from Omaha Beach, and I couldn't have been more grateful. He is Army Staff Sergeant Dean M. Weissert, but the world calls him "Hero." 🇺🇸



Army Staff Sergeant Dean M. Weissert on Omaha Beach

But I Call Him Hero

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Uncomfortable

Arica Z. Carlson • Academic Transfer

Waking up in sweaty pajamas
The fabric stuck to your back like a second skin.
A long silence on a first date,
awkward chewing,
casting your gaze anywhere it won't catch his.
Laughing when no one else does.
Falling down where everyone can see you.
A touch of a stranger on the sidewalk.
Too potent to be accidental.

Dwayne

Jordan Carman • Academic Transfer

Back then
the three of us,
closer than siblings,
would ride in the back
of Dwayne's aquamarine El Camino.

On blocks of splintered scrap wood we sat
laughing hard with our child bellies as
warm summer wind blew our hair.
And Dwayne would smile.
Through his horned-rimmed glasses,

and the rearview mirror –
Dwyane would watch us
and laugh so hard
that his burly soldier body
shook harder than it had in years.

Time moved simply then
riding through the town that raised my father,
but how were we to know
of the ways the wind can change.

Eagles

Shannon Savage • Graphic Design



I Am From

Ann Mohammad • Academic Transfer

I am from an Eden torn apart by the merciless hearts
of its own people.

I am from the muddy waters and the busy banks of Tigris.

I am from wide open space full of fear and the unknown,
hunger imposed by the powerful and gallows set up by the evil.

I am from the haunting echoes of bombs and chaos of planes.

I am from forced detachment from a motherland.

I am from a man of passion, and a woman of sacrifice.

I am from sleeping on thorns and showering with rainwater.

I am from the eminent mountains of smuggling
and the tough and cold hands of deporters.

I am from a rebirth, an 8-year-old home, a faith lost and regained.

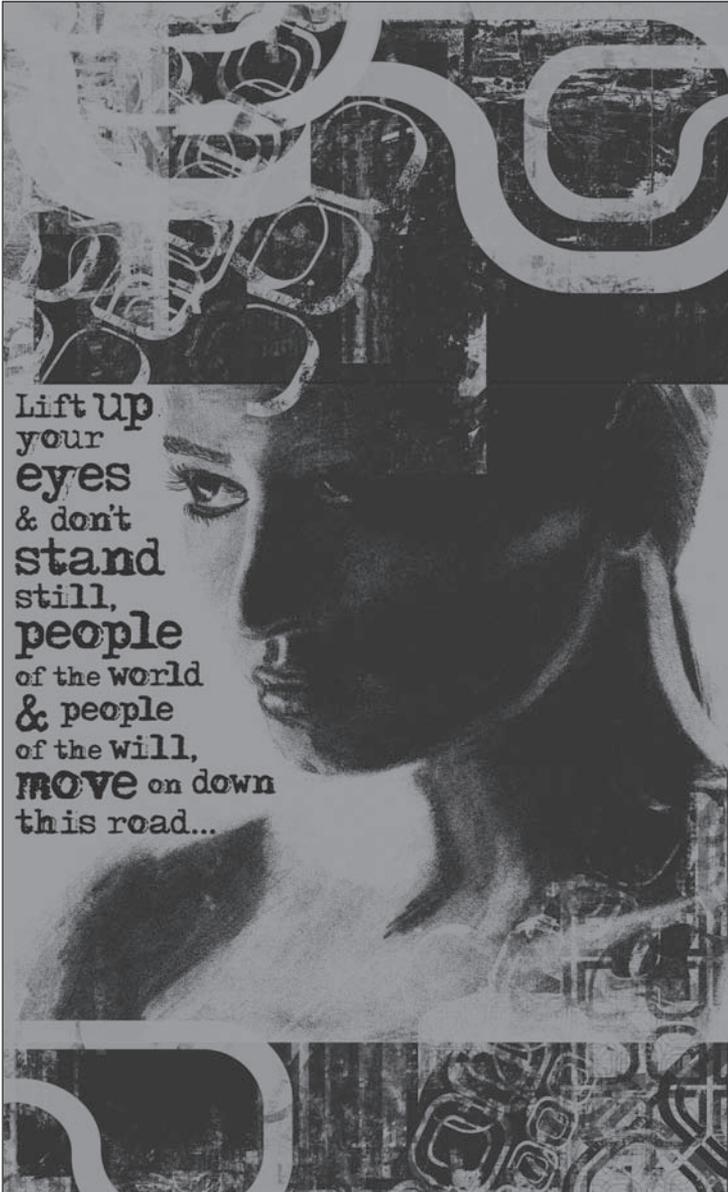
I am from a soul that dwells deep within my heart
despite the distance.

I am from the aspirations of four siblings,
and brothers and sisters in faith with open ears and open hearts.

I am from the need of peace.

