

What is the Quill?

The *Crowder Quill* is a literary-art magazine published by the Magazine Production class at Crowder College in order to encourage and showcase the creative abilities of local writers, artists, and photographers, as well as to provide a cultural link between Crowder College and our surrounding communities

The publication is funded through Crowder College as an educational tool and service to the community. Both the contest and publication are free.

The *Crowder Quill* is published each spring semester; the contest deadline is Feb. 1 each year. Electronic submissions are encouraged; email Quill@crowder.edu or LBailey@crowder.edu for instructions.



About the Contest

The magazine is a compilation of winning entries in literary and art categories:

Nonfiction: Essays, character sketches and other true-to-life writings should be limited to 1800 words.

Fiction: Clear plot development and well-defined characters are expected; also limit of 1800 words.

Poetry: Whether free verse, blank verse, rhymed or metered verse, poetry should make a point, state emotion, or relate an experience.

Black and White Art: Entries include pen, pencil, and charcoal creations with good contrast and composition.

Color Art: Entries include oil, colored pencil, pastels, and acrylic.

Digital Art: This graphic art category includes computer-generated art or extensively manipulated photographs in order to create special effects. Photography with only minor adjustments should be entered in one of the photography categories.

Black and White Photography: Entries may be reproduced from film or digital files with only minor corrections and adjustments.

Color Photography: Film or digital files that emphasize vibrant color reproduction are sought.

For more details about the contest and an entry form, see pages 96-98.

Contact Information

To request more information about the contest, acquire an entry form, or to be placed on the mailing list, please contact the Quill:

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Back inside cover: *Memories* Crystal Moody | Rocky Comfort | Crowder | Honorable Mention | Color Photography

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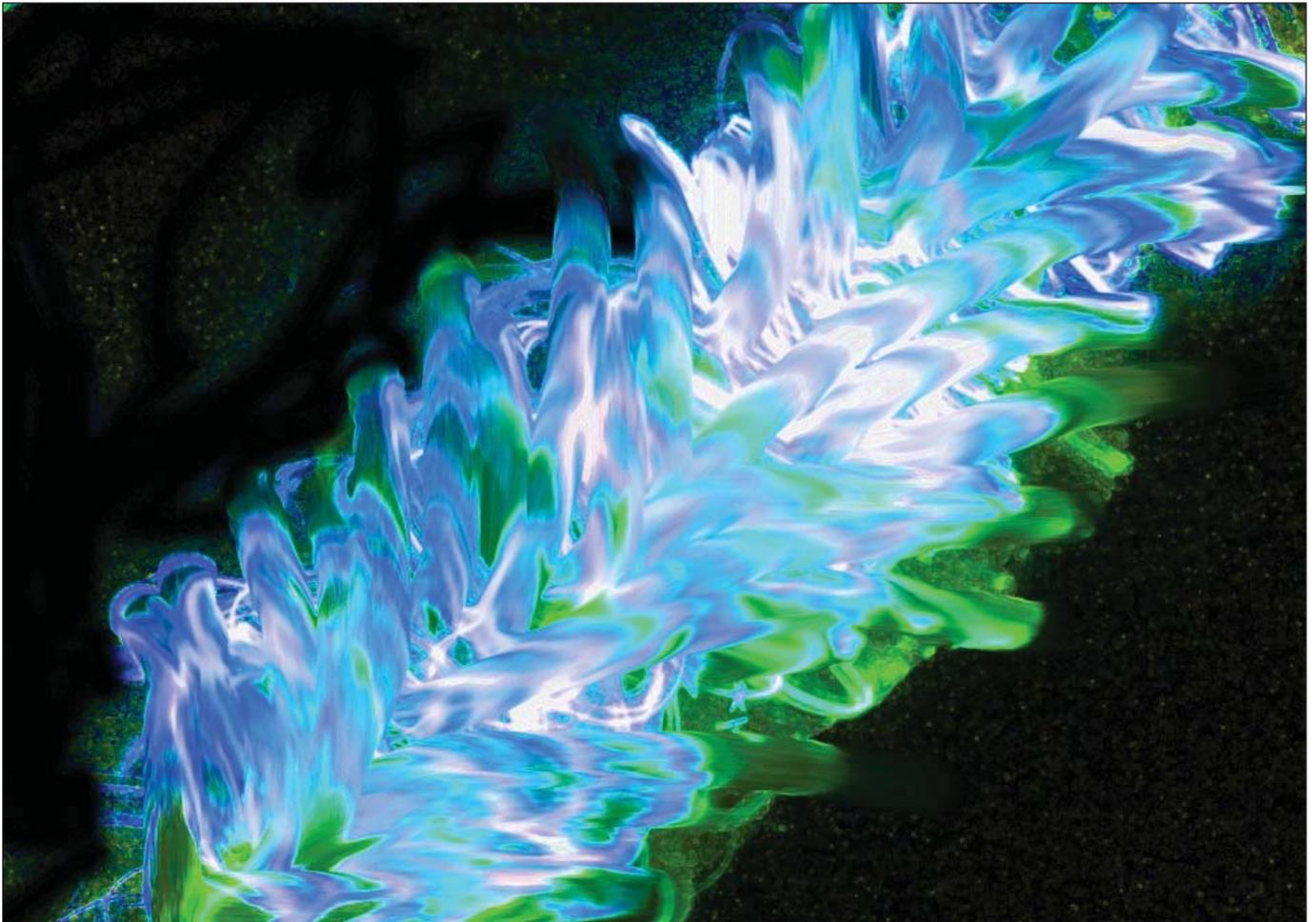


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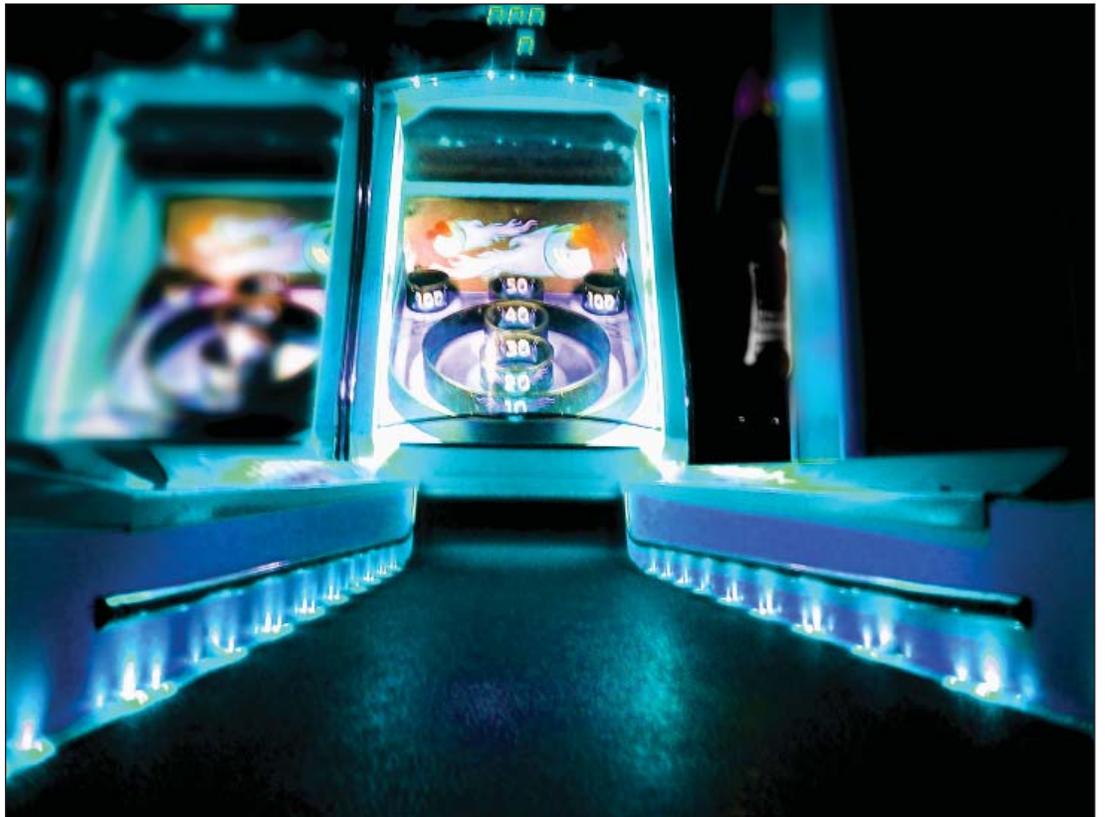
On the Road to Hope

Latonia Bailey
 Goodman
 Staff Adviser
 B&W
 Photography



[Above]
Blue Fire

Katelyn Jackson
Neosho Christian
High School
Silver
Digital Art



Skee Ball

Tekyla Carpenter
Joplin
Crowder
Bronze
Digital Art

A Story for the Quill

Words, words, words, floating through my mind,
I try to pick a certain word, one that is good,
friendly, kind.

Too many choices, all those forks in the road,
My decision would be easy if I knew
where they would go.

So many ideas are traveling in my head.
Where should the story go,
is the main character dead?

Is it a happy ending fairy tale or a dark, cold

night and a coyote's wail?
An epic battle fought with brawn, or an
impossible biography of a kid with a wand?

How should I decide to make it end?
Do I play it straight or make it bend?

I try to twist the story around,
But new ideas are hard to be found.

Perhaps I will gain from a story of old,
And hopefully, possibly it will earn me a gold!

Madison McDonnell
Neosho Christian
High School
Honorable Mention
Poetry

Keep It Light

It's 11:47 p.m. on Sunday night, and I still don't have my research paper typed. I've been over and over my notes and an idea has begun to form in my mind, but the fog of exhaustion has settled over me and I just can't seem to write anything worthwhile. I know I have to do it, though. Because if I don't? I'll fail my entire American Literature class. Okay, maybe not entirely fail, but it will seriously drop my grade and, on graduation day, if I want to be standing next to those few students who have kept a 4.0 GPA throughout high school, then this is one thing that I will do. I have to do. So here are my options at this point: A) trudge through the eight pages of work ahead of me and put minimal effort toward the project, or B) get a drink of Red Bull, put on my thinking cap, and produce one excellent research paper. I know that if I choose option A then I will certainly regret it tomorrow because it will be about as good as my fourth grade book report and I'll have to throw it in the trash. No matter how much I dislike the idea of staying up late to write a paper, I hate the idea that I could potentially fail a lot more. So there's my decision. I'm going to make this time count.

I spin in my chair and chug my Red Bull down. I turn my iPod up in my ears and close my eyes. I have information, I have my computer, and I have the will to get this paper polished by tomorrow morning. Images form in my mind of my teacher pointing at me with one hand on her hip telling me to show, show, show and not

tell, tell, tell. I see my teacher's reaction when I hand her this paper and her weeping in delight because it's the most utterly astonishing thing she's ever read. With that in mind, I type my first sentence. It has to be interesting. Something that will suck in my reader. A thought surfaces to the edges of my mind and I snatch it up and type it out. I pull and tug at the idea, typing and backspacing, and I form it into a lengthy introduction. Alright, I tell myself, that wasn't so bad. I look at the clock. 12:10 a.m. I stand up, twist my back, stretch my neck, and do a couple of jumping jacks. I'm ready to dive into the body of this thing.

My introduction has me on the right track and ideas are flying through my head faster than I can coherently string them together and type them out. My fingers fly across the keyboard as thoughts, memories, facts, and information are bunched together and synthesized in my mind. I arch my back and it cracks like hundreds of mouse traps being stepped on. It's been 70 minutes and I'm already on page five. Words are filling the page much quicker than I originally thought they would.

As I go through the paper, I read back what I've written and start to edit and remake sentences. Sentences that sound like gibberish I cut through and rework so that the new sentence I end up with is as clear as the snow coating the ground in the middle of January. I flip through my notes and make sure I didn't miss any key

[Continued to 6]

McKenzie
Pendergrass
Neosho High School
Gold
Nonfiction

Keep It Light

[Continued from 5]

information that should have been placed in my paper. By the time I finish the paper, my eyes are drooping and my shoulders feel like someone dropped 400 pound boulders on them. The computer light seems like it's being powered by the sun, my eyesight is blurring at the edges, and my hands are sore from my fingers being tensed over the keyboard. But it's done.

When the night began I knew I would have something completed by the next morning, but I did not know if it would be worth anything. I wasn't going to take a project that I knew I could do perfectly well on and throw it all away just because I was a little bit tired. Sure, my brain felt like someone had drop-kicked it and my mouth was agape because my jaw was too weak to move it closed, but I would be proud of whatever marks I received on the paper. I had taken this research assignment, rolled it up into a tiny ball, and knocked it out of the park. I was proud of the way I had taken this potentially draining situation and made the very most of it. And anyway, I knew if I was given an assign-

ment that I knew I had to get done and I knew that my grade depended on, I would always choose to delight in the task presented to me.

There had been times in my life when I tried to take the easy way out, and I always hated the outcome. I had vowed to myself that I would positively react, as best I could, to any situation that I had to handle. When I got my first job, I worked every night I was scheduled and always brought homework to do on my break. When I attended summer camp two years ago, I embraced the challenge and learned more about who I am and met the most diverse group of people that pushed me to places I didn't know that I could go. I've learned to laugh and smile along the way because I know my journey to my goal is just as important as achieving it. The journey is what teaches me to grow, push myself, and always seek help when I need it most. I've learned to be grateful for my efforts when the final question is asked: did you try your hardest? Yes, I did.

Say Cheese

Becky Wylie
Neosho
Community
Bronze
Color Photography





Visitor from the Arctic Tundra

Becky Wylie
Neosho
Community
Silver
B&W Photography



White Crowned Sparrow

Becky Wylie
Neosho
Community
Gold
B&W Photography

The Wedding

Harry Gardner
Granby
Community
Silver
Fiction

My story begins with a wedding. Mine, to be exact, and a shopping trip. I am not a procrastinator by nature. However, the past six months have been the busiest in my thirty years here on this planet. In May, I proposed to Miss Emma Onaphant, and we were two short weeks away from the wedding ceremony. Adding to the pressure is the fact that I was in the midst of a computer conversion at my company.

This was consuming sixty hours a week of my time. In spite of all these demands, I ventured into downtown Seattle in the midst of morning traffic to select presents for my ushers and for Brad Dildford, my best man. I can still afford the time away from work. However, this is the last official act prior to the big event and it must be done. What was I buying? I had no idea. The only thing I knew for certain was the gag gift for Brad, almonds! I had never met a person with an almond addiction until I met Brad at Washington State. If he stopped eating almonds, the growers would have had to claim bankruptcy.

I was determined to find every variety of coated almonds there is, and, just maybe, I could find a variety that he hadn't tasted. I headed to Nordstrom's in order to take advantage of their concierge service, for the simple fact that I have seldom shopped for others. This was not the time to learn. After finding a parking spot, I entered the store and headed for the concierge desk. I was greeted by a knockout looking young lady.

"Good morning, and welcome to Nordstrom's," she said

"Hello, I am going to be a real pain because I have no idea what I need, and I am going to rely on you for some serious help," I smiled.

"Well," giving me a beautiful smile, "What is the occasion?"

"I am in need of six presents for my ushers and a nice gift for my best man."

"When is the big event?" she asked.

"In two weeks," I replied.

"Have you set a budget?"

"No, I haven't. However, I don't want to take out a second mortgage to finance this venture."

"By the way, do you have a name or would you prefer to be called sir?" she exclaimed.

"Charles Morton," I said. "However, most

people call me Chad."

"It won't be necessary to take out a second mortgage, Chad, so let's kick around some ideas," she smiled.

We discussed shirts, ties, jewelry, cuff links and even gift certificates. I felt that was too impersonal.

After several hours covering the entire store, with the exception of women's dresses, we settled on the gifts, and the cost was within my budget.

Looking at my watch, I was surprised to see it was 11:55, and I had not stopped for breakfast.

"Forgive me," I said, "but I never even asked your name."

"It's Jill Evans," she replied.

"Well, Jill, if it's not against company policy, I would like to thank you for all your help by asking you to lunch," I said.

"I can't leave the store," Jill replied. "However, we could eat in the atrium restaurant. They serve a very nice lunch."

After being seated, we chatted about the wedding and her moving from Ohio to Washington several years ago.

Between bites, I mentioned I had only one more assignment today and that was to buy my gag almonds present for Brad.

Jill said, "Thank heavens you're not buying them for me, I am allergic to most nuts, almonds included." That brought a laugh from the two of us.

She inquired as to where Brad worked. I told her he was the sales manager for Galaxy Labs, which, by the way, was only three blocks from here. Suddenly she became ghostly pale, and began unseating herself.

She said, "Oh my God!" and started running out the restaurant.