Motivate Me

Renee Krenk • Graphic Design



Lift up
your
eyes
& don't
stand
still,
people
of the world
& people
of the will,
MOVE on down
this road...

The Dissonance of a Lucid Dream and a Reoccurring Image

Bryan Klopping • Academic Transfer

There's a cat that frequents my father's graveyard
who sits upon his grave.
The look within its eyes makes me want to die,
but I'd never give that away.

There's a fine line in my memory,
a line that sits upon her hip,
and it's the line between life and death,
but I'll never let it slip.

I see it in the static on the airwaves,
and it haunts me to no end,
but the impending silence and end to the violence
consumes me once again.

There's a torch that lights my path
up to heaven from down below,
so I close my eyes and wait to die,
so I'll never let him go.

There's a story not worth reading
and a film of it as well.
Perhaps it's the plot or the ghastly ending,
but that story, I'll never tell.

There's this lucid dream I'm having
of a doctor and a heart.
He says the best way to solve a problem
is to never let it start.

Stellinger Nox Noctis

Heather Anne Williams • Academic Transfer



Bedtime

Ashley Wooton • Academic Transfer



Coming Home from Work

Vanessa Buck • Academic Transfer

“Damn it, it’s cold out there,” I said as I stomped the snow off of my boots. A snowstorm had given us a couple of feet of snow, and I was just coming home from work.

“Why do you think I’ve been inside all day?” Jeff said. He was sitting at the kitchen table reading the local paper. I always found the table to be amusing. It was an old restaurant table with the number plate still intact that read “61.” Jeff bought the table and matching chairs for me at a garage sale the year before.

“Lucky for me I had the day off,” Jeff told me. He was drinking coffee out of a blue Elvis Presley mug. It must have been hotter than he expected because he winced when he tried to take a gulp.

“Ha, ha,” I said. “You don’t drink coffee like that.” I made sure to point and laugh. Jeff has always hated that, but he always deserved it. I even made fun of the one shirt of his that I liked the best. It was a blue and red striped polo shirt. On most people, I would have thought that it was an ugly shirt, but it looked good on Jeff. I couldn’t help but smile when I saw that he was wearing it.

“What’cha readin’?” I asked him. Jeff’s paper was spread across the table. He had taken it apart, and it was everywhere. I was performing the task of taking off my coat, hat, gloves, and scarf and tossing them on one of the chairs. “What a chore. I hate winter,” I said.

“I’m reading the paper. You might have noticed that if you had just looked,” Jeff said in his usual sarcastic way. He took a sip of his coffee, being careful not to hurt himself. I took the cup from him and took a sip then said, “I meant, what article are you reading specifically?”

Smiling at me, he said, “You should have said that in the first place. It’s a riveting tale of a young homeowner in Colorado.”

“Riveting, huh,” I said as I sat down to unlace my boots.

“This girl, Jessica something, put a wreath on her front door. And because it was in the form of a peace symbol, some of the

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people in her neighborhood started pissing and moaning about it. Saying shit like it is against the war in Iraq, or it's a satanic symbol. Shit like that."

"What's satanic about a peace symbol?" I asked.

"Like I know. Anyway, there were people in her homeowner's association who started to bitch about it. So, the president of the association called a meeting of some committee. And he threatens the girl who has the wreath on her door by saying that he's going to fine her twenty-five dollars a day until she takes it down."

"That's shitty," I said. Jeff gave me an annoyed look for interrupting him. "Don't give me your shit. Please, keep going. I'm listening," I assured him as I took another sip of his coffee.

"Anyway, this committee gets together and decides that there is nothing wrong with putting up a seasonal wreath because all of the other neighbors are doing the same thing, right? So what if it's a peace sign? But that just pissed off the president of the association, I guess, because he fired all of the committee members," Jeff said.

"He did? Are you kidding me?" I said.

"Nope, not one bit," Jeff said. "The girl with the wreath says, 'Peace is way bigger than not being at war.' Huh, we're still discriminating against hippies."

"No, my dear, hippies don't own homes. I think you mean yuppies," I said getting up to put a cup of water in the microwave for some tea. I was still cold.

"Will you get me another cup of coffee?" Jeff asked.

"What's wrong with yours?" I said.

"Your coffee is better than mine," Jeff said, looking into his cup.

"How sweet. Do you think that if we put a big peace symbol wreath on the door, the neighbors would complain?" I asked while spooning sugar out of a yellow, glass sugar bowl into Jeff's cup for his coffee.

"No. In this neighborhood, someone would steal it. What are these people gonna go after next? I bet it will be the yellow ribbons around trees," Jeff said.

Coming Home from Work

“Do you want creamer at all?” I asked.

“No, thank you,” he said. I took my hot water out of the microwave and put a teabag in it. Then I took Jeff his coffee and sat back down.

Reaching out to take my hand he asked, “So, how was work?”

“It was work,” I told him, which was true. The day had been boring. I had gone to class that morning and then gone to work. “Nothing interesting happened. The weather is bad, the roads are awful, and it’s cold.”

“Well, that sucks,” he said.

“Yep. I think that we should have a fireplace to keep us warm,” I said looking around the kitchen of our cheap little rental. I couldn’t help to notice that the wood print contact paper on the metal cabinets was starting to peel. Jeff was caressing my hand and looking at the table.

“That would be nice. We could make love down by the fire.”

“Pervert,” I said, giving him a sly look.

“Possibly,” he said. He looked as if he was thinking about something, but he was having trouble putting it together into words. I had seen the look before, so, I asked him about what was in his head.

“I think that people should be nicer to each other,” Jeff said looking at me.

“What did I do?” I said.

“Nothing. I was thinking about that article. Some people just don’t know how to pick battles, do they? I mean, a bunch of people lost their jobs because of a wreath. It’s a whole load of shit,” Jeff said.

“I think that you are thinking too much about it. This kind of stupid shit happens all the time. You just happened to read about it in the paper. And what in the hell are you talking about?” I told him.

“You’re right, and, well,” he said. He paused for a second to think. I had no idea what he was trying so hard to get at. Jeff started looking like he was nervous. “I met the girl in the article. She was at that party I went to in Denver last month. She told me this entire story, and then I read about it in the paper.” Jeff

Coming Home from Work

was still just staring at the table.

“That’s interesting, Jeff. But, you look like there is something else on your mind, dear.” I knew that I was right.

“James,” he said. He lifted his head but did not look at me. He was still holding my hand.

“What is it, honey?” I asked him.

“I took that girl with me back to the hotel room that night.” Jeff was struggling to get something, if anything, else out but couldn’t do it. Tears had filled his eyes. “I’m sorry,” he said. Then he stood up and grabbed his coat.

“What are you saying to me?” I stood up and reached for his arm, but he was already walking through the living room and out the front door. I could do nothing but stand there. My confusion had stopped my thought process, and I was frozen.

“I want to talk about this, James. Just call me later,” Jeff said closing the door behind him.

As I sat back down I couldn’t help but look around the kitchen. There was the peeling contact paper on the cabinets, and the one-compartment sink that was half-filled with dishes. Even though it was a crappy rental, this was our home. I turned and looked at the paper still scattered across the table. I looked at the article about the girl in Colorado, and for some reason, I wondered if maybe I should buy my own house. 🏠

Cars

Laura Drawbaugh • Visual Publications



Stuffy

Erica Zoucha • Academic Transfer

In the closet
the stuffed dog,
the stuffed monkey,
and the evening house maid.