I was stunned and a little slow reacting; however, I gave chase and grabbed her arm just as she was about to slip into the elevator.

"Wait one minute!" I yelled louder than I expected. "You can't run off like this with no explanation for this outburst."

She was visibly trembling and tears were forming in her eyes.

"Oh my God, how could this have happened to me?" she moaned.

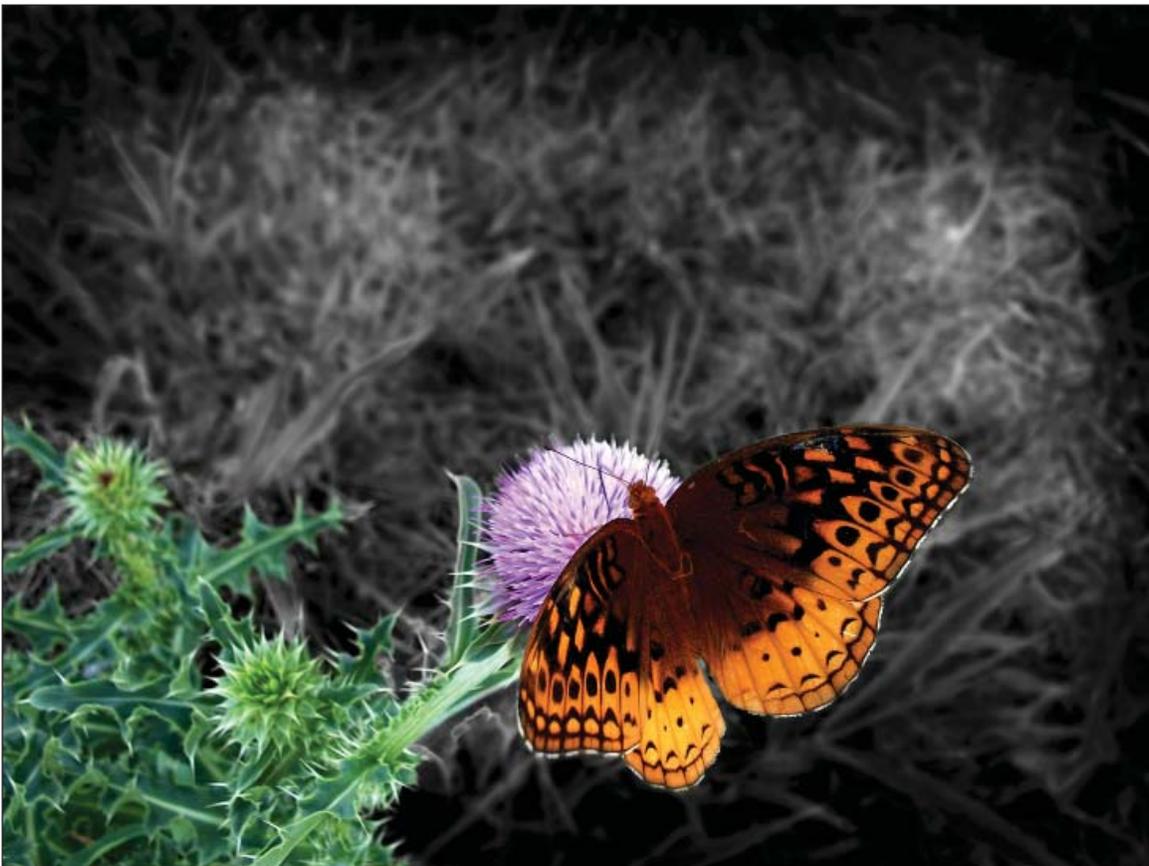
"What in the hell are you talking about?" I asked.

Jill looked at me and said, "I really don't



Flow

Kayla Tarwater
Neosho
Crowder
Bronze
Digital Art



Butterfly

Tekyla
Carpenter
Joplin
Crowder
Gold
Digital Art

The Wedding

[Continued from 8]

know you and if I tell you what I think I know, you are going to hate me and I am going to hurt a lot of people.”

I said, “Jill, you are being a bit melodramatic.”

“I wish that were the case,” she said, “I could carry this case to my grave and be happy.”

Again, I said, “Jill what in the name of heaven is it that can be this serious?”

“Let’s go outside,” she said, “I need a cigarette. What I have to tell you is hearsay and hopefully it is all a lie. The only reason I am even telling you is because I feel you are a decent person and you may deserve better.”

“At a time like this I wish I were a smoker,” I said. “Ok, let me have the details of whatever the hell you are talking about so I can clear it up.”

“Chad, I hope that is possible, and please don’t hate me for what I am going to say. When you mentioned the name Brad, and then Galaxy, it clicked. My roommate Anne is an administrative assistant at Galaxy. A nasty rumor has been running through the office regarding Brad having an affair with a girl that is soon to be married.

“God! I hope it is some other girl, but the coincidence is really unbelievable. There it is; the whole ugly rumor that I pray is not true.”

Flabbergasted I looked at her and said, “I think the atom bomb just landed in Seattle. I don’t doubt what you said, but it can’t be true. Brad is quite the ladies man, or so he thinks, but I can’t imagine him being this amoral. We were fraternity brothers and lived in the same room for four years. Crap! I even borrowed money from my folds so he could pay for a jam he got himself into with a girl that arose from a sorority party several years ago. I am shaking. I am so upset. I don’t know what to say or do.”

“I am so, so sorry, Chad. I didn’t want to hurt you,” Jill cried.

“If this is true, what a tsunami this going to create. Old man Onaphant thinks I am not good enough for his daughter. He is an East Coast snob that considers state college grad beneath his daughter. I wanted a simple wedding. However, he insisted in spending more the \$50,000 on this extravaganza even pulling strings to get us into the Arcadia Country Club for the reception. I have got to clear this mess up as soon as possible,” I muttered. “I really appreciate your telling what you heard. I believe it must be some other person that Brad is involved with, and somehow I will get to the bottom of it,” I whispered. “Let’s keep this between us, and I will

update you as soon as I find out anything.

“Please give me your home number. Now, I guess I better go buy the stupid almonds in case this turns out to be untrue. Maybe I should buy a gun. Only kidding, Jill.”

The following Monday, I called Jill before she went to work and made arrangements to meet her for dinner at an oriental restaurant we both knew of, a block from Pikes Market.

As usual, I was early.

I was nursing a glass of house red wine when she entered.

I had a “wow” moment. I never realized how pretty she was; it was like seeing her for the first time.

After helping her to her seat. I ordered a glass of white wine for her and a second red for myself. I knew I was going to need it.

“Well,” she said, “hopefully I was wrong and everything is fine.”

“Not quite,” I said. “After leaving you last week, I hired a detective and within two days he had incriminating evidence, photos which confirmed everything you heard.”

Jill looked at me and said, “I am truly sorry. This is not what I was hoping for. What are you going to do now?”

Without looking at her I told her I felt betrayed on so many levels that I am still in a state of shock. Mr. Onaphant and his wife I can understand, they were against the marriage from the beginning, but being betrayed by my best friend and my fiancée was too much.

“So I assume you cancelled the wedding?” she said.

Smiling, I said, “Not exactly.”

“Not exactly? What does that mean?”

“It means I am going through with the wedding,” looking at her for the first time since I lowered my eyes.

“Excuse me, but I think I entered the wrong restaurant. I was to meet a reasonable, sane person for dinner.”

“What I am about to tell you may sound petty, but I feel the way I am going to have closure is to confront the guilty parties at the wedding so everyone will understand why I am taking this route to expose them. Fortunately, my folks are not going to it because my dad has not recovered sufficiently from a recent surgery to make the trip west. That will save them some embarrassment. After all, the future bride’s parents spent a small fortune staging this event and they should get their money’s worth.

“My God, you are really going to do this?”

she asked.

“Not only that, but I want you to be in the audience at the reception,” I smiled. “Well, let’s have dinner and hopefully we will meet again,” I said.

The wedding went off without a hitch. It was a very nice ceremony, all things considered, and I was now married, at least for the moment. By the looks on some faces, they were wondering why I had a screen behind the wedding party table and a slide projector set up on the dance floor. I looked around for Jill, but did not spot her. If she didn’t show, I couldn’t blame her.

Standing up, I tapped the crystal goblet for attention. My moment had arrived.

“Welcome, everyone,” I started. “Before we begin the festivities, I would like to present a short slide presentation, which some of you might find interesting.”

It was at that moment that I spotted Jill in the back of the room, covering her forehead with arched hands, as if to say, “Hear it comes!!!!”

I hit the remote, and the first image on the screen was a shot of Brad and I in our dorm room several years ago.

“Here,” I said, “is how the groom and best man use to spend their time, loafing in our room, swapping lies about our conquests.”

There was a slight laughter from the crowd.

The next slide is of vista point in Oregon, where I proposed to the bride. This next one is interesting. As you can see from the time and date of the photo, it was taken less than a week ago at 7:00, in front of the Starburst Motel in suburban Seattle. The next photo is the same day at 7:37. The bride, at that time my fiancée, is seen the entering the room.

“Now let’s flip to 8:45 that evening.

“Here comes the bride with the best man, him leading her to her car and giving her a good night kiss. Tender, tender, tender.”

At that moment, all hell broke out! First, I saw Mrs. O hit the deck, and she started to gyrate, resembling a salmon landing on the deck of a boat. Next, Brad was guzzling champagne straight from the bottle. Mr. O was looking at his checkbook, wondering how the \$50,000 disappeared and whether he could get a refund.

The bride was banging her head on the table, and beating her fists in a very unsyncopated rhythm. The most fantastic scene was the audience. They reminded me of my folks’ gold fish pond at feeding time, mouths wide open, eyes to the sky, waiting for the pellets.

“Well,” I said, “that is the end of the slide show, and with that, I wish you a good night and a happy life.”

I started walking to the club lobby, I had my luggage stacked and a prearranged taxi waiting.

I turned and said, “One last thing. Pick up your wedding presents as you exit and hopefully you kept your receipts.”

The cab was waiting. “Seatac Airport, American Airline terminal, please.”

As we drove to the airport, I realized with all the excitement, I missed eating again and my stomach was rumbling.

“Hey driver,” I asked, “Do you have any snacks up front? I am starving.”

“Only a couple of bags of almonds,” he replied.

The outburst of laughter emanating from my throat must have scared him because the cab veered to the right and immediately straightened up.

“I’ll take them. Put them on the tab.”

After checking in at the counter, I relaxed for the first time that day with a novel I brought for the trip. I had over an hour before departure. After about twenty minutes, I noticed a shadow descending on the pages of the book. Looking up, there stood the beautiful contenance of Jill.

“I don’t believe it how did you find me?” I inquired.

“It was easy I contacted the party planner several days ago and told her I was organizing a surprise going away party at the airport. She provided all the information I needed.”

“You will never know how nice it is to see you, and even nicer that you thought enough of me to see me off.”

“Oh I am doing you one better. No one should go on a honeymoon alone. I am joining you”

I was too shocked and delighted to respond. The only thing I could do was fumble in my pocket and pull out a bag of almonds. Holding them out I said, “would you like some almonds.” “Not on your life buster, not on your life!”

Mirrored Elegance

Cathleen Bailey
Neosho
Crowder
Silver
Digital Art





[Above]

Follow the Sun

Susan Roberts
Anderson
Community
Honorable Mention
Color Photography



[Right]

Lotus Lit from Within

Becky Wylie
Neosho
Community
Silver
Color Photography

Kiss the Girl

Something felt out of place in that small room. Despite the excitement of the show, all knew that the return of soldiers wasn't always a beautiful situation. Certainly, it was tempting to believe that they would return the same way they left, but the reports of deaths by the hands of returning spouses told a different story. It was a story of fear and torment; unlike the dreamy fairy-tale mothers tell their daughters before they lay them down in their lovely plush pink beds. It was a secret too many women were forced to keep. Or at least that's what Emma needed to assume. Again, she found herself almost hoping that she wasn't the only one who had to handle this violence. Though she wouldn't wish this situation on a single soul, it tore her into pieces to think she was the only one. *It has to be the PSD...the...what is it called. Damn it, what did Mother call it?* As she stared at herself in the mirror, Emma went back and forth in her mind trying to find the file that had the name in it. For some reason, it was important to know the name. Knowing what something is called provides a sense of calmness.

Finally, finished with the touch up and reviewing the last minute changes, Emma made her way to the stage. *Releve instead of a plié at the beginning of my solo*, she repeated over and over in her head as she stood in perfect third position stance; feet pointed out in opposite directions of each other and arms rounded out as though she were holding an invisible beach ball. She played over in her mind how she would execute a perfect releve; standing with her feet pointed out and lifting onto the balls of her feet. She played this over and over in her mind. Emma understood that most mistakes were made with basic stances and not so much with the advanced techniques and she feared she'd mess this up.

The developing bruises on her face stung under the heavily applied make up. Each red, black and blue mark told a story opposite of the romantic one she was to act out to the audience. When the heavy burgundy curtains lifted, Emma spotted him. In the left corner of the theatre, Lawrence stood stoically. His smile was crooked. His façade was warped. There was an aura of ever-present evil floating around him. His smile was a lie. Anyone could easily detect only death and carnage was festering inside his

blackened soul.

This particular ballet was another false depiction of the great return of the men in arms. It was a story of a soldier named, Charlie, whom was in love with a young lady named, Tilly. He was to propose to her during a welcome home party. Emma mentally shook her head again, trying not to think about the cliché plot and how it was a story she wished was true for her. Her pointed feet glided elegantly across the black slick stage as the small orchestra started playing. The excitement of the violins, the sweet sound of the flutes and clear hollow sound of the clarinets carried Emma through every movement. She focused vigorously on each arabesque with great virtuosity. Her exposed skin started blushing red, but not from nervousness of the many staring eyes. It was from the heated tension she could feel from the only set of eyes that seemed to bore a hole into her soul and shred her into pieces.

Emma made the unforgivable mistake of locking eyes with Lawrence. The lavishly furnished theater seats, the smiles of the audience, the many lace front hats that covered porcelain faces, the many men in zoot suits, and the women with drop curled hair seemed to disappear as they glared at each other. Her cautious bright green eyes made contact with Lawrence's ambiguously angered empty set of peepers. During the first jete of her solo, her left leg gave out and she stumbled to the stage. The sense of losing one's footing while reaching for a step that's not there engulfed her spirit. She stayed down, dismayed by her mistake.

Without missing a beat, Raymond, Emma's duo partner, appeared next to her, gently coaxing her to lift her head by caressing her cheek. He reached out his hand, longing to touch her. As she rose to her feet, he softly wrapped his hands around her tiny waist, lifting her in the air once again, making her feel as light as a baby's first breath. He lowered her down to the black linoleum surface and held her close to his chest as they stood in tendu; standing on the toe boxes of their ballet shoes. Standing directly in front of him, but barely blocking the audience's full view of his beautifully sculpted body, she gently whispered into his ear.

"This isn't a part of the script," she whispered under her light breath. Though she appreci-

Jenell Jackson
Waynesville
Crowder
Honorable
Mention
Fiction

[Continued to 14]

Kiss the Girl

[Continued from 13]

ated going by script, there was something about this that excited her. The feeling of following someone else's lead was exhilarating. For once, she didn't have to think. The thoughts of Lawrence escaped her mind as she felt as though she was floating in Raymond's strong arms. His freckled forearms bulged under the spotlight.