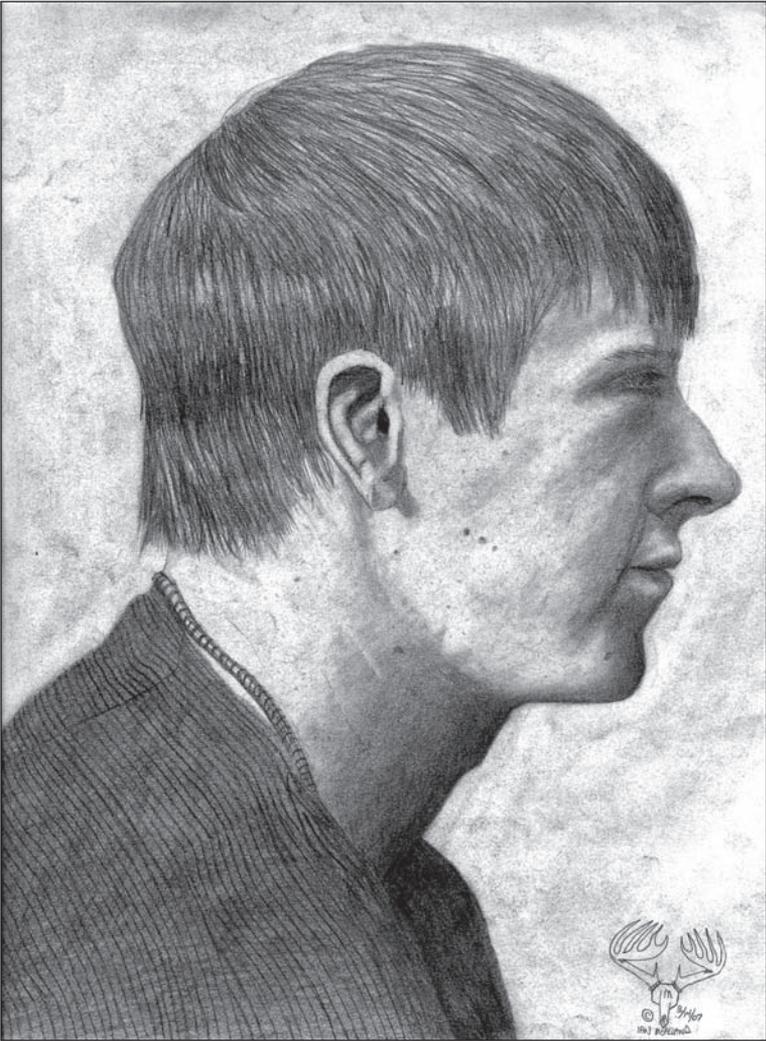
Come Go with Me

Carolee Ritter • English Chair



Mug Shot

Ian Moreland • Graphic Design



Love Must Have Limits

Rachel Lamb • Academic Transfer

Sometimes we find love in the strangest places and sometimes, with the strangest people. But it's not whom you love, or how you find it, that matters. It's how we are loved that makes the difference. And if there is one thing I have learned about love, it is that love must have its limits.

His name was Chad; he was my first love, and he rocked my world. I'm not sure what really attracted me to him initially; we definitely came from opposite worlds. I was a sheltered, small-town pastor's daughter with the curse of bold rebellion. Chad was notorious for his brutal fighting techniques and drug dealing. He was feared among those who knew him and those who didn't. You didn't have to know him to see that you didn't want to mess with him. He was tall with thick, broad shoulders. You could easily see the defiance of his toned, bulk muscle throughout his forearms and calves. He had brown, freckled skin and an afro the size of Texas. But Chad wasn't all frightening. He was actually very fun. He had a clever humor and was always the center of entertainment at every social gathering.

Chad and I spent three years together in what was the most dysfunctional and abusive relationship I've ever experienced. In the beginning, there were no expectations and no responsibilities. We spent many nights staying up getting high and talking for hours on end. We ran with a rough crowd. Some of Chad's friends were the top methamphetamine dealers in town. Chad was well respected on the streets, and I was held high because I was his girl. I never had to wait for a drink or a hit, and I never had to pay for anything. Chad and I were partners in crime, reckless to the law and to society. But that could only last for so long.

After a few years of intense partying, a served prison term, and an unexpected pregnancy, we were on a different road together – a winding road headed down a very dangerous path with nowhere to turn off.

Love Must Have Limits

It was late; I was tired. I watched the rain droplets slide down the windshield and the glare of the street lights on the wet pavement. I'd driven this route so many times; even with my mind in other places, my subconscious would take the correct turns. I glanced back in my rearview at my precious, new little girl. She slept softly, her lips pouting just like her father's. She looked like an angel – beautiful soft skin and distinct features.

I dreaded reaching his house. There was always something to fight about, something new to hate him for. Everything had changed after Tiana was born. I cared about responsibility, growing up, and being a family. And, well, Chad, he wanted things to stay the same.

I knew there was going to be trouble as soon as I pulled up. Chad approached from the front porch of his house. I watched him stagger down the wooden stairs; the intense look in his eye and his determined charge for the car door told me he was high. He carried Tiana as we walked up to the house. We didn't say much more than, "What's up?" It was the only way we greeted each other anymore. As we walked into his house, I felt suffocated by the thick stench of sprayed air freshener and candles mixed with cigarette smoke.

"How many times have I told him not to smoke in places where my baby goes?" I thought bitterly to myself. It wasn't long before we were arguing, mostly about him constantly being high and how the last one hundred dollars meant for diapers and formula had been spent on an eight ball. We fought about his constant lack of financial support and his ongoing porn addiction. These were things that I'd learned to accept before, but not anymore with Tiana. She deserved better than I did.

"I'm so tired of your lies. It never ends! It's always the same things, the same arguments, and I don't need it!" I screamed. At this point we were outside on the porch, where we usually went to fight, leaving Tiana inside. I began to walk towards the door. All I wanted was to get out of there.

"We're leaving you, Chad," I threatened.

"Oh, you think so?" And with that, he pushed me to the ground, walked inside, and locked the door. Panic flooded me.

Love Must Have Limits

I rushed to my feet, pounding on the door; my little girl was trapped inside with that monster.

“Go home, bitch!” he yelled from inside.

I screamed at him through the door, banging and pounding until my fists tingled with numbness. Then after what seemed eternity, I heard the door open, and Chad walked out.

“You stupid bitch, you think you’re so high and mighty.”

His words fed the fire burning inside of me. I could feel my anger pumping through my veins and heat flooding my face. I walked up until I was inches from his nose and looked him into his fierce, bloodshot eyes.

Through clenched teeth, I hissed, “It’s over, Chad. I’m done. You will never see me or Tiana again. We’re out.”

With that, in a split second, I felt his strong hands grip my neck. My feet lifted from the ground as he carried me across the porch leaning me over the edge. I looked into his eyes, afraid, part of me screaming and fighting for help, and the other part wanting him to just kill me so that I could escape this deadly rollercoaster I’d been stuck on for the past three years. And then the strangest thing happened; he let go and fell to the ground weeping.

These were the moments that always made me weak. I felt sorry for him; he never did stand a chance. His dysfunctional home life had set the standard. How many times he had watched his father beat and rape his mother I couldn’t tell you. The stories had always made me feel empathy and compassion for him, but not that day. That day was the end of trying, the end of hoping and believing in change.

I slowly walked into the house, leaving Chad behind, hoping to get Tiana and get out as fast as possible. But Chad quickly followed me inside and snatched her from my arms, gripping her tightly. He sat down holding onto her and weeping. She cried and cried; he was holding her too tightly. She was afraid. Infants could sense hostility in the environment, and she knew something was wrong. She knew something was dangerous. I sat and watched for over an hour, eyeing his every twitch and every faint movement. She was so tiny, only a month old; it wouldn’t take

Love Must Have Limits

much for him to hurt her. I felt helpless, trapped, and afraid. He wept rocking her back and forth.

“What would I do if something happened? How would I ever forgive myself?” I fearfully thought to myself.

Finally, I summoned up the strength to ask him for her. He didn't respond at all. Terrified, I reached for her, my hands shaking with terror. Not a word was said as I took her into my arms, placed her in the infant seat, and hurried out to my car. I started the car as fast as I could, struggling to get the keys into the ignition; my heart was beating so fast. I feared he would try to stop me; I feared he would take her. I expected him to. I kept glancing back at the front door, just waiting for him to appear. But he never did.

That was one of the most terrifying days of my life but also one of the most defining. That day I decided to begin loving my daughter and protecting her. And more importantly, it was the day that I decided to begin loving myself. My value system, my self-respect and my self-love will be the ultimate example my children follow. It was time for me to set the standard. Finally, I had seen the exit and turned off the narrow road. Love, although beautiful and full of hope, must have limits. 🧡

Unfinished Spring

Nic Batterton • Human Services



The Red Morning

Jordan Carman • Academic Transfer

By the morning –
the red worms had filled
the whites
of her brown eyes

And the plastic snakes –
encircled her arms
binding her
to the bed.

We watched her chest rise –
and fall
with each small breath
she forced.

The sound came from her lungs –
sticky.
Wet.
Full.

The nurse said –
her kidneys would soon
calcify.
Hard as stones.

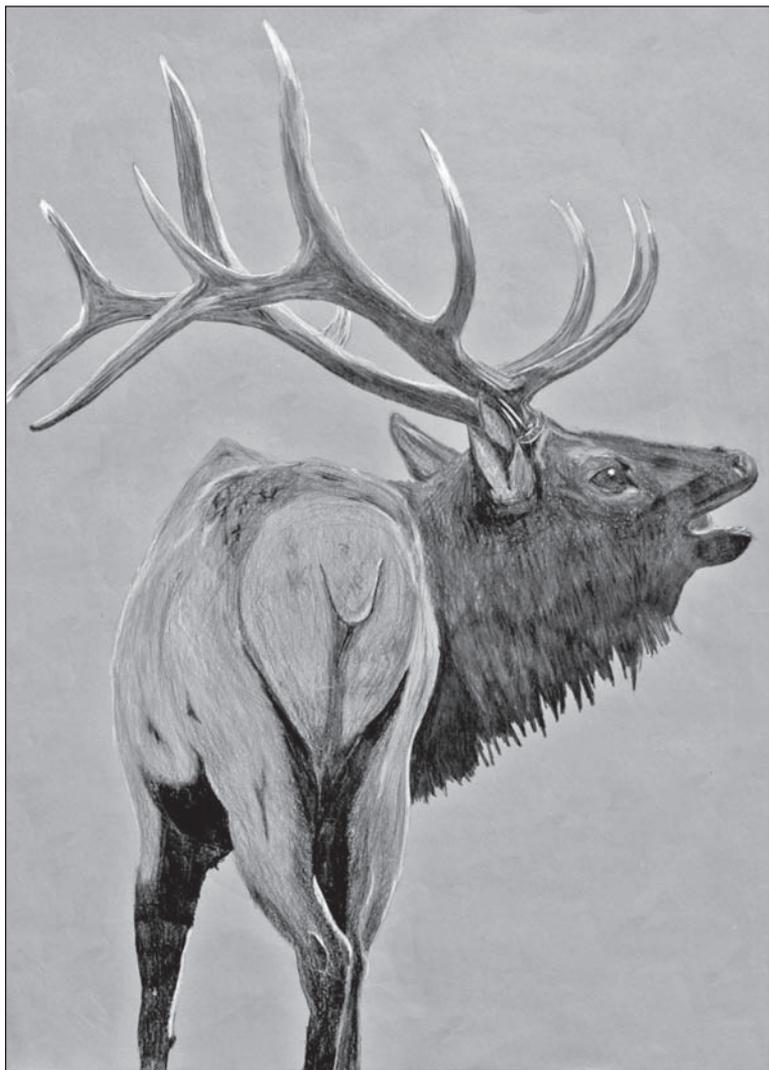
Her belly –
fully distended.
Now occupied only
by the poison inside.