"Just feel the music," he told her under his breath, arms still holding her close. Claspings hands, they jetted into the air, legs perfectly parallel with each other. Touching her soft skin, Raymond felt as if they defied gravity together. Through every long and drawn out rehearsal, he longed to be with her; to protect her from the evil touch she experienced too many times. As they twirled on their toes, he remembered one rehearsal where she fell during an arabesque, right into his arms. Upon a closer look, he could see a faint handprint on her cheek. In order to comfort her, he imagined leaning in to give her a kiss, but Emma shyly turned away, with shame

painted on her face. He continued reviewing moments like these where he imagined touching her sweet lips as the two of them danced in unison in front of the captivated audience. He conjured an idea to shock the spectators during the last of their duet. He bowed gracefully as she executed her last arabesque, balancing on her left leg with her right leg pointed straight out behind her and arms again holding an invisible beach ball horizontally. The winding down of the violin signaled the end of their duet. Raymond rose from his bow, bent down into a lunge while holding her waist, as though he was kneeling to a queen, and slowly lowered her to the ground. In a graceful push-up position he lowered his bare chest against her chest, lying carefully on top of her. He could feel the racing of her heart. The audience looked on in awe, desperate to see what would happen next. In the back of the theatre, Lawrence stormed out, angered at what he just saw. He quickly realized that he had lost the one he supposedly loved. He left, intentionally stomping the heels of his dull black boots,



Eternal Love

Katy Dunn | Diamond High School | Honorable Mention | Color Art

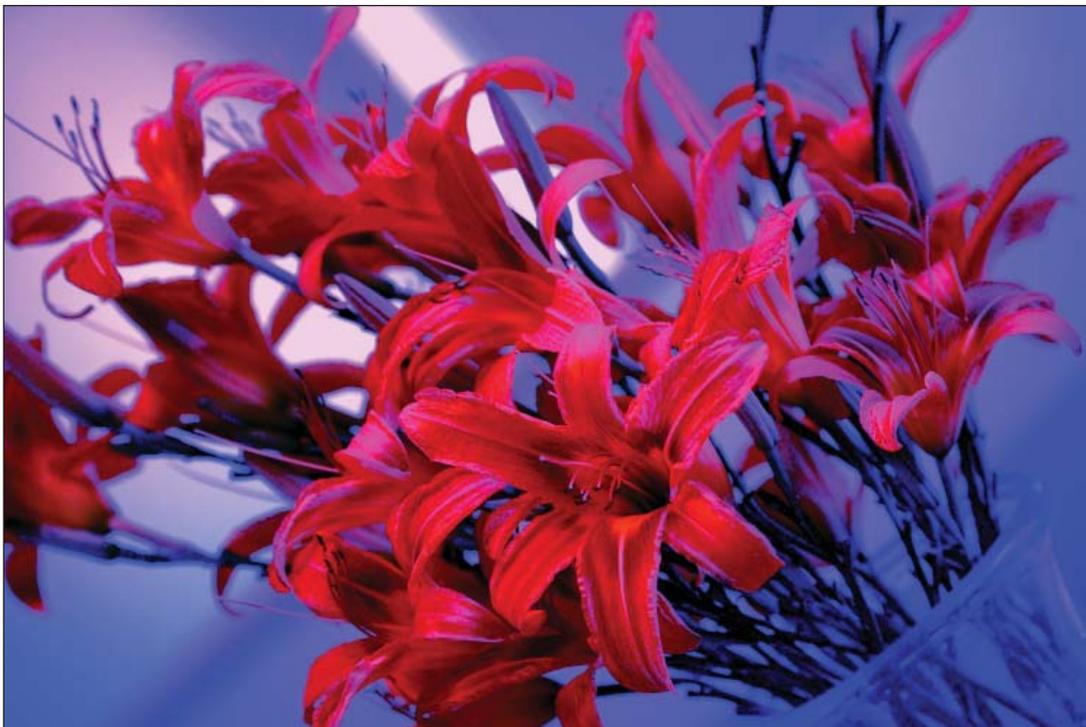
providing a hollow thudding noise that no one paid attention to.

Raymond gradually lowered his face parallel to Emma's and as the audience leaned forward in their seats to catch a better glance, his lips touched hers. Her heart leaped with elation while she slightly opened her mouth, accepting and returning the kiss. In that moment, the two became one. Emma was freed from the hold Lawrence had on her for too long. The audience stood to their feet, roaring with applause and hollering with joy. The improvised act of two new principal dancers of the ballet company received a standing ovation. They quickly stood to their feet, both smiling and bowing to the audience, hand in hand.



If Only Just for One Day

Presley Keith
Seneca
High School
Honorable Mention
Color Photography



Just Because

Misty Willet
Goodman
Staff
Digital Art

Awe of the Last

Brad Stout
Neosho
Staff
Fiction

It was dark when I awoke, too dark to see anything except the glow of digital green numbers on the poorest excuse for an alarm clock I ever had the pleasure of meeting. The sad thing was that it was actually the second alarm clock of that particular model that I had owned, the first having been sadistically bludgeoned to death by the biggest hammer I could find after it had failed to wake me up on a day when I was supposed to have met with the Dean of Admissions for the university I had wanted to attend and still dream of. It was no surprise then that this replacement my mother had gotten for me two months prior had the same problem, casually blinking “9:37” mere inches from my face, causing me to realize what was supposed to have been an hour’s nap had turned into four and a half.

“I think I’m going to have fun introducing you to my old baseball bat,” I told it, watching as it indifferently blinked from 9:37 to 9:38.

I sat up in bed, listening as the springs made their usual complaints, and swung my feet over the side, connecting them to the icy hardwood floor. Standing up, I made my way across the cluttered jungle that was my room, tripping over the heap of a bed sheet that always made its way to the littered floor after I discovered partway through an unremembered dream that it was too thin to keep me warm, and therefore useless and undeserving of any respect.

At the sealed entrance to my personalized fortress of solitude, I flicked a switch, immediately illuminating the room and momentarily blinding myself with the bright light that bounced off the boring white walls that were standard in almost every room of the house. Once I regained my vision, I turned around to search my twin-size bed for the other piece of useless technology I owned, finding it sunken into the crater my hefty form had crafted into the mattress over the course of three years.

“What did I tell you about falling asleep under my fatness?” I said as I picked up my cell-phone. “Jeez, it’s no wonder your screen malfunctions.”

Turning it on, I quickly discovered a new voicemail and paused to listen to it.

“Hi, Sweetie,” my mother’s voice said, emitted from the tiny black speaker at the top of the battered phone. “I hate to do this to you, but I’m going to have to work late again. That presentation I mentioned last week was bumped up a couple of days, and Janice and I are swamped trying to get caught up so you’re going to have to fend for yourself tonight—”

“Great,” I muttered, hanging up before the message could finish.

Irritated, I stuffed the phone into my pocket, opposite from the two warped combs and tattered leather wallet that contained only three dollars—not nearly enough money for a pizza delivery—and made my way back to the sealed entrance, stepping over the bed sheets and the piles of dirty laundry in the floor. Opening the door, I made my way through the rustic interior of the ancient living room before finally coming to a halt just inside the kitchen, a place I would no doubt leave disappointed in a matter of minutes.

As I stood there, towering above the cheap rolled-out tile pattern that lay on the floor, I stared longingly at the shiny black surface of refrigerator metal that on a good day would contain the objects of my wildest dreams. I reached out my hands, grasping the plastic handles and pulling them towards me, letting the vast light pour out in such a glorious fashion that one would have thought the second coming of Christ was happening in my fridge—only to reveal that it was in fact empty besides a few of my mother’s low-fat yogurts and a half gallon of expired milk.

Disappointed, as I had previously predicted I would be, I closed the doors and turned my attention to the ominous drawer that sat below. A cloud of chilled air arose as I pulled it out, through which a vision of pure beauty appeared. Wrapped in plastic sat the awe of the last. One final frozen beef and bean burrito, neglected by the rest of the household, peered up at me—ready to be devoured—from behind a bag of stir-fry—the last place anyone would ever dare to pluck from.

Reaching out in a trance, I picked up the burrito with a gentleness I had never before shown and stared at it in wonderment before fi-

“I think I’m going
to have fun introducing
you to my old
baseball bat.”

nally turning it over to read the heating instructions on the back.

“Open one end of the package and microwave for two minutes and thirty seconds,” I read eagerly to myself, violently ripping open one end of the package as told. After grabbing a porcelain glass plate from the cabinet next to the fridge and placing the burrito amongst its floral pattern, I opened up the microwave’s chamber door and set it inside. Then, following the rest of the heating instructions, I entered the desired time and pressed “start,” watching as the burrito slowly began to turn in circles.

Suddenly, at the hum of the microwave came the jingling of a dog collar, and I turned around just in time to see my dog Peanut, a white-hair Jack Russell, appear from around the corner, sniffing the air as she trotted up to my feet and sat down. Gazing up at me through pleading brown eyes, she let out a soft whine, letting me know exactly what she wanted.

“Sorry, girl,” I said, “but your sad eyes and hunger cries aren’t coming anywhere near close to parting me from my beloved burrito.”

Letting out a groan, Peanut stood back up and trotted away, back to her den beneath the dining room table. Watching her as she went, I marveled over the level of understanding she always showed. When the microwave “dinged,” however, my attention immediately snapped back to the burrito, and I jerked open the microwave door and reached inside, burning my fingers upon the plate, causing me to drop it and fling the burrito down onto the counter.

Cursing the mess I had made on the old wooden counter top, I turned around to face the paper towel dispenser, my only hope to save my beloved and clean up the greasy beef and beans that oozed out of both ends. Tearing off a half-dozen paper towels, I rushed back to the side of my dying burrito, only to discover it was no longer there. Frantically, I spun in circles, searching for a trace or clue as to its whereabouts, my

eyes eventually halting on a trail of cooked meat leading into the dining room. I followed the trail, finding myself standing at the entrance to Peanut’s den.

“You’re more cunning than I thought, Peanut,” I said sadly, more to myself than to her.

Crouching down on my hands and knees, I peered between the chairs and into the darkness beneath the table, where I caught a glimpse by the faintest light, the hideously mangled form of my beloved burrito and the furry white paws that wrapped around it. Then, from an unseen place that lay not far beyond, came the quiet rumble of a low growl, alerting me that the burrito would not be the only thing bitten into if

I did not leave soon. Retreating from the darkness, I stood up and headed back into the rustic interior of the living room where I plopped down into the nearest chair with a groan, a sigh of sorrow soon falling over me at the loss of my beloved.

As tears slowly began to well up in my eyes, I heard the sound of keys jangling to my left and I turned to see my mother entering through the front door, a small plastic sack

in her right hand reading, “Taco Bell,” in big blue letters.

“You didn’t call back so I didn’t know what to get,” she said, briefly glancing at me. “I hope this is okay.”

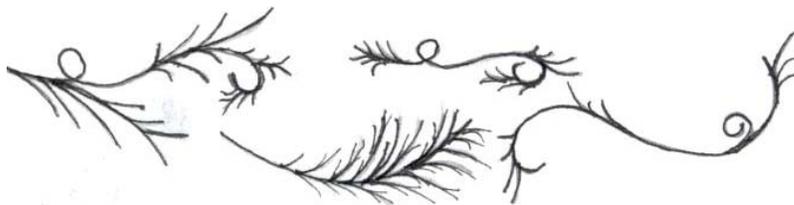
Bewildered, I stared back at her. “I thought you said I had to fend for myself tonight?”

“I did,” she continued, walking past me and into the kitchen, “But then I went on to say that I couldn’t remember if there was anything left worth eating in the house and that you should call me back whenever you could to let me know whether I should pick something up.”

As she came back to the living room and stood in the doorway, I suddenly felt the tears of sorrow that had welled up in my eyes moments before turn into tears of joy.

“Did you not listen to the entire message?” she asked.

“Frantically, I spun in circles, searching for a trace or clue as to its whereabouts, my eyes eventually halting on a trail of cooked meat leading into the dining room.”



Buster Brown, Mud Puddles and Back to School

Kim McCully-Mobley
Aurora
Community
Bronze
Nonfiction

When I went to school two blocks from home in 1966, Lyndon Johnson was President of the United States and Hubert Humphrey was the vice president. I was in the first real kindergarten class and we went to school part of the year in a church at the end of Wilson Avenue, near Chat Creek and Aurora Skateland.

The headlines were all about Civil Rights, Vietnam, women's lib and rock and roll. My underwear label was Buster Brown, and Little Joe Cartwright was the man of my dreams. Recess was just amazing, and learning to read opened up a world of wonder and magic for me.

It cost a nickel to send a letter, and I couldn't wait to learn to write cursive, so that I could send letters to my grandparents in Arkansas. I already knew how to tell time, but I faked not knowing a few times so that my teacher wouldn't be mad at my mom.

The average person could expect to live to the age of 70, and I could fit all of my school supplies into a big red cigar box from Powell's Hilltop Market, across from Lowell School. I loved the Indian on the front of the Big Chief tablet and could play the minor strains of "From A Wig-Wam" on the big, black piano in our living room 10 times without stopping. That was about all I could get away with before I would get "the look" from my dad.

My parents paid about a quarter for a gallon of gas, and we had supper at the dinner table most every night. We watched the news, went to church and played baseball with the invisible man.

I got a new pair of shoes every school year and can remember Principal Anthony Estes hollering at me from the window of his car as

I tip-toed every so lightly in my black Mary Janes, wondering if I could dance across the mud puddle on the sidewalk at the school's Delta entrance.

"Your mother works hard for those shoes," he quipped and I jerked my foot back from the puddle, unable to look him in the eyes.

Times were simpler then. It took a village. Our neighborhood had its own network, and you had better behave or the word would be out on the street before your parents returned home from work at night.

Once again, I find myself waiting for the opening day of school, knowing full well there'll be a few hecklers and some who won't sit in their seats. Do I dare tell them I got a spanking the first week of school for talking, not sitting down and not minding my own business?

Kids don't bring cigar boxes for their school supplies anymore and gas is almost as pricey as gold. We have another Democrat for president, and politics, war, tolerance and Lady Gaga still make headlines on a daily basis.

Life expectancies are creeping up as the average man will live to the age of 76 and the average woman will live to about 80.

I still like to get that "back to school" pair of shoes and mud puddles still seem to call my name. I always hesitate with that first step, though; and I look back over my right shoulder to see if Mr. Estes is watching me from the front seat of his car.

I still like cowboys and Buster Browns, the smell of freshly waxed floors, glue and Big Chief tablets. Things are different now, but some things will inevitably stay the same.

"Your mother works
hard for those shoes,'
he quipped and I jerked
my foot back from the
puddle, unable to look
him in the eyes."



Life at the Wal-Mart Deli

Wal-mart is a grand corporation with many attributing features. The deli is one of many features of the Wal-mart corporation. The deli has three different sections: meat and cheese, hot case (fried foods), and sandwiches. The deli is a great way to use all one's senses in daily lives, not just the employees but also the customers.

One sense that is high in the deli would be sight. In the deli there are customers, associates, and being observant. With customers there are the looks on their faces (like their world is over) when they find out we're out of something they want. The look of excitement on kids faces when they receive their cup of popcorn chicken. Being around fellow associates is one of my favorite parts of my job. If the customer does something weird or is being grumpy then they give the "really" look. You also have to be on your toes when it comes to slicing because you do not want to cut off your fingers!

The second sense would be touch. Being on my toes also goes with touch because if I were to cut my finger, I am most definitely going to feel it! The feeling of the most uncomfortable jeans in the world, khaki pants! Hair nets are the most uncomfortable and unfashionable thing any creatures could ever wear, its like having a

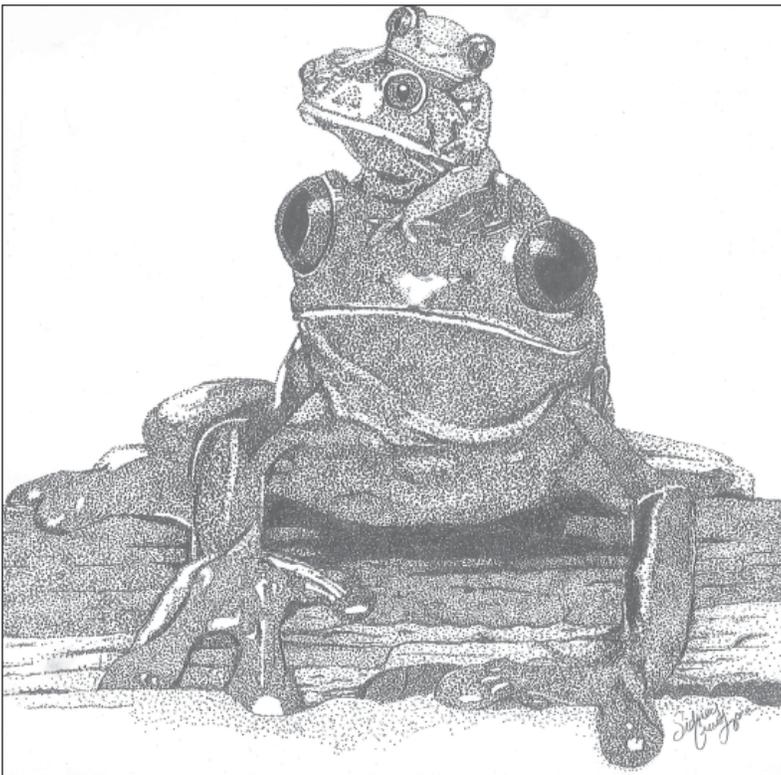
beehive on top of my head!

The third sense is hearing. The sounds of the foods frying is like being at a Japanese restaurant with amazing foods! The sound of people chatting in front of the counter, jokes from Luis, a fellow associate, and children yelling at their parents because they do not get what they want. Bosses telling me what I should and should not do, slicers humming, and paper crackling.

Next on the list is taste. Deli sampling is an amazing part of working at Wal-mart. The cool sweet taste of maple honey ham, spicy goodness of general chicken, and the sweet taste of banana pudding that sooth your mouth and makes it water just by looking at it. The look on peoples faces that show that they enjoy their first taste of something.