The Red Morning

Her children –
now grown.
Sat.
Surrounding her bed,
and for once they all stayed –
listening.
Watching.
Waiting.

Calling Her Name

Chris Jensen • Graphic Design



Our Contributors

Ashley Abramson (“Back Roads of Me,” “Clay Sunset”): A country girl at heart, Ashley was raised in a small farming community in the cornfields of Nebraska, and she wouldn’t dream of raising her kids anywhere else. When Ashley saw the sunset pictured in “Clay Sunset,” she sat down on the dusty country road and stared. Luckily, she also had her camera with her. Although she’s now a college student in Lincoln, Ashley believes her small-town values cause her to wave at each person she passes on the street. Memories of Ashley’s upbringing inspired her to write her poem, “Back Roads of Me.”

Heather L. Barnes (“My Memory of Him,” “Skywalk,” “The Face”): Born and raised in Michigan, Heather has lived in Nebraska for only a couple of years. She has a passion for writing and photography and hopes to become successful at both. She wrote her poem, “My Memory of Him,” about her grandfather.

Nic Batterton (“Unfinished Spring”): Nic says his photograph, “Unfinished Spring,” reminded him of how he was growing and transforming – just like the flower – as he readied himself to transfer to UNL. Nic says he loves life and all it has to offer. Life is beautiful, he says, so smile already!

Connie Beall (“Intense,” “Simplicity”): Connie enjoys wearing ugly shoes that no one else will wear. She says she loves her life and her kids. “Simplicity” features her niece.

Danielle Beebe (“Pink Flower,” “Caterpillars”): Danielle’s biggest goal in life is to be a photographer for the *National Geographic*. She’s loved taking pictures all of her life, but she’s only recently thought of it as a career choice. She is transferring to Hixon/Leid College for Fine and Performing Arts. Danielle thanks Nic for telling her about *Illuminations* and encouraging her to submit her photos.

Jamie Behrends (“My War, Our War (A Wife’s View)”): Jamie’s favorite thing to do is to hang out with her two boys, especially taking them to parks and going down every slide. Jamie

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says if she could get paid for loving her husband and her kids, she'd be a millionaire. Jamie wrote the wife's view of "My War, Our War" because she felt it was the only way to help people understand the trials she went through when her husband was deployed. She'd like others who have a spouse deployed to know they're not alone.

Jeremiah Behrends ("My War, Our War" (A Husband's View")): Jeremiah is the father of two boys. He spent eight years in the U.S. Army as an infantryman stationed in Georgia, Kansas, and Iraq. After medically retiring from the Army, Jeremiah decided to go back to school with his wife. He says that to the other students in the classes they take together, he and his wife are known as "the married people." Jeremiah wrote "My War, Our War (A Husband's View)" to share a very difficult time in his life that he'd been unable to share with anyone before.

Maddie Bromwich ("The Man that Walked (A True Story)," "The Tattooed Girl (A Self-Portrait)": Maddie loves tofu and plans on one day being a reality TV star and then a literary/artistic master. When she gets home from class, she enjoys having staring contests with her cat and eating string cheese. Her story, "The Man that Walked," is based on something that actually happened to her almost two years ago, while "The Tattooed Girl (A Self-Portrait)" is an illustration she did in class for a motivational poster.

Vanessa Buck ("Coming Home from Work"): Vanessa says she was named after a hooker character in a movie. She is fascinated by Japanese culture, including anime, manga, and old samurai films. A single-mother of a three-year-old, Vanessa is compelled to stack dirty dishes and studies literature with a passion.

Sarah Butts ("Evening"): Sarah's motto is, "Grab life by the horns and never lose your grip!" She carries her camera with her everywhere and photographs everything from bugs to car accidents. Her photograph, "Evening," was her interpretation of

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a lovely bit of alone time. Sarah has three dogs, eight cats, two guinea pigs, one rabbit, and five varieties of birds, and she and her family are building a museum of crafts and antiques.

Arica Z. Carlson (“Uncomfortable” and “The Stallion of 1989”): Arica has enjoyed writing since she was a child, and taking a creative writing course at SCC re-sparked her passion. Because she studies and works in the field of sign language interpretation, vivid description and imagery are very much a part of her life.

Jordan Carman (“Stranger,” “Dwayne,” “The Red Morning,” “Low Rain”): Jordan usually writes short stories but has been enjoying trying out different styles of poetry. When not working, Jordan enjoys reading, writing, movies, music, languages, art, and history.

Sam Christiansen (“Dad: Digger of Holes, College Professor, Role Model”): Sam says he can be shy, but once people get to know him, he’s funny, kind, open-minded, relaxed, creative, friendly, and extroverted. Sam says he wrote his essay about his dad – a horticulture teacher at SCC’s Beatrice campus – because he feels he owes his dad a lot and is thankful to be his son.