Smell is the most important sense of all. The smells of the deli are so mouth watering. They pull me in and make me buy something, even if I am not hungry. Honestly, who doesn't love the smell of fried foods? The sweet smell of rotisserie chickens cooking in the oven, the tangy smelly of BBQ chicken and pulled pork sandwich flow through the air like a barbecue on summer days.

Samantha Holland
Pierce City
Crowder
Honorable Mention
Nonfiction



Toad'em Pole

Sidney Tyson
McDonald County
High School
Bronze
B&W Art

The Elephant in the Room

Lea Carter
Salt Lake City, Utah
Community
Gold
Fiction

“When I was a kid, my dad used to tell me these stories,” Jen laughed a little, and gestured with her free hand, “the kind that end with ‘and the moral is,’ or something like that.”

Wes smiled back, but he wasn’t really listening. Things were bad at work, and it looked like they were only going to get worse. Look what happened yesterday...what a lousy way to spend Thanksgiving. First the robbery, then the paperwork. He hadn’t even gotten home until after the kids were asleep.

“Mommy, Mommy!” Lisa ran into the room, a little toothpaste marking one corner of her mouth.

“Hey, sweetie,” Jen greeted as her five-year old daughter scrambled into her lap.

“Tell me a story!” Lisa demanded, settling into her favorite snuggle spot.

“Oh, well, we’d better wait for Jason,” Jen kissed Lisa’s damp hair and winked at Wes.

“Absolutely,” he responded, the image of his wife and daughter, warm and safe in their home, shaking him loose from his somber mood. Just in time, too. Other families had to buy their bedtime stories.

Jason came bounding around the corner and pounced in Wes’s lap. Wes inhaled sharply to recover the air Jason had knocked out of him.

“That was quite a jump, buddy!” he congratulated, lifting his seven-year old son into the air. “Look at you!” he held him out, hands on his son’s elbows, Jason’s legs dangling a few inches off the ground. “You are getting so tall! Mom, look at Jason! He’s grown at least...” Wes paused, pretending to be shocked, “What are you now, four feet tall? Already?”

Lisa giggled and Jen relaxed. She worried about Wes, mostly because he seemed to be taking everything so seriously these days. Once, not so long ago, he would come home tense, but it wouldn’t last past dinner. Lately, whatever was going on at work was following him home, like a tiger stalking its prey.

“Daddy!” shrieked Jason, wriggling to free himself.

“Story, story!” chanted Lisa, tugging at Mommy’s arm.

Somehow Jason got on his father’s lap, feet first, and began arranging his father’s arms comfortably around him.

“A story?” Jen asked, tilting her head to

the side. “Let me see...would you like to hear a story about the elephant and the straw?”

Jason and Lisa clapped their hands and called for her to begin.

“Well,” Jen shifted into story-telling mode, “long ago, in a land on the far side of our world, there was no such thing as cars.”

Jason, who possibly owned every matchbox car ever made, stared at her, eyes as big as saucers.

“They used horses, and donkeys, and...”

“Elephants!” interrupted Lisa ecstatically.

“And elephants,” agreed Jen, smoothing Lisa’s hair gently. “Elephants are big, and strong, and they work hard. But, this story is about one elephant in particular. He was born far away from people. The first time he saw a man, was when the man came to take him to school.”

Jason groaned aloud. He was on vacation! Wes’s eyebrows shot up, and it was all Jen could do to keep from bursting into laughter at the face he made.

“He was a very young elephant,” Jen continued, staring at the Christmas tree to avoid looking at Wes, “but the man knew that it wouldn’t be long at all before the elephant was so strong and so powerful that he wouldn’t be able to train him. Well, the man took the young elephant home with him. At first, the elephant didn’t know what to think about the strange place, and he got into lots of trouble. He was always stealing the vendor’s melons, for one thing.” Out of the corner of her eye, Jen saw Wes’s face harden a little. Oops...

“Mommy, stealing’s bad!” Lisa announced firmly.

“That’s right!” agreed Jen hastily. “That’s exactly what the man told him, too.”

“Did he listen?” asked Lisa, both eyebrows raised eagerly.

“Oh, yes,” Jen answered seriously. “The man taught the elephant to pull the vendor’s cart, and then the vendor gave him melons to eat. They became good friends.”

Satisfied, Lisa snuggled closer. It was almost bedtime, and her internal clock was slowing down.

“The man taught the elephant lots and lots of things,” Jen went on, “and the elephant grew bigger and bigger, just like Jason.”

Jason grinned, but didn’t interrupt.

“One day, the man got a job for the elephant in a town nearby. They had to walk all day to get from their town to the other town. While they were walking, they met a stranger. He was a storyteller traveling to the very same town, and they decided to walk together. The storyteller wanted to know all about elephants! How much does an elephant eat each day? How big do they grow? How strong are they?” Jen smiled inwardly when Jason looked expectantly at Wes.

“I...we better hear the rest of the story, pal,” Wes hedged, “we can look that stuff up tomorrow, ok?” Jason nodded excitedly, and turned back to listen.

“Just then, they turned a corner, and they saw a huge tree across the road! The stranger was worried, because he had to be in the next town early tomorrow, and it would take too long to walk there if he had to take a different road. So, the man and his elephant went to work! It took some hard work and some time, but the elephant moved the tree! The stranger was so impressed that he promised to buy the elephant some melons when they reached the next town.”

Lisa giggled a little.

“There was just one problem.” Jen raised both hands, palm up. “Even though the elephant moved the tree, they were still so far away that it got dark before they could get to town!”

“Did they sleep outside?” asked Jason, ever alert for any reference to camping.

“That’s right,” Jen answered. “When they were all ready for bed, the man did something that surprised the storyteller. He reached into his pack, and took out a piece of string. He told the elephant that because they had to sleep outside, he was going to tie the elephant up so he wouldn’t run away and get lost. Then, he wrapped the string around the elephant’s huge leg, and tied a knot in it so it wouldn’t fall off.”

“And that’s all?” Jason asked, clearly confused.

“That’s what the storyteller asked,” nodded Jen. “He reminded the man that elephants are very strong, and can travel very fast, and...oh, lots of things. He was really worried!”

“What did the man say?” asked Lisa, yawning a little.

“The man said that, as strong his elephant

was, he wasn’t strong enough to break a promise,” Jen answered seriously.

Wes’ smile started slowly, spreading from one quirked-up corner of his mouth to the other. He was remembering what she’d been saying just before Lisa burst into the room. *When I was a kid, my dad used to tell me these stories...*

“The man and the storyteller wrapped themselves in their blankets, and slept all night long. When they woke up, the elephant was right where they had left him, sleeping by a banana tree. The storyteller visited many strange towns and saw many strange things after he met the man and his elephant, but he never got tired of telling stories about the elephant who wouldn’t break his promise.”

Later, after they had tucked the children in, Jen and Wes stood in front of the Christmas tree, thinking. Wes was wondering what the world would be like if more people were like the elephant in the story, and Jen was wondering what Wes was thinking.

“You did a great job decorating, honey,” he sighed at last, slipping an arm around her waist.

“The kids helped a lot,” she smiled, tilting her head so it rested against his cheek.

“I can imagine,” he chuckled, remembering years past. They always let the children help, and he knew perfectly well the challenges involved. “You do so much,” he continued, his arm tightening around her waist, “the cooking, the cleaning, wrapping the presents... I,” he sighed, “I almost hate to bring it up.”

Confused, Jen turned to face him. “What’s wrong?” She asked, concerned. Longer hours? Budget cuts?

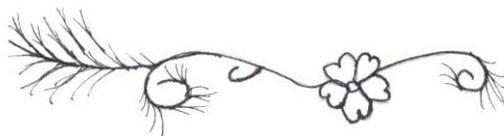
“Well, there’s nothing *wrong*, exactly, it’s just...you forgot.” Wes kept his tone serious, a little hurt even, despite the growing amusement he felt. “I had to hang it myself.”

“You...what?” Jen almost laughed in relief. He was being silly! He was being silly on grown-up time, with no kids around! “What are you talking about?” she asked, shaking him.

Wes looked up, and her eyes followed his. Directly over where they were standing, hung a cluster of mistletoe.

“It’s my favorite decoration,” Wes said, looking down at her upturned face.

“They used horses,
and donkeys, and ...”
“Elephants!”



The Cure for What Ails You

Ben Lesue
Monett
Community
Honorable Mention
Nonfiction

T*his is not good.* It's 2:30 a.m., and my throat feels like I swallowed a cactus. I don't know if I'll be able to go camping with the boys. I lumber downstairs and mix up some warm saltwater to gargle hoping for the best. At 10 a.m. when I rolled out of bed, the boys had already organized their gear and had eaten breakfast. They were just waiting on me. My throat was still sore, and I had a Nyquist list of misery. Camping in this condition this wouldn't be fun. My wife brewed some raspberry leaf and peppermint tea with some elderberry syrup. "Here, it's supposed to help your immune system." I hate when she says, "It's *supposed* to help." As if there's some doubt. Herbal remedies may indeed work, but I swallowed three ibuprofen and some Sudafed just in case. *OK, get it together. Don't let the kids down.*

Two hours later we pull out of the driveway. Destination: Lost Valley, Arkansas on the Buffalo National River. I was feeling slightly better, and the boys, my 9 year-old son and my 11 year-old nephew, were excited. I love northern Arkansas. The Ozark Mountains revealed their unique beauty as we drove along.

I had heard about some elk herds in the area, and I wondered if we would see any. As we turned toward Ponca, I saw a yellow sign warning of elk crossing. As if on cue, two majestic elk appeared grazing in a field. I pointed them out to the boys as we passed several vehicles pulled over to observe the animals. *This is a good omen.*

We arrived at the trailhead to find the parking lot full. There were many people still hiking in and out along the trail. We parked the car, then scouted for a good site. The boys decided on a campsite atop a hill overlooking the entire campground. I made the boys pitch the tent and gather firewood while I tried to let the natural surroundings soothe my aching head. After they finished, I let them run off to play while I got the fire started. They headed up a steep hill behind our campsite and went over a ridge into a large draw that the boys described as a "gorge."

By the time we had a good fire going, most of the day-hikers had departed, leaving the valley quiet and serene. However, we could hear other campers talking, and we could hear their radio. *I came here for some peace.* Though it was not blaring, the depressing electronic notes filled the campground in stark contrast to the

sounds of the valley. "Oh, this is techno. I hate this kind of music. I'd only listen to it if I was bored and wanted to die," my nephew said. I chuckled at his deadpan assessment. The radio echoed through the campground, and I was entertained by the running commentary of our neighbors' musical tastes from two prepubescent boys. I won't mention what they said about Lady Gaga.

The tinfoil dinners were done, and the savory odor of barbecued chicken wafted through the air. But we had one problem: I forgot to pack the forks. My nephew said, "That's Ok. We can just go 'caveman' and use our fingers to eat meat." So we did. And it was good. Something about meat, fire, Nature—it's good for the soul. Afterwards, we roasted some tasty marshmallows to the sound track of our neighbor's radio.

We woke up around 8:00 AM and got ready for the day. I started the fire while the boys went back up to the gorge to play. Breakfast was some bacon, eggs and hot chocolate. I was just as excited as the boys to see the caves and waterfalls that awaited us down the trail. I was feeling pretty good despite a lousy sleep—the neighbors forgot to turn off their radio at night.

We began our hike, eager to see the wonders of nature. Our goal was the Eden Falls Cave only a mile down the trail. I knew that it would be refreshing and invigorating. As we walked down the trail, the trees, the rocks, the caves, the wind, and the sunlight all began to infuse my body with warm, healing energy. We passed the "Siamese Beech," two beech trees which had grown together. It reminded me of the Ents, those wise men from Lord of the Rings. What lessons could we learn from them? We continued up the trail and arrived at the Natural Bridge. Over centuries, running water had carved through 50 feet of limestone, creating an interesting tunnel. The boys delighted in crawling through it. In the shade of the cool rocks, I admired the view.

We continued up the trail toward Eden Falls and Eden Falls Cave. The falls cascaded over 100 feet spraying the rocks and hikers below with fine mist. After a few more minutes of hiking we arrived at the cave. After donning our headlamps we set off into the darkness. The boys had no problem crawling through the low passageway, but my older body didn't move as smoothly. The passageway opened into a large

room. From the ceiling a waterfall poured through, showering visitors with cool spray. The power of falling water charged the air with energy and hope.

Leaving the cave, the view looking down the riverbed and valley was postcard-worthy. Somehow the trees in this part of the valley still had their orange autumn leaves, though the rest

had been stripped bare by the winter winds. We hiked back to the parking lot for lunch. As we walked back, my son asked if we were buying any souvenirs. I told him the photographs and our memories were our souvenirs. For me, they were something more. They were my remedy—my aches and worries left behind along the trail.



Autumn Morning

Misty Willet | Goodman | Staff | Color Photography

New Father

In heartfelt awe, I watched his face
as in his heart, you took your place.
Such protective love filled his eyes
the moment he heard your newborn cries.
His precious gift, he reached out to you.
You stopped your cries and instinctively knew.
The one whose hand stopped your
cries with his touch
will always be at your side, loving you so much.
Your father will protect you, teach you,
guide you as you grow.

He's yours, you are blessed,
and this you will always know.
Your father's love for you is a reflection
of our Father above
before you were born, God knew you
and showered you with His love.
As I watched, God's love was reflected
in your father's face.
As always, it was felt in my heart,
where long ago, your father took his place.

Cynthia Middaugh
Lamar
Community
Silver
Poetry

The Man on the Escalator

Cynthia Middaugh
Lamar
Community
Honorable Mention
Nonfiction

Several years ago, some friends and I went to Kansas City to do some Christmas shopping, and see the big city's version of Christmas lights.

Although it cut into our shopping budget, we stayed at the Crown Center. In the middle of the lobby was a baby grand piano. The pianist was playing and singing beautiful Christmas songs. So, we sat and listened for a while.

While I was mesmerized during "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," my friend, Becky, had not been. She was more enthralled with the lobby itself.

Becky leaned over to me and said, "Look! There's a pimp!" I turned and saw what she meant. Coming down the escalator was a man with a floor length fur coat draped on his shoulder.

Now, where we lived, we didn't have escalators. The only elevator in town was at the hospital, and it only went to the second floor. Never, and I mean never, had either of us seen a man in a floor length fur coat. The men we knew would never even be caught holding their wives' purses, much less wear a coat like that.

I turned to her and whispered, "No, Becky, this is Kansas City. He must be a drug dealer!"

About that time, Becky's husband, Ray, came up to us. Terribly excited, he said, "Look! It's Derrick Thomas!"

I said, "Who's that?"

"He plays for the Chiefs!" Ray said.

Derrick Thomas had safely landed and gone into the bar. He apparently was not drinking, but just killing time.

I told Ray to go and get his autograph. Ray said, "Can't. They won't do that. Their signa-

ture is worth too much money."

With that, I got up and walked into the bar. I headed straight toward the Chiefs' football star, and when I got there, said, "Mr. Thomas?"

He turned to me and said, "Ma'am?" I truthfully told him that I had two sons at home, and if he would sign an autograph for me, it would be the best Christmas they ever had. You see, they were and still are Chiefs' fans.

With my asking, the whole bar shook with laughter. I thought that Ray had been right all along. Then, it happened. He looked at me and said, "Well, Ma'am, do you have anything to write it on?"

All I had was a \$5 bill.

He held it for a bit, then signed for me. I reached out and touched his arm and said, "Thank you. Merry Christmas, Mr. Thomas."

"Merry Christmas to you, Ma'am.", Mr. Thomas told me.

Now when I touched his arm, you could have heard a pin drop. I read in *Sports Illustrated* the next week that he had a surgery on that arm. No wonder everyone was so nervous about it. At the time, all I could think of was that his arm felt more like a

piece of steel than an arm.

Shortly after we got home, I also learned that Derrick Thomas had broken a rule about defacing money when he had signed that \$5 bill for me. I felt it was absolutely priceless.

Sometime before Christmas, it finally dawned on me. I had two sons, and only one autograph. So, I made copies for my boys and all the men in my family, all but one.

Since I wouldn't have known who the man on the escalator was if Ray had not told me, I framed that autographed, \$5.00 bill and gave it to him for Christmas. I don't know if he still has it or not, but I hope he does.

"Shortly after we got home, I also learned that Derrick Thomas had broken a rule about defacing money when he had signed that \$5 bill for me. I felt it was absolutely priceless."