Laura Drawbaugh (“Cars,” “Hold On!”): Laura loves photography and music. Without them, she says she’d go insane. For “Cars,” Laura merged two photographs she took. She thinks the resulting photo turned out well (and looks even better in color!). “Hold On!” was motivated by a merry-go-around experience with her friends.

Kayelon L. Easterday (“But I Call Him Hero”): Kayelon is the third of four girls and a tomboy at heart. She is a perfectionist, she loves to garden, she raises purebred Black Angus cattle, and she has a phobia of socks. Kayelon had been eager to hear the entire story of the WW II veteran who had spoken to her high school history class, but it wasn’t until she received a writing as-

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signment in Composition I that she had a chance to conduct her two-hour interview with the hero.

Matthew Eliker (“Sigh of Relief”): Matt is from Utica, NE, and enjoys skateboarding, playing baseball, and lifting weights. He’s going to school for criminal justice and is in the Army Reserves. Matt says he wrote “Sigh of Relief” because, “This was just a memorable time of my life.”

Matthew Hayden (“The Familial Clutter”): Matthew says his habits include breathing, cynicism, and spending time with his wife. He doesn’t believe in guilty pleasures. Matthew wrote “The Familial Clutter” in an attempt to clarify in his mind the events that occurred when his mom died.

Chris Jensen (“All Alone,” “Calling her Name”): Chris loves to hunt and fish. It’s no wonder, then, that wildlife is his favorite drawing subject, as seen in his works, “All Alone,” and “Calling her Name.”

Jeanine Jewell (“Five Pieces”): An English instructor at the Lincoln campus, Jeanine says her poem, “Five Pieces,” was created in a class she taught in which her students spent a day doing poetry exercises. This particular exercise had five specific steps to follow.

Erin Kelly (“Hidden Beauty”): Erin said she was floored when she saw how beautifully this quick snapshot came out. She credits her brother, who first noticed this little side path winding through a Colorado downtown area and said it would make a cool picture. Erin plans on majoring in psychology and minoring in sign language (and possibly art) at UNL. Erin says she would love to be a freelance photographer and writer if she weren’t so scared of failing. Erin also loves rollercoasters, scrapbooking, knitting, and movies.

B. Neal Kirchner (“The Singer in the Trees,” “Trouble in Mind”): Neal grew up in a small-town Kansas motel near the banks of

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the Neosho, and he says catfish fear him. He once nailed a love poem to the roof of a shed, and he's afraid of bees.

Bryan Kloppig (“The Dissonance of a Lucid Dream and a Reoccurring Image”): Bryan says that from a young age, he's turned to the sublimation of his problems. He's been involved in all aspects of the production of music, film, and poetry, and he's a lucid dreamer. Bryan reveals that since his father's passing in the spring of 2007, he's learned an impressive amount of information about himself, and he's excited for what comes next.

Renee Krenk (“Adjusting Beauty,” “Erin,” “Motivate Me,” “Personal Canvas”): Renee loves photography, music, fashion, architecture, bright colors, advertising, and collecting Jones soda labels. “Adjusting Beauty” was part of a photo shoot for a local dance studio. Renee shot “Erin” with a new camera in a field of wild sunflowers near her house. Her younger sister is the model. “Motivate Me” was a design project for class using hand-drawn illustrations in a digital composition. And for “Personal Canvas,” a self-portrait, Renee really did paint all over herself with acrylic paint.

Ashley Krska (“Calamity Strikes Song”): Ashley thinks it's odd, but she enjoys reading romance novels. She's taken jazz, ballet, tap, and toe dance lessons for 14 years, and she's a horrible nail biter. After observing a storm develop one night, Ashley decided to write a poem using a symphony performance to describe it. The result is “Calamity Strikes Song.”

Rachel Lamb (“Love Must Have Limits”): Rachel says she's determined, stubborn, outspoken, and brutally honest. Her favorite day of the week is Thursday when she gets to watch *Grey's Anatomy* with a bottle of red wine. Rachel wrote “Love Must Have Limits” in hopes of helping other women escape abusive relationships.

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Ann Mohammad (“I Am From”): Ann has an absolute love for writing and politics. These interests pushed her to complete five journals in three years and major in International Relations so she could have an opportunity to take part in all her interests.

Stephanie Mitchell (“Daughter, Beware the Wrecking Ball”): Stephanie admits she has very liberal viewpoints, but she agrees and respects several conservative ones. She loves to read and write poetry, and she has two babies – her cats Antony and Snickers. Stephanie wrote, “Daughter, Beware the Wrecking Ball” to share a personal experience that had a profound impact on her life; she hopes it will help open eyes to the reality of abuse.

Ian Moreland (“Mug Shot”): Ian grew up on a ranch in western Nebraska and has been drawing all of his life. He drew “Mug Shot,” a self-portrait, as an assignment for a drawing class. He wanted to make it as realistic as possible.

Tanner Peregrine (Cover, “Venice Water Ride”): Tanner says he uses the freedom of art to express himself from day to day. He wanted to continue improving his portfolio, so he was motivated to try something new when he used watercolors to create “Venice Water Ride.”

Jenna Peterson (“Rurouni Kenshin,” “The Death of Aslan,”): Jenna loves watching and drawing Japanese animation, and when she started watching the show *Rurouni Kenshin*, she couldn’t help but draw it. For “The Death of Aslan,” Jenna drew on the rich symbolism in the Narnia books. Apart from drawing, Jenna loves singing, socializing, and being outside. She also loves being busy and organized.

Claudia Reinhardt (“Wild Milkweed Pod”): A Writing Assistant in the Multi-Academic Center, Claudia has written and edited publications for corporations, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions for many years. She serves on the Lincoln Libraries Foundation board and says that most of her

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poetry is inspired by experiences with nature. In her “fun” time, biking keeps her moving, yoga keeps her balanced, reading keeps her focused, and gardening keeps her grounded – literally!

Max Reis (“Some Days,” “Dog House”): Max is a painter and a potter and was a high school art teacher for twenty years. He now serves as a mentor for the LPS gifted program. Married for 38 years, Max has created two public art projects, the Tour de Lincoln and Star Art.

Adriane Emily Richwell (“A Child’s Questions”): Adriane believes that poems matter more than poets, and any life worth living feeds the imagination. In her poem, “A Child’s Questions,” Adriane explores the relationship between science and literature.

Luis Rios (“Wetback”): Luis wrote “Wetback” because he wanted other people to know what it felt like to be illegal, and that illegal immigrants could be good people, too. Luis wishes to thank Jeanine Jewell and the staff of the LRC for the help he received in finishing his story.

Carolee Ritter (“Come Go with Me,” “Keep an Eye on Summer,” “The Nearest Faraway Place,” “There on the Sand”): Carolee says the prairie has replaced the sea as her landscape, but she was born and raised at the beach – the sand, surf, and dunes are in her blood. Carolee’s four photographs are images of the three most beautiful things she knows: the beach, her niece, and her brother as a father.

Mary Ann Rowe (“Mother”): Mary Ann is a workaholic and has to force herself to do nothing. Mary Ann’s mother impressed upon her the importance of Christian ethics, work ethics, and moral values, and “Mother” is a tribute to her.

Nicole Running (“Bright Eye,” “Squeak,” “Text”): Nicole says she’s been interested in art since she was a “wee one.” Art motivates her, and she doesn’t know what she’d do without it. Nicole

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was doing a photo shoot when she randomly snapped the photo “Bright Eye.” Nicole thought it turned out well for an accidental shot.

Shannon Savage (“Eagles”): Shannon loves doing scratch art; it’s one of her favorite mediums. “Eagles” features Shannon’s most loved birds. When she’s hungry, Shannon enjoys her favorite snack – graham crackers and milk.

Leo Sougey (“Rocky Mountains Bear Lake”): A custodian at SCC’s Lincoln campus, Leo took his stunning photo of Rocky Mountains Bear Lake on a motorcycle trip to Loveland, Colorado. The photo was taken in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Jacob Thomas (“Jacob-Glass Type”): Jacob says his wife makes him who he is. He was motivated to make his image, “Jacob-Glass Type,” by his instructor, Merrill Peterson.

Heather Anne Williams (“Stellinger Nox Noctis”): Heather graduated from Beatrice and went to SCC because her parents told her to. She says now they knew what they were doing. Most of Heather’s time is spent buried in prisma color pencils and markers. When she does emerge from her cave, she enjoys being outside and catching an occasional movie. Heather said “Stellinger Nox Noctis” was drawn in the presence of inter-lecture boredom space.

Ashley Wooton (“The Basketball Game,” “Bed Time,” “Omniscience”): Ashley finished her AA degree – a two-year degree – in one year and is attending Northwest Missouri State University. She has a unique obsession with classic Hollywood. Audrey Hepburn is her idol, and Ashley can pull off wearing a fedora. She loves listening to Frank Sinatra and is comfortable being who she is, no matter who surrounds her.

Hannah Zetocha (“The Beauty of Feet”): Hannah has been drawing pictures all her life, but she’s taken only one art class.

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She's taken ballet for fifteen years and is a neat-freak. She actually loves to clean. She plans on eventually marrying and having kids while writing books. She thanks her dad for encouraging her to submit her drawings to *Illuminations*.

Erica Zoucha (“Stuffy”): Erica was inspired to write her haiku, “Stuffy,” after watching *The Brady Bunch Movie*. She's from a small town of 2000 people and feels she's fun and easy to get along with.