Altered Perceptions

Brad Stout | Neosho | Staff | Digital Art



Exactly Wrong and Completely Right

He is completely wrong for me
Stealing, lying, cheating,
My heart hates him,
Wills him to disappear.
Memories of hurt flood
Tears of blood
As he takes aim at all of my emotions.
He comes fully-loaded
Firing strong, relentless
His eyes hold mine and captures me.
Beautiful eyes,
Begging me to dive right in.
Words, cool and smooth,
Both melody and harmony in his movement,
With arms welcoming me in.
His smile as big as his heart,
I stare in wonder as he opens his soul
And displays all the broken beauty it has to offer.
In this moment, and forever, he's all I need.
My heart desires him.
He is exactly right for me.

Kelsey Phipps
Carl Junction
High School
Bronze
Poetry

A Baseball Tragedy

Cynthia Middaugh
Lamar
Community
Honorable Mention
Nonfiction

Larry was very young when he caught the disease of baseball.

Always athletic, in his teens he was basketball's center, and football's quarterback. But it was baseball that he lived, breathed, dreamed, and was an outstanding catcher.

Born an only child, his mother adored and spoiled him. She was so proud of him, as it seemed there was nothing he couldn't do. She chose to overlook his violent temper, and his sometimes totally irrational behavior.

He had the muscular build that belongs only to an athlete.

He had handsome, dark looks that some compared to a "poor man's" Dean Martin.

In 1951, his Joplin, Mo baseball team became the state champs. He showed me a picture of that championship team when I was grown, with baseball playing boys of my own. Both of my boys were, of course, catchers.

He told me as he pointed out their faces in that picture, "Here are the Boyer boys. They went to St Louis. This is Griffin, long before he was your high school principal. Mickey Mantle wasn't on our team yet, and of course, I went to Cleveland, to the Indians."

His face saddened as he told me that, and his eyes betrayed the fact that at that moment, he was back in 1951.

I knew the story. My mother had told me years ago about it.

You see, Larry's career with the Indians was basically over with before it had the chance to start. He would never know what he could have done in what he had loved his entire life.

It seems that as soon as he got off of the bus, he immediately made phone calls, letting his folks back home know he had made it.

He called his girlfriend, to let her know. During that phone call, his girlfriend told him that she had just found out that she was going to have his baby.

What tortuous turmoil that went through his head was unfathomable. There he was, in Cleveland, finally about to do what he had lived for since he was old enough to throw a ball.

On the other hand, it was 1951. His mother was the church pianist, and his stepfather, who raised him, was a Pentecostal preacher.

Apparently, he hung up the phone, slowly picked up his suitcase, and got back onto the bus. All the way back to Joplin, he grieved like

he never thought he could, but felt he was doing the only thing he should.

He and the girlfriend were married quite soon. However, ten months after the marriage, there was still no baby! His girlfriend, now wife, had apparently had her own agenda. She thought she would be marrying a Cleveland Indian baseball catcher, and would be able to soon get pregnant in order to keep him hooked.

To him, she had always just been one of the "bad girls" of the 1950's. He was wild, and so was she. He never loved her at all. He threw away his career because he thought a child was involved, and he had been raised to do what was right, although he usually chose otherwise.

Ultimately, it was crystal clear. He threw away his baseball career with both hands over a lie—a lie!

They were in no time divorced, and Larry was this time, on his way to California.

He headed out west to race cars, and he did so. But how he spent most of his time out there was working on the motors, not driving. He had also been gifted as a top notch mechanic, a "gear head." He got more thrill from making cars go fast than from driving cars fast. He was auditory, and could also just listen to a motor and know what was wrong.

After about a year, he came back to Joplin. He came back home. He was still the same young man, only this time, he was wearing a black leather jacket and his hair was combed in a ducktail. California was ahead of Joplin with that style.

He met my mother, who looked like a green eyed Elizabeth Taylor, and fell head over heels in love. They had my brother and me, and life seemed good, at least to Mother.

Larry, my dad, had been working for some time as a mechanic at the Ford dealership in Joplin. On one surreal day, my father walked out into the showroom, and proceeded to throw a wrench through the huge showroom window.

As the glass and my father's mind shattered, it was left to Mother to pick up the pieces. She always had, but I had just been so young I didn't know.

My older brother, however, knew everything that took place.

As I have often reflected on that event, I believe my father was back in 1951. He was just simply throwing out to second base from home plate, as catchers do. I have always understood

my father.

His drinking worsened, and so did his violence. I missed most of this, because Mother protected me from seeing it.

After twelve years of marriage, Mother had to divorce him.

With that, Larry again rode out west. This time he went as a mechanic, and to just get away from all of us.

He was in Arizona. We were in Missouri. It was over ten years before we saw him again.

Since my older brother witnessed more than I, he always felt the rejection.

The memories I do have of Larry, when I was little, were wonderful. I felt the abandonment.

Years later, Larry was once again home, and at times, he was in our lives. But that was to be a very short lived joy.

Larry, my father, died of lung cancer. He had always smoked nonfiltered cigarettes. Not to mention he was always shut up in a garage, working on cars.

He found out the day of his own mother's funeral that he had cancer. Exactly one week later, we buried him.

My brother and I could not believe it. We were just starting to know him again. Larry had mellowed somewhat, although it was apparent he was still haunted by his past, and he was still self-medicating his schizophrenia with alcohol.

At his funeral, the organist played "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." I thought I would surely die.

He was buried with a baseball in his hands, and a fishing pole at his side. Baseball and fishing were Larry's loves. Again, I thought I would surely die.

My father's fifth wife had made all of the arrangements.

When the service was over, my brother and I talked about it a lot. We knew our father had been taught about Jesus. He cried out to God when he was in so much pain at the end. We just hoped and prayed he went to

Heaven, but we won't know until we get there.

My brother could tell how much distress I was in. He did what he had always done best at these times. He made me laugh. He told me the truth, although it was awful. I knew it, too.

He said, "Sis, that baseball and fishing pole were just fine. The thing is, Dad would have been happier if it had been a Budweiser in his hands, and a naked woman next to him."

The more I thought about it all, the harder I laughed, and I felt surely I could live.

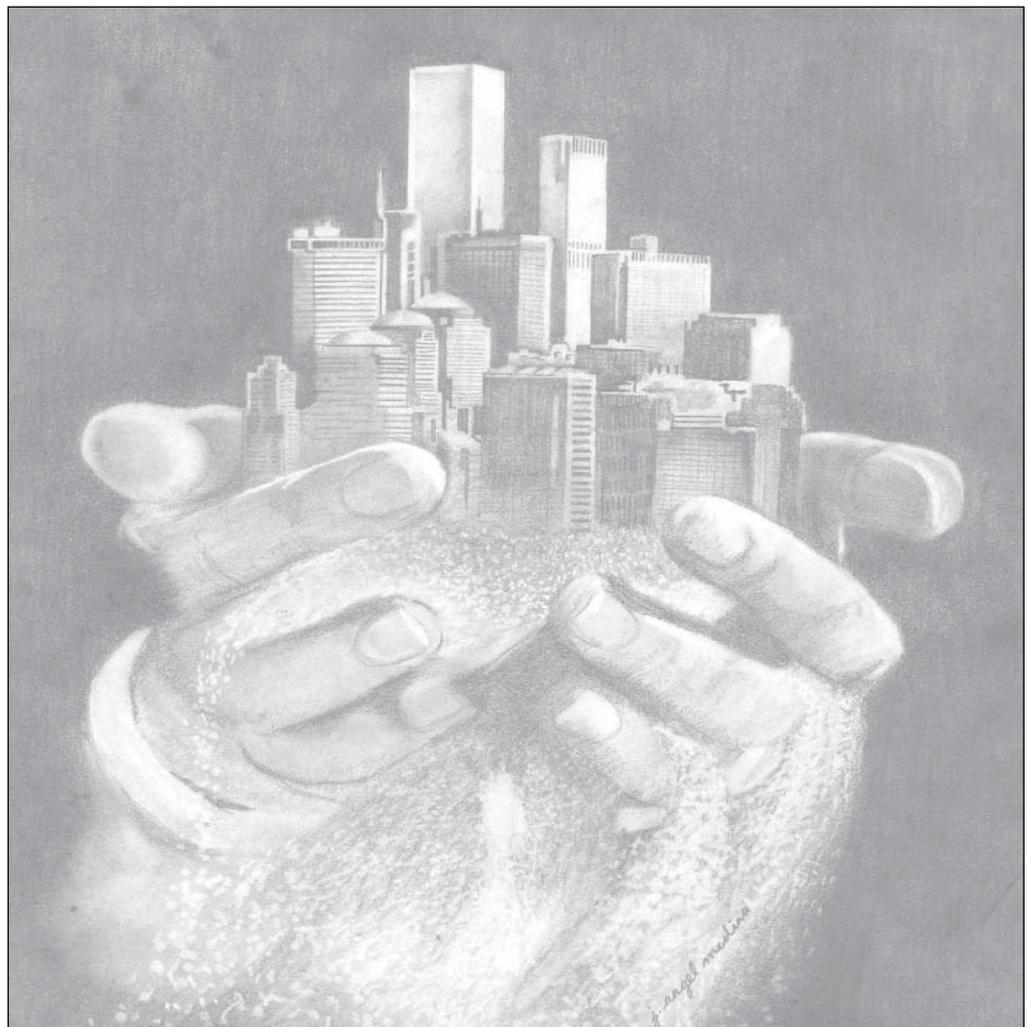
Now, I have been kept from so many bad things that took place in my childhood. What memories I do have are good ones. I have made my father, Larry, a legend, still living in my mind.

In so many ways, I have done what I think he would have done. It has always thrilled me when I have been told that I am "just like Larry," or "look just like Larry."

I have given much thought to my own funeral, and my likes here on earth. But I believe that a cat in the coffin is just a bit too Egyptian for most Southern Baptist funerals today.

Keep it Together

Jose Angel Medina
McDonald County
High School
Silver
B&W Art



Cab Fare

Brad Stout
Neosho
Staff
Fiction

The night waned on slowly, leaving those still awake in the neighborhood yearning for the new day's light. An old yellow cab left over from the late '50s and in desperate need of repair cruised through the aging neighborhood with a loud hum. Inside, the cab driver's gaze shifted from one side of the road to the other, looking for a fare he did not expect to find. After a few moments, highway hypnosis began to settle in, and the cabbie's gaze moved from the cracked residential street to the distant hillsides where the glow of wildfires perpetually illuminated the night sky.

Staring out at the emblazoned hills, his thoughts drifted back to his last fare and to the thousands prior that he had encountered in the bleak nights. Almost every one of them seemed to reek of booze and cheap cigarettes, and all were too drunk to locate their own cars after staggering out of one of a million bars and clubs that were still open during the night hours.

Despite the sadness behind his present view though, driving through the crumbling residential areas with the wildfires slowly on approach somehow seemed refreshing and more pleasant to him than his traditional surroundings. With this in mind, he began to reduce his speed in hopes of making his drive back into the city last longer.

However, the cab driver's peace was soon interrupted as a pale, thin woman dashed out of one of the still-lit houses on the left and raced towards the old cab, her hand raised in the smoggy night air, signaling him. Catching her presence out of the corner of his eye, the cabbie maneuvered the cab to the curb in front of her and waited as she quickly opened the door and climbed in.

The driver, struck by the suddenness of his fare, asked his usual question with caution, "Where to?"

"Shut up and drive," the woman demanded, her voice quivering.

The cab driver looked up at her through the rearview mirror. Seeing her up close, his eyes observed the things he was unable to see before. Her hair, strawberry blonde, lay in a heap on her shoulders. Her pink lips were cracked, one of them bled slowly. Under her long jacket she wore a silk nightgown, much too thin to have kept her warm in the cool night air. Teardrops flowed from her eyes like silent rivers, leaving

them swollen and red.

Her eyes. They said it all. Staring back at him, they carried her apology for snapping at him.

"Don't worry about it," he said. "I've been treated worse."

The woman's eyes shifted downward, then back up as curiosity distracted her from her recent troubles. "Is it because you're foreign?" she asked, noting his dark features and the slight trace of an accent.

His brown eyes looking back at her, "Partly," he said. "Being a cab driver doesn't help."

Losing the quiver in her voice, the young lady wiped her eyes and gave a faint smile, producing small, even rows of white teeth. "The big black mustache doesn't help with the stereotype."

"I never thought about the stereotype," the cab driver said, looking at his reflection in the rearview mirror. "Thanks for bringing it up, though. Now I'm going to have to shave."

The woman began to laugh, forgetting her recent troubles completely. He began to laugh, too. When they both finished laughing, a silence befell them. It was not an uncomfortable silence. Neither of them noticed, and it went on for a while.

"Where exactly am I supposed to be taking you?" the cab driver finally asked again.

"I don't know," the woman said, her troubles coming back to her. "I don't really have anywhere to go." She paused, "Sometimes, I'm not even sure how I got here."

"The feeling is mutual," the cabbie said. Then, taking another look at her bloodied lip, he added, "Only I think you might have had a harder time than I've had."

Having just then felt the pain, she brought her hand up to her lip and wiped away the blood. Her eyes swelled up with tears once more at the sight of it.

"He hit me pretty hard tonight," she began, her voice regaining its quiver. "I'm not going back. Not this time."

She looked up at him; his gentle eyes peered back at her. They held their gaze for a while, the only breaks coming when the cabbie looked back at the road.

"Would you like a place to stay?" he asked. "For the moment, I mean. I have a sister who

[Continued to 30]



Forgotten Beauty

Latonia Bailey
Goodman
Staff Adviser
Digital Art

[Below]

Don't Let Your Luck Drain Out

Shelby Little
Neosho
Crowder
Silver
Color
Photography



Touching the Sky

Jessica Cole
Neosho Christian
High School
Bronze
B&W Photography



Cab Fare

[Continued from 28]

lives not too far from here and would be happy to help you for a while.”

She smiled and wiped away the fresh tears that streaked through her makeup. “I think I’ll be okay,” she replied. “I have an old friend who should let me stay with her until I get back on my feet. She’s one of the few true friends I have these days. But thank you. I really appreciate the gesture.” Continuing to smile at him, she brushed a strand of misplaced hair behind her ear.

The cabbie smiled back at her, “I might need your friend’s address. That way we don’t spend the rest of the night cruising residential areas.”

Again she laughed and told him the address.

Nearly seven minutes later, the cab slowed to a stop in front of a small house in a rundown neighborhood. The young woman slowly got out of the cab and approached the cabbie’s window.

“How much do I owe you?” she asked.

The cab driver grinned, “Nothing. My meter broke yesterday, and I haven’t been able to get it fixed yet.”

“So, how do you know what to charge people?” she asked, curiously.

Looking down at a small electronic device in the seat next to him, “I have to use a calculator,”

he said.

They began to laugh softly, breaking the silence of the neighborhood. The woman continued to stand by his window afterwards, her hair blowing gently in the cool breeze.

“What’s your name?” she finally asked.

The cab driver looked up at her. “Tariq,” he said.

“Well, Tariq,” she began, “Could I possibly get your phone number? That way I can call you, should I need to call someone.”

With a soft smile, Tariq gave her his number.

“May I ask what your name is?”

Producing a soft smile of her own, the woman peered back at him and uttered her name.

“Marie,” she said.

With a small thank you, she began to turn away and hesitantly headed up the driveway, glancing back at him over her shoulder as she went. Tariq waited until she was inside before pulling away from the house. As he drove off into the rising sunlight, he began to doubt—as he always did when he stumbled upon the occasional fare in need—that he would ever hear from her again.



Morning Sky

Patti Richardson
Fayetteville
Community
Honorable Mention
B&W Photography

[Below]

Twisted

Jessi Perry
Nevada
Crowder
Gold
B&W Photography



An Unforgettable Trip

Tola Ferris
Noel
Staff
Nonfiction

Sinking my teeth into a meat and butter sandwich that was prepared by a friend, I find myself enjoying the flavor more than I expect. It was the summer of my 11th year and we were in Europe on a humanitarian aid visit. Looking out the car window, I watch the Romanian landscape zipping past me. Shades of green streak on along with small houses dotting the countryside, making me feel as if I were in an old folk tale.

A while later our driver has to stop. I look to see what's going on. A guard holding a gun stands by a rail road crossing, as metal bars stop any cars from passing through. No one is going to try to get by that train, I think to myself. My father is in the front passenger seat talking to our friend. He says this is normal procedure in Romania. We wait for about ten minutes. Then one train car passes by, and a minute later the bars go up. We proceed on, and I almost laugh, thinking about all that security for one train car. This happens to us several times. My father notices that we're running late for our flight back to America. I hope this train doesn't keep slowing us down. We finally manage not to be in the train's path anymore and make our way towards the border of Hungary.

My father shows some papers at the border crossing, and the guards let us go on our way. To make things worse, a little later our

friend's car, which had been making a loud noise throughout the whole trip, suddenly breaks down. We all step out of the car, and my father and our friend check to see what's wrong. I admire the sunflowers; which are about ten to twelve feet high all around me. There's an endless sea of yellow that spreads across for miles. A few minutes later a tow trucker stops by and gives us a lift. I can't believe our luck. We all get back into the car, and the tow trucker drives us to a car dealership.

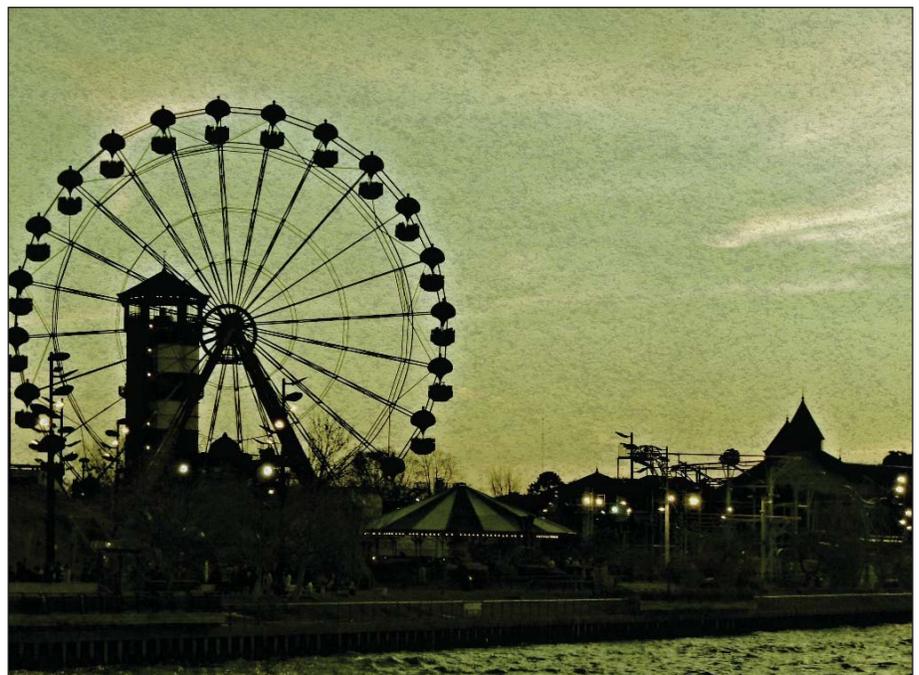
About 15 minutes later we get out of the car and our friend exchanges words with some other people. This young man around his 20s knows some English and tells us that he can get us to the airport on time. My father and I grab our suitcases from our friend's car, and we all get into a new car. The young man starts the car and steps on the gas, taking us down the two lane highway at ninety miles per hour. I hold onto my seat wondering if I'm about to die. I'm worried that we might not make it home. The young man asks if we like music, and begins to play through the stations as he swerves around cars, almost wrecking into them.

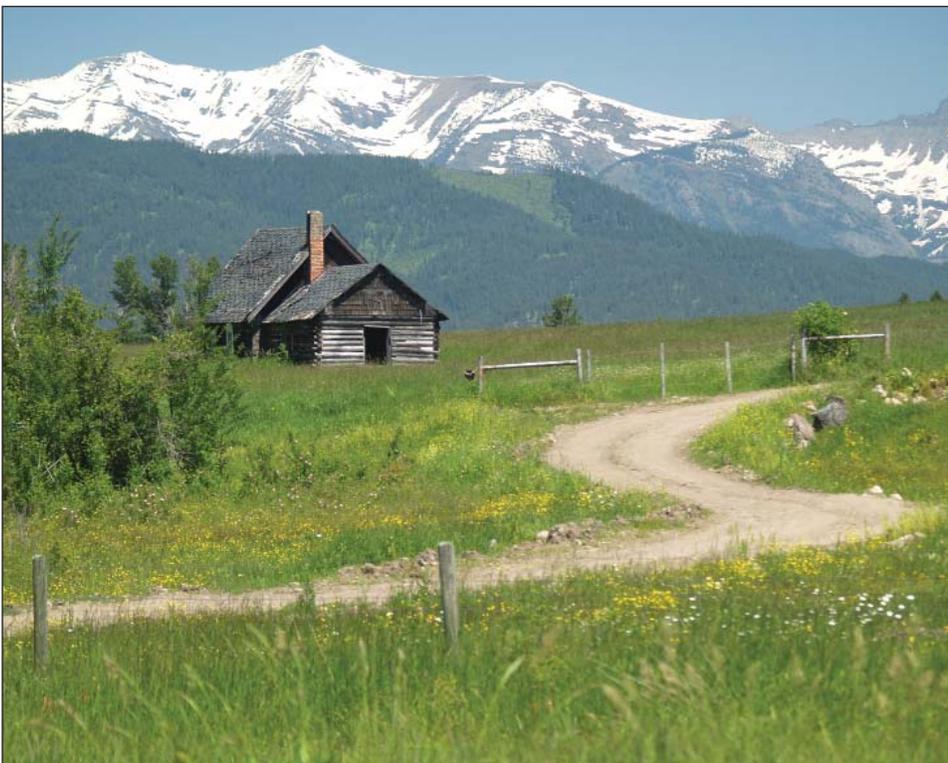
I look at my father, telling him with my eyes that I think he's crazy. My father looks a little nervous, but laughs. The traffic becomes heavier and the driver slows down around other cars. Suddenly he hits the breaks, making my

[Continued to 36]

Ferris Wheel

Angela Kuri
Diamond High
School
Honorable Mention
Digital Art





[Above]
It Happened
Wherever
She Sat

Joanna Booher
Granby
Community
Silver
Color Art

Nestled
in the
Northwest

Latonia Bailey
Goodman
Staff Adviser
Color Photography

Run

Jenell Jackson
Waynesville
Crowder
Silver
Nonfiction

Each child on Maple Drive had a bike equipped with the pink streamers for the girls and the green Ninja Turtle stickers for the boys. At the time, just three years old, I admired anyone who had enough smarts to operate such a complicated machine. Bikes were the cool way to have fun in the summer. I sometimes envied the fact that I was not a “Big Kid” yet. What was so special about them that they could ride that contraption of fun? It was true that they were bigger than me, but give me a break; I just learned how to read. I was on top of the world. Nothing could stop me now. Not even the fact that I did not have a bike yet.

Starting at lunch time, the kids outside had been flying up and down the steep hill. Inside the comfy living room, I had committed a sin my mother often warned me of. I was sitting the ‘wrong way’ on the couch, leaning over the back of it to see out the window. But, of course, that rule could not apply to me at a moment such as this. No; not when all the Big Kids were performing their amazing abilities in front of my own house. My heart beat with excitement, longing to be outside having as much fun as they were. I greedily inhaled my peanut butter and jelly sandwich and followed it with a cup of skim milk. To me, it was the most amazing taste, second to macaroni and cheese, of course.

After wiping a few crumbs off the couch (another childhood sin), I ran down the stairs and quickly shoved on my Baby Bop sneakers. Frustrated from having to learn to tie my shoes, I just put the pale pink laces into a knot and stuffed them in the back of my shoe. It was not the most comfortable feeling, but it would have to do for the time being. I did not feel like asking anyone to tie them.

With all my strength, I pulled the fancy mahogany wood and skillfully etched glass front door open. The weather was perfect, accompanied by the bright shining sun and the slightly humid air that reminded me that summer was still here, but coming near its end. Adjusting my lime green long shorts and pale pink with lime green stripes shirt, I took that brave first step off the stoop.

As I walked up the long driveway, the kids were zooming by with such incredible speed

on their “I’m-too-cool-to-walk-around” bikes. I smiled as I watched my older sister Erica fly down the hill, smiling as if she just discovered the meaning of life.

“Hey Smelly Jenelly,” she yelled as I reached the end of the driveway. Honestly, I did not appreciate that nickname. But it was not something that I needed to focus on at the time. I had something else on my mind.

At the same time, my friend and next door neighbor, Ashley Beak walked up to me complete with porcelain-doll skin and rosy cheeks, snow white shorts, lavender t-shirt with Barbie dancing across the front, delicate purple strap-on sandals, and lavender socks with the frills on the top. I was very glad to see her, but she was not the person I wanted around at this moment. She hated running around, and I knew she would not want to run up and down the street with me.

“Nell, want to play?” Nell was my nickname, well, kind of a nickname. Ashley could not pronounce J’s, so she just called me Nell. Her voice resembled a fairy princess compared to my raspy voice. In her hand she held her pink suitcase filled with Barbie’s. I knew that today she wanted to have Barbie and Ken get married, even though they already were married last week. I was not really in the mood for Barbies.

“Ashley, I am going to run.” Her face looked squished together when I told her that. It was as if she took in the horrendous odor of skunk road kill. I shrugged my shoulders, and put all my attention on the bikes.

The gang cruised back up the street effortlessly, and that is when I decided to put my amazing plan into action. Who cares if I do not have a bike, I can still have fun, right? With all my power, I ran quickly beside all of them, really wanting to show them that I could have as much fun as they did. Nothing could stop me. The humid wind rushed through my hair the same way my mom’s fingers ran quickly as she braided my thick textured hair earlier that morning. My chubby legs were drained of energy and my short arms pumped rapidly as I made my way up the hill, but I certainly was not going to let that stop me, especially since I was having too much fun. If I was having this much fun running beside the bikes, how much fun would it be actually being *on* a bike some day?



Sophie Bowls

Karina Cole | Neosho | Community | Honorable Mention | Digital Art

An Unforgettable Trip

[Continued from 32]

face smash into the seat in front of me. I look to the right of me and I see a police car. He slows down to around 30 miles per hour now. I feel my body becoming less tense now that we're actually going the speed limit. Then a few minutes later, we're swerving through traffic again. Holding onto my seat, I prepare myself for when he stops suddenly again. Our friend looks out the window and says, "There goes a plane."

"I hope that's not ours," I reply.

Five minutes later, we finally arrive at the airport. The driver smiles and tells us to have a good day. I am feeling a bit dizzy as we rush to the counter to ask if our flight is still here. Sadly, we missed our flight by five minutes. I have a feeling the plane that we had seen taking off was the one that was ours. I take a deep breath, relieved that I survived the drive. We find a hotel in the city of Budapest to stay at until we can catch the next flight. After my father and I drop our things off, we decide to explore the city.

The temperature begins to warm up, and beads of sweat form on my forehead. I don't mind because I'm wide-eyed looking at everything around me. The city was like most cities in the aspect of having many large buildings, but the way things looked were completely different. I buy a few postcards to remember the place.

There's a large bridge nearby and the Danube River flows underneath it. The water looks inviting to me. My father asks if I want to walk across it. I say, "Sure."

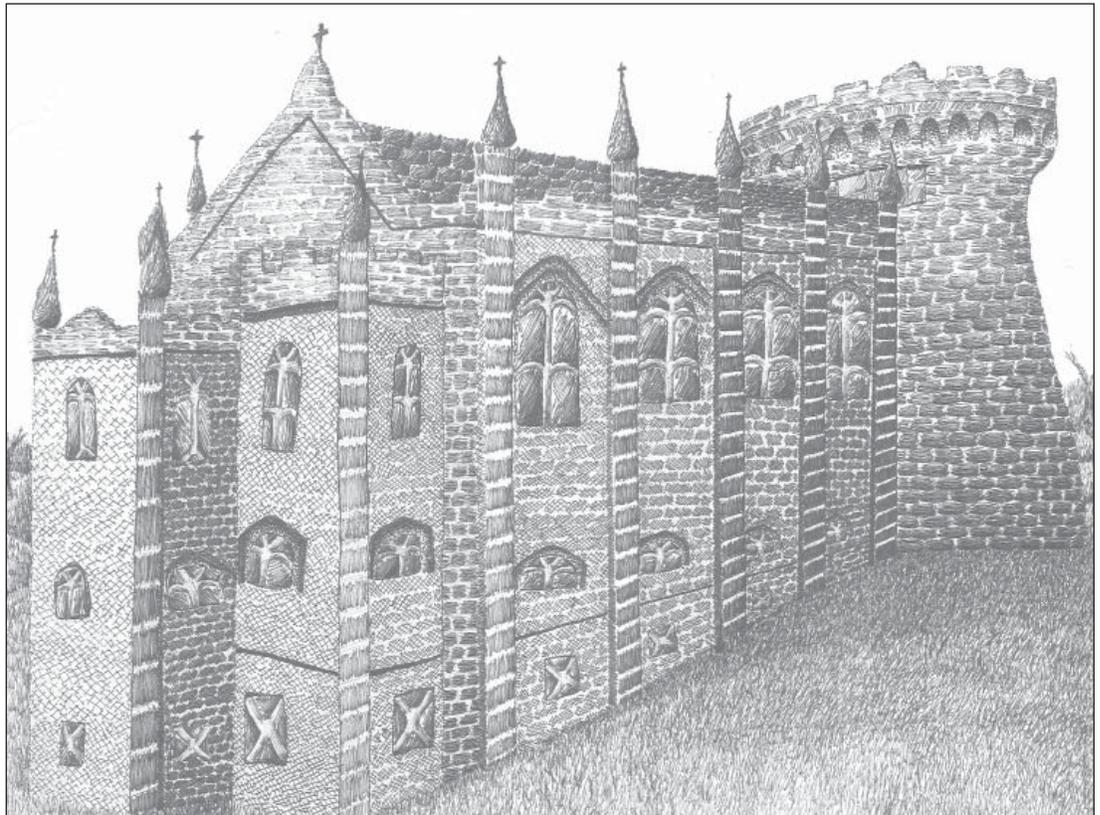
We make our way to the bridge and spot a castle up ahead. I love old buildings and this excites me. I notice that one of the postcards I have is a picture of the actual castle that I'm looking at. We walk for a while until the heat catches up to us, and we realize that the castle is much further than we had first thought. After spending a cool week in Romania, we were not ready for the hot weather.

We go back to the hotel for a little bit to cool off and then later head out again. We see a sign that says "Szupermarket". My father and I laugh because it sounds funny. For supper we decide to have Hungarian goulash, a dish that Hungary is known for. We sit outside in an open air cafe and enjoying the much cooler weather sipping at our warm soups.

We've been up since four in the morning, and although the night is young, we head back to the hotel to sleep, and get ready for our flight back home the next morning. Although we missed the flight, staying in Budapest was an experience that I'll never forget.

Katelyn's Dream Castle

Katelyn Brisco
Cassville
Crowder
Honorable Mention
Color Art



Dripstone Cave

"They wandered in deserts, and mountains, and dens and caves of the earth," - Hebrews 11:38

It started as a cool, dreary day, with a number of mundane chores ahead to catch up on. Not the most exciting way to spend a day off, if you could call it that... drop my daughter off at college, make some phone calls, set an appointment, stare at the computer screen, and the like. But the day was not to end as it had started.

Later, in the afternoon, my daughter, Tola, arrives home with a friend, Jesse. They want to see a cave nearby... Did they say *cave*? My interest piqued, I'm all ears. They're talking to a former cave guide, and an unrepentant caveaholic. I know the cave; let's call it Dripstone Cave. Been there before. Nothing like Carlsbad Caverns, but a cave is still a *cave*. Tossing manners to the wind, I invite myself along.

"Mind if I join you?"

"Sure!" replies Jesse. That's it; I'm committed. While Tola changes into clothes more appropriate for a cave, I grab some flashlights and a camera, make sure Jesse has a light, and we're on our way.

Before long, we park near our destination, walk a short distance, scramble up a steep slope, and find ourselves at the entrance to the cave. Tola arrives first.

"There's a dead animal in the cave!" she calls out. "A dead deer!" That's funny; nothing smells dead. Jesse and I are right behind her. A prank. Nothing more than a rotting log! We take a minute to catch our breath. No, half a minute. The underground is calling.

A short distance past the entrance, we turn our flashlights on. Traversing the entrance passage is surprisingly easy; rocks that had been strewn across the floor before are gone. We straddle a puddle covering the pathway for ten feet or so and venture on, leaving the last hint of daylight behind.

Soon this passage joins the main passageway. To continue one way would require a flat-out belly crawl. Squatting down and peering into this passage reveals that it doesn't go far, or open up into anything bigger. We decide not to try. After all, we're here to see a *cave*, not crawl through a mud hole. We glance at a few small dripstone formations – mineral deposits formed

by dripping water – and turn the other direction.

As we do, we hear the sound of a waterfall in the distance. There hadn't been one before, and it rained a lot last night... Is it safe? Could the cave flood? Should we continue? Having left the chilly air outside, we're enjoying the relative warmth of the spelean world, and the yet-unseen passage ahead beckons us onward. We take our chances.

We soon find ourselves in an area where we are surrounded by dripstone formations of all kinds – stalagmites, soda-straw stalactites, draperies, and more. And the sound of the waterfall grows louder. In this most active area of the cave, even formations that had been vandalized show signs of beginning to heal themselves.

Around a corner, in a shaft just off the main passageway, we find one of the most remarkable formations in the cave – and the waterfall. Water coming into the cave from above is flowing over a stalactite, plummeting some twenty feet into a perfectly round rimstone pool, full to overflowing, the excess spilling into some of the smaller pools around it. Barely visible is a now-submerged stalagmite in the center of the pool.

Farther down the passageway, we come to more rugged terrain. Rimstone dams, most of them thicker than a man's arm, crisscross the floor, all with pits of various sizes lined with cave coral behind them. In wetter times, water would have filled the pits up to the top of these dams forming at their edges. We step gingerly across this landscape, careful not to damage them, or the cave coral lining the pits.

Just beyond the rimstone pathway, we find several long, narrow puddles a few inches deep. We stop and look around for any signs of life. We find nothing – not even bugs. We forget to consider the three flashlight-wielding troglodytes looking for them.

Toward the end of this zone, our way is partly obstructed by several large blocks of rock, one on top of another, no doubt having fallen from above. They're stable, cemented together in places by flowstone deposits. We climb past them through a narrow path on one side. A few steps beyond, we find a sign of life under an overhanging ledge. *A BAT!* No, *just* a bat. This whopper may be a whole two inches from head to tail. Hibernating. A little farther on, we

Martin Ferris
Noel
Community
Silver
Nonfiction

[Continued to 38]

Dripstone Cave

[Continued from 37]

spot another one. Cute little guys. Ever wonder what bats dream about during their winter slumbers? We lower our voices as we pass by. Sweet dreams!

As the passageway widens, we spot a unique flowstone formation on the wall, somewhat roundish, about a foot in diameter. Tola says it looks like a genie in a bottle. Here the terrain changes – less rimstone, but more stalagmites, and just as rugged. Using our imagination, we find more formations that resemble things in the outside world, enough so that we could call this area the Hall of Imagination. Across the passageway from the genie's bottle, we find a

couple that look like brains. Further along, we find several small stalagmites in a row on the floor. We agree that it looks like a spine. But of what? A turtle? A dinosaur? Maybe a demon...? We keep moving.

The passage narrows a little, and we are struck by the unusual appearance of the wall. It's perfectly vertical, but sculpted by water dripping here in some time long past, giving the wall a fluted texture. It's dry now, and the nearly transparent coating of dripstone covering much of the wall sparkles in the light of our flashlights. We call this area The Draperies.

Past the Draperies, more large blocks of rock slow our progress. We squeeze past them into a long, narrowing room at the end of the cave. The walls close in on us. A niche at the far end catches my attention. Inside are two rimstone pools filled to the brim with crystal-clear water, one behind and above the other, terraced-like. We take turns side-stepping past each other to get a better look.

Here in this nearly pristine area, we talk about how well preserved the cave is. A few stalactites broken here and there, a few shards of glass, a couple fading specimens of graffiti, and that's about it.

Before we leave, we find a slightly wider spot in the passageway. Tola suggests turning off our lights. We do, and blackness engulfs us. We experience the cave in its natural state – total darkness, and except for an occasional drip of water, total silence. We contemplate this, and chat in the dark a few minutes. We then turn on our flashlights and start our return.

We squeeze past the blocks of rocks, and a few steps farther, something catches Tola's eye at floor level – a couple deposits of orange clay. The same kind they use to make pottery, she informs us. It reminds me of another cave nearby where a large clay pocket had been mined a number of years ago for pottery classes at the local college.

We retrace our steps past the Draperies, and come to the Hall of Imagination. And the spine. I still don't see the turtle; well, maybe. Still looks like a dinosaur's spine, or a demon's. Suddenly thoughts flood my mind... I'm a sinner. I'm already underground. It's dark in here – and warmer than outside. What if it *was* the spine of a demon? Is there a hidden passageway in here somewhere? Where would it go? Down? How far? What would it lead to? I'm glad we're on the way out!

My Secret Place

Tola Ferris
Noel
Staff
B&W Art



Along the way, Jesse finds a couple more bats, but in places where they are harder to see than the others. All four are the same kind; all are hibernating. As he turns around, he bumps his head. Tola and I ask if he's OK. He assures us that he is, and jokes that he has a souvenir of his visit.

We climb down past our final obstacle — the first pile of rocks we encountered coming in. Again we are within earshot of the waterfall. As we approach the rimstone pathway, we spot another life form. A leopard frog. Not a native of the cave. What is he doing in here, we wonder. Our presence doesn't seem to bother him. We watch him for a minute, and continue on our way. He never moves from his rimstone perch. A short distance beyond, we arrive at the waterfall, and pause there for a second look.

We return to the entrance passage and start our trek to the outside. The air starts to cool, reminding us that the entrance is near. Along the way, we find several cave crickets resting on the wall here and there. We look around for more, and find a group of 30 or 40 on the ceiling just ahead. Several walk around, but none seem any more

concerned about our presence than the frog. By now it's almost dark outside. No daylight enters the cave to alert us that the entrance is dead ahead, and we emerge somewhat unexpectedly. We pause for a moment by the rotting log and reorient ourselves to the outside world. We climb down the slope below the cave, holding on to trees and rocks to steady ourselves, now lighting the way for each other in the fast-fading twilight.

The road back to the car is a little longer than we remembered, and we talk about our adventures along the way. Tola, the prankster, soon sees the car ahead, but this time the joke is on her. As we approach, it turns out to be a plastic bag caught in a bush! A short distance beyond is the real car, and we're soon on our way.

Later, my thoughts take me back to the cave, and the demon's spine. We were underground and came out alive. It occurs to me that Jesus was also underground and came out alive. And because of that, after my final experience underground, I'll come up alive. Not so that demon though; he'll still be in darkness. But that's his problem.

Authenticity

In a world
Where everything
Has been
Spoken
Written
Sung
Discovered
Invented
Re-invented

In a world where everything
Has been done
Authenticity
Is an endangered species

Brad Stout
Neosho
Staff
Poetry



Going after the One

Amanda Cook
Wheaton
Staff
Nonfiction

Growing up on a ranch in northeastern Arizona was one of the many highlights in my life. I was given ample opportunity to learn about cattle production and horsemanship. I consider it a blessing that I was part of a family that worked together. Memories of riding horses, tending cattle, and fixing fences stir a love for the cowboy way of life in my heart. Ranch life is day in and day out full of hard work, sweat, calluses, and a never-ending “to do” list. For instance, the duty of combating the ever malevolent thistles, loco weed, and cockle burrs. But regardless of the challenge, ranching is outlandishly romantic when you consider the lifestyle strives to keep the western heritage of America alive.

I’ve since moved away and live about 1100 miles away from my childhood home. However, I still enjoy going back to visit and help my parents on occasion. In the fall of 2008, I had the opportunity to go home and help with the fall gathering and branding.

The morning of the branding, I woke up early, excited to be home. I could hear familiar voices downstairs and smell breakfast cooking. My Uncle Jay was discussing the plans for the day with my dad. Aunt Dara’s distinguishing laugh echoed through the house. The coffee brewed, releasing its deep aroma, while mom fried eggs and hash browns. I quickly dressed and went downstairs. My family all greeted me warmly with hugs and smiles. I loved seeing everyone.

After eating breakfast, I went outside to saddle my horse. I loaded my saddle, blanket, and bridle into the back of Dad’s ranch truck. Then I drove to the arena and corrals to catch my horse. Friends and family were already saddling their horses, getting ready to help us gather and brand.

Once my horse was saddled, I joined the others. Dad stood in the middle of a circle of riders and explained the plan. He wanted us to ride to the east end of the ranch. We would then spread out and work our way back toward the working corrals, thereby sweeping the entire ranch and driving all the cattle in the same general direction. Hopefully no cattle would be left behind.

Understanding the simplicity of the plan, I expected things to go smoothly. I squeezed my horse into a long trot to cover ground quickly.

We made it to the back fence line in a timely manner. After contemplating where the cattle might be, I decided to check behind a nearby mesa. But there were no cattle. “Oh well,” I thought, “I will find some.” The cowgirl in me was leaping with excitement. I wanted to find a big bunch of cattle and bring them in all by myself.

My eyes scanned the land, as I rode. For the most part, my parents’ ranch is very wide open country. Looking in one direction I could see about 40 miles. Off in the distance, I noticed my Aunt Cheryl and Bob, a friend of the family, gathering a large bunch of cows. I felt a little disheartened that I hadn’t found any. I decided to ride the riverbed and see if any cattle were hiding out there.

The riverbed is full of tall, bushy scrub trees called tamarisks. The presence of these radical weeds makes it very difficult to see any cattle, let alone where your horse is going. To navigate through the tamarisks I recommend following the cow trails. Yes, these worn paths do possess a mazelike quality. They dart in every imaginable direction and often circle, leading you back to where the trail began in the first place. But I still recommend staying on the cow trails. The river can only be crossed in a few places due to quicksand and the steepness of the riverbanks. It’s safest to cross where the cow trails go through the river.

While working my way down into the riverbed, I rode upon Chad, a rodeo photographer who thought it would be fun to help us out with the cattle. Chad and I decided to team up and ride the riverbed together. “Maybe a little help won’t be so bad,” I thought.

We saw fresh cow tracks leading into the thick of the tamarisks. I followed the tracks and then heard something in front of me. Although the cow was not visible, the sound of her quietly pushing through the branches was evidence and kept me hot on her heels. As I followed her, I realized we were no longer on a cow trail. Limbs scraped and banged against me; I regretted not having worn chaps to protect my legs. Earlier I relished in the “simplicity” of our plan. Now the word “simplicity” was very unfitting.

After following the cow for what seemed like forever, she came into sight. I had been trailing one of dad’s old red Saler’s. “What a pain,” I thought. But I kept following her. Eventually

she got back on a cow trail and headed toward a deep draw, which excited me! She wouldn't be able to cross; instead she would have to change directions and go up and out of the riverbed. Things were definitely turning out favorable for me.

The cow walked up to the edge of the draw and jumped! I couldn't believe my eyes. Her front half clung to top of the embankment and her back half dangled off the edge. I held my breath thinking the worst. A vision of her falling off backwards and getting hurt passed through my mind. In the midst of her scrambling and straining to get on solid ground, I sat on my horse watching. There was nothing I could do to help her. Somehow she managed to pull herself up and calmly walk off.

I had had "it". Whatever "it" was, I had had enough of "it". What kind of cowgirl can't catch an old cow moving slowly? She had been walking the entire time. "She isn't worth it!" I thought to myself, "Who cares what happens to her." She had no desire to be with the rest of the herd. So naturally it made sense to me, she should be left behind in the wilderness. If perhaps she died out here, it would be her own fault!

Suddenly the Lord spoke to my heart. He said, "Amanda, go after the one." In Luke chapter 15, Jesus tells three parables. One about a lost sheep that is found, another about a lost coin that is also found, and the third about a lost son that returns home to his father. In the parable about the lost sheep Jesus says, "What man of you having a hundred sheep, and losing one of them, does not leave the 99 in the desert, and goes after the lost one until he finds it? And finding it, he puts it on his shoulders rejoicing. And coming to the house, he calls together the friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that had been lost.' I say to you that so is the joy in Heaven over one sinner repenting, than over 99 righteous ones

who have no need of repentance." Luke 15:3-7

God goes after His children. Even if it's just one, God's love is so great and compels Him to reach the lost soul. In His opinion, "we are worth it!" I remember God coming after me and working in my life. Regardless of the desire to do my own thing, He pursued me. Then God, in His goodness, brought me out of darkness and into His family. One soul on earth is worth it to Him.

I really didn't think the cow deserved my time or effort, but God taught me a profound lesson that day. It wasn't about the cow at all. I learned a spiritual lesson about the love God has for sinners. My outlook and judgments toward other people needed to change. I have often given up on people, thinking they were hopeless, too difficult, and would never change. But the truth is God never gave up on me. He wanted me to understand His heart toward people and "not to grow weary in doing good," Galatians 6:9. God wants His love to be great in and through us!

Instantly, my attitude improved and I continued driving the cow. She led us onto a foot wide path. To our left plunged a steep drop-off into the river, and to our right sat a steep ledge that bordered the riverbed. The ledge looked too steep to climb. But then I saw my moment.

The cow stopped and stood facing a path
[Continued to 42]

Shadowman

Amanda Cook
Wheaton
Staff
Color Photography



Going After the One

[Continued from 41]

that led up the ledge. It looked a little brushy; however, I thought we could make it. I rode my horse toward her and closed my eyes to protect them from the brush. The cow climbed out and my horse lunged up the path behind her.

It was a done deal; we were out!

Then I looked behind me and gasped. I had ridden my horse through an old, partially fallen down barbwire fence. If my horse had gotten tangled, we would have fallen down the ledge with barbwire wrapped around us. It could have been really bad, but I knew my Father had been watching over me.

By this point, the cow's attitude had changed. She became more than willing to let us drive her toward the herd. As Chad and I pushed her into the main bunch of cattle, we looked at each other and smiled. A sense of satisfaction went through me. I was glad I hadn't given up on her. She was worth it.

"Above all have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins."

1 Peter 4:8

Nailing the Truth

Others have built homes and walls
Tables or chairs or horse's stalls
I had hoped to help a carpenter build
Not chosen to hold a man they killed
Here I stand in his right hand
Watching his blood hit the sand
I see faces of anger cheer
And people of sorrowful fear
In His words "Father, forgive them"
I have come to know him as the Son
And with the words "It is finished"
The world will know what he has done

Joshua Boley
Cassville
Staff
Poetry



Lighting The Way

Joshua Boley | Cassville | Staff | Color Photography

Untold Fairytales

She sat by the window with her child on her lap, staring into the horizon where the sky meets the grass. As a million thoughts raced through her head, she held her little boy tight. Emma Sanders wasn't your average high school senior; there was more to her than what meets the eye; however, grade-wise she ranked tenth in her graduating class. No one really understood Emma for who she truly was, maybe because she never cared to open up about all her pains. Her story was left untold, sitting in the back of the closet overlooked by the rest of the world. Emma was left to be judged by the ones who stand on the outside of the window looking in. They didn't know the truth of her story, or how she became who she was. The only judgment they could conclude, was, "She's a whore," for the simple fact that she was the mother of a two year-old boy.

Everyone jumped to conclusions about Emma, all of them that is, except for Cayden. He didn't care how Brently was brought into the world. All he cared about was how much he wanted to prove his love to Emma.

That morning, as Emma wheeled her wheelchair into school, she held her head down, hoping to be invisible to all those around her. After Emma had Brently, she shut herself off from the world; losing all her friends, and every hope of being a professional gymnast. Life was complicated, but Brently was the only thing that kept her going. Emma didn't think she would ever have anyone again, when suddenly she heard, "You look beautiful today, Emma."

She stopped fiercely, shoved her wheels forward, and looked up to find the cutest guy in school standing in front of her, Cayden Rayes. "Th .. Tha... Thanks," she stuttered as she took off again.

"Hey Emma?" Cayden choked

"Yea?"

"How would you like to go out with me sometime? Like.... On a date?"

"No thanks, I uh I got a lot to do," she whispered, trying to hold back the excitement.

"Please, just take a chance and trust me. It's so easy to say no and take the easy way out, so how about saying yes and taking a chance, just this one time... Please Emma?" he begged

"Look, I can't exactly go 'on a date; look at me, Cayden, I'm a paralyzed freak. I don't want

to be someone else's problem. I'm sorry."

"You're not a problem! I have waited so long to ask you out, so will you please just give me a chance to prove to you how much I lo..." Cayden stopped short of a big word and corrected himself, "How much I care about you. That's all I ask, one date and if you don't have a good time, I promise I will leave you alone the rest of the year..."

Emma sat there tossing the thought around in her head and looked back to Cayden, "Fine... one time, then you leave me alone and that's that."

"GREAT! I will pick you up tonight at 5:30. Thank you Emma, I promise you won't be sorry!" Cayden exclaimed as he ran off like a little boy chasing the girls around the school yard.

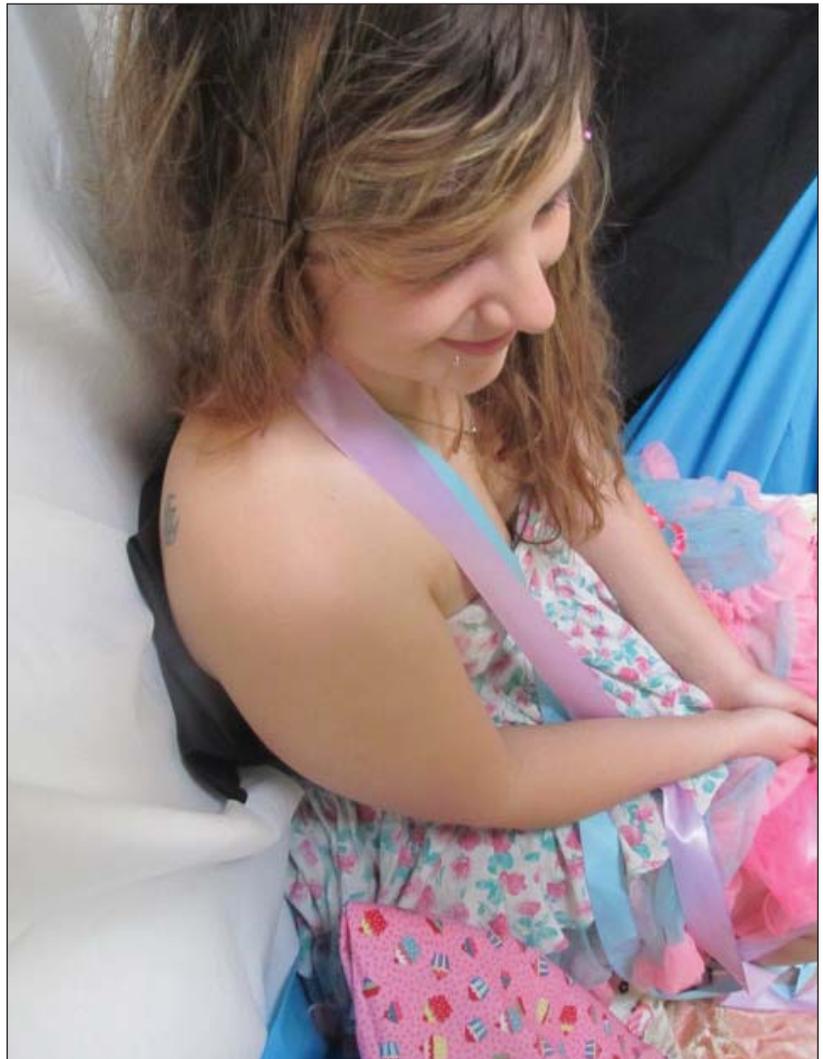
Emma hurried out the doors as the school

[Continued to 44]

Whitney Gray
Neosho
High School
Bronze
Fiction

Playful Obscurities

Aubrey Donaldson
Joplin
Staff
Color Photography



Untold Fairytales

[Continued from 43]

dismissal bell rang and headed straight for home. Ready to go by five, she sat staring out the front window waiting for Cayden's truck to come down the drive. "Mommy?" Brently whispered as he climbed up into her lap.

"What baby?"

"Are you going to find my daddy?"

"No Bubby, I'm going out," she whispered while a tear fell down her cheek.

Cayden pulled in the drive, shut off his truck and ran to knock on the door. "It's open!" Emma yelled.

Cayden walked in the door and stopped to stare at the most beautiful girl holding an adorable little boy. "Hey," he managed to say "You look.... stunning!"

"Hi. Thanks, umm this is Brently; Brently can you tell Cayden hi?"

"Hi," he shyly whispered

"Hi buddy," Cayden replied

Emma took Brently in to her mom, and left with Cayden. They drove in silence for a while, until Cayden finally said, "He's adorable Emma; he looks just like you."

She stared out the window trying to hold back the tears as the memories began to come into her head again, "Thanks, he's really great."

As the night went by, the two of them shared some laughs, and for Emma, everything seemed to be fading as she realized she hadn't been this relaxed and happy for a really long time. After paying for dinner, Cayden decided to take Emma to the park so that they could sit under the star-filled sky, and enjoy the refreshing breeze that made the trees sway as though they were dancing while they talked. "So what should I know about you? I mean, what's the catch?" Emma asked.

"Emma, I'm just gonna be up front with you," Cayden took a breath and the next few words came out so quickly they were almost not understandable. "I really like you, and I don't know your story or why you have a kid and that's really not any of my business unless you decide to tell me, then you will have my full, undivided attention. As for now, I plan to prove myself to you in hopes that you could see us becoming a couple," he finished, gasping for a breath to refill his lungs.

"You really like me?" she questioned with the raise of one perfectly shaped eyebrow.

"That's what I have been trying to tell you!"

"Cayden, I know you probably don't understand me or why I am the way that I am, it's just hard for me to explain to people something

I don't want to remember. It's just..." Emma searched for the next few words. "It's just hard for me to trust people right now, after everything I have been through lately.."

"You can trust me Em, I promise. Don't worry about a thing, I'm not going anywhere, so if you need anything just call me okay?" Cayden stated as he looked in to her eyes with the most sincere and trusting look he could.

After a few hours of sitting under the night sky and sharing small talk, Cayden drove Emma home, and as they said their good byes, Cayden kissed Emma's forehead, and walked towards his truck, stopping short to spin around and look at Emma, "Thank you for letting me take you out tonight, I had a lot of fun."

Cayden waited for her to respond but got nothing, so he told her good night, turned around and continued to walk. "I was raped." Emma whispered just loud enough for him to make out the words.

Tears began to stream from her eyes, as though rain had begun to fall from the sky. The past wasn't a door she cared to open, but that night, she opened it out of faith and love. Cayden stood with his back to Emma in shock trying to change the look on his face before turning around. "I had Brently because I got raped by what was going to be my 26 year old step-brother. After all that happened, Dad ended it with his girlfriend, and I moved in with my mom because I couldn't be in Dad's house anymore without the nightmares causing me to wake in the middle of the night with a blood curling scream so loud it could break a window." Emma gasped for a breath as the crying made it difficult to refill her body with oxygen.

Cayden stood on the sidewalk just before his truck, and stared at the ground in front of his feet, trying to find the words to say. "Emma, I'm so sorry, you didn't have to tell me."

"It's fine... someone was gonna find out sooner or later right? So why not you, right now?" She cried lowering her head in embarrassment.

Cayden walked over to Emma and squatted down so that he would be eye level, placing his rough work-calloused hand under her chin, lifting it to make eye contact. "You didn't deserve to go through that. How could a guy do that to a girl like you?" Cayden didn't understand.

"Yea, but it happened, and this wheelchair tops it all off When I was having Brently, they gave me an epidural and the day after I was sent home I was taking a shower and collapsed. When I woke up in the hospital, they told me I had paralysis from when I had the epidural and

that it would be about three years before I would be able to regain mobility.”

Cayden stared in shock as Emma had finally decided to open up to someone... him. “Emma, I promise to be here for you no matter what. You need anything, I will be here in a heartbeat, and don’t think I’m someone that’s just going to say something and not mean it. I’m being serious.”

It wasn’t long until Emma and Cayden were in a serious, committed relationship, and Emma decided that she would let him take her to prom. Now in most fairy tales they dance the night away, but for Emma, her prince charming was so much better. Cayden never once sat her down; he held her in his arms the whole night so that she wouldn’t have to sit in her lousy wheelchair, unable to dance. Their night was magical. He became her fairy tale!

After a few months of their relationship, Brently began to call Cayden, Daddy. It started when Cayden had brought Emma home from dinner, and they sat on the couch watching a movie. When Cayden got ready to go, Brently ran up to him, jumping on his lap to give him a big hug and said, “Good night, Daddy!”

That was when Cayden finally realized it was time for him to take the next step. That next night, Cayden got Emma and Brently into his truck and ran back inside to talk to Emma’s mother quickly, “I appreciate your blessing in

this, Ms. Sanders,” he said, running back out the door.

After dinner, while they were waiting on dessert, Cayden leaned over and whispered something in Brently’s ear, then got up as if he was going to go use the restroom. At that time, Brently tugged on Emma’s sleeve and said, “Mommy... Will you marry Daddy?” he paused, then continued in his charming little ways, “Pleeeeaassssee?”

As Emma looked over her left shoulder, she saw Cayden on one knee with an opened, small, white box containing the biggest diamond she had ever seen in her life. She gasped, sucking in all the air she could, frantically throwing her hands over her mouth as tears accumulated in the bottom of her sky blue eyes. “Of course I’ll marry Daddy!” she screeched. Cayden slipped the small silver band onto Emma’s finger, and everyone in the restaurant applauded them.

While the wedding plans were being made, the couple agreed that they would wait until Emma was able to walk again; but for now they looked for the perfect house far from any sight of the city. They finally found one that was two stories high with a wrap around porch and a cherry red door. A tire swing hung from the big oak tree in the front yard, that was perfect for children, and Emma knew this was the one. They are moving in next month!

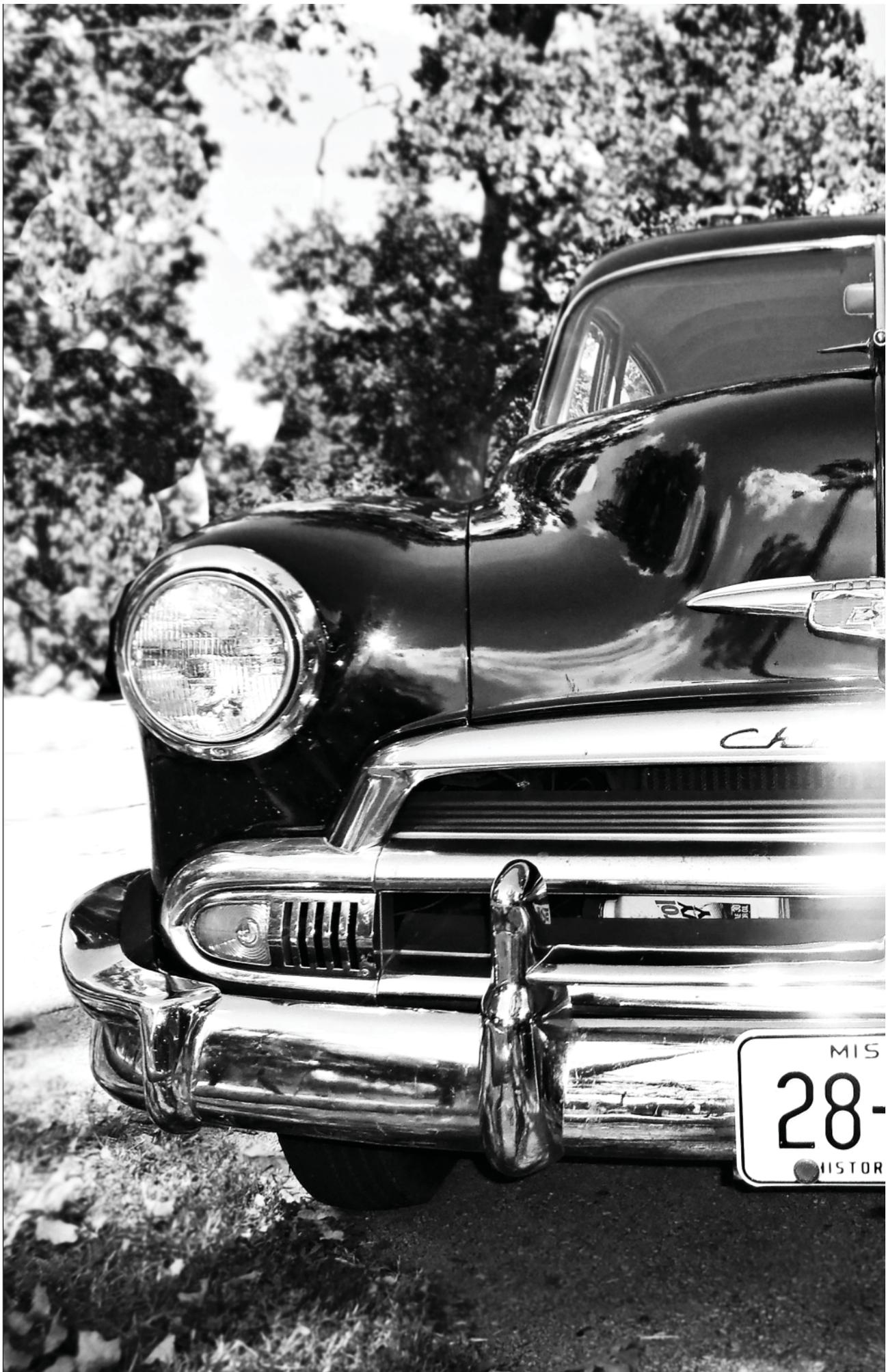
Love

Kasi Taylor
Neosho Christian
High School
Honorable Mention
B&W Photography



The
Old Car

Jessica Cole
Neosho
Christian
High School
Gold
B&W
Photography





MISSOURI
304
PUBLIC VEHICLE

In the Hands of an Angel

Jessica Cole
Neosho Christian
High School
Bronze
Nonfiction

It was an idyllic day. A sparrow or two twittered at each other, perched cockily in the oak trees by the old green-wrapped farmhouse. The warm spring sunshine sifted through the branches to paint sunny patches on the cool cement porch.

The weathered porch rocker swayed gently as the breeze played across the porch and in the grassy yard. It was a fine rocker. It had seen the years come and go past the old house. It had listened to the chatter of growing children, and proudly held Grandmother Cole almost every day as she shelled peas and broke beans from her garden for the family meals.

It was a Sunday afternoon in May of 1966. Paul Cole, his wife Carol Jean, and his two children, Clifford and baby Rebecca, were visiting Paul's family. Paul's birthday was a perfect excuse for a visit, though they visited nearly every weekend without an excuse. They were a very close family.

Jimmy balanced on the edge of the porch watching Paul, Carol Jean, and little Clifford set out across the field to see the cows. He grinned as Clifford rushed eagerly ahead of his parents. Soon, they disappeared behind a patch of woods. Jimmy amused himself by swinging round and round on one of the white pillars.

Granddaddy Cole walked up and down the porch, holding her in his characteristic way. It

made a sweet picture- the grandfather, dressed in his Sunday best, his newest white shirt and gray striped bib overalls, and the dark-haired baby girl sleeping in his hands. Granddaddy always carried babies on his hands, palms upward.

It was hard to imagine the shrill crying of the sweet baby now that she rested peacefully. Granddaddy Cole decided to sit down. He would remember this casual decision for the rest of his life. Granddaddy plumped down into the old porch rocker.

Granddaddy sprawled on his back amid the ruins of the broken rocker as Rebecca flew up into the air, propelled with Granddaddy Cole's instinctive flinging his arms up. Jimmy, on the outward swing of his revolution around the pillar, was helpless, as was Granddaddy Cole. Rebecca went nearly up to the rafters before plummeting toward the cement.

The expressions of horror slowly changed into speechless astonishment as the little baby stopped in midair and hung suspended, baby fingertips just brushing the hard cement. Ever so slowly she was lowered onto the hard surface. Baby Rebecca lay sleeping serenely.

Several long moments passed before Jimmy and Granddaddy Cole breathed again. It was impossible! They stared at the little baby sleeping peacefully on the cement floor before looking at each other.

"Did you see that?" Granddaddy questioned, struggling into a sitting position.

Jimmy nodded. "I sure did," he whispered. Granddaddy rose and gently scooped up Rebecca as Paul, Carol Jean, and little Clifford came into view from behind the trees.

Granddaddy, Jimmy, and Rebecca waited for them on the edge of the porch. It seemed forever until they finally arrived at the porch, looking curiously at the broken chair. Granddaddy smiled and handed Rebecca to her mother, Carol Jean.

"While you were gone Rebecca had a fall," Granddaddy announced. Carol Jean immediately began checking her darling infant for the inevitable bumps and bruises, but Granddaddy stopped her by continuing.

"The rocker broke when I sat down with her. Rebecca would have hit the cement, but God caught her in midair before letting her touch the floor! She never even woke up!"

Brightly

Moriah Mathews
McDonald County
High School
Honorable Mention
B&W Art



Our Life-Changing Vacation

Little did I know that our vacation to America in 1986 would change the lives of our family forever. It involved the lengthy process of selling our home, car, and business trips to London, and legal paperwork. Though, the hardest part of all was saying our goodbyes to family and friends.

The London airport terminal was swarming with people of all shapes and sizes. We located the departure lounge for our flight to Dallas, Texas, found some empty seats, and waited to board the 747 Jumbo Jet. Our seats were toward the back of the plane, we walked through what seemed countless sections. I wondered how this lump of metal would ever take off with all the weight it was carrying. The flight seemed long and tiring, especially since our day had started so early that morning with a two hour taxi ride.

With the excitement of visiting new places, seeing new things, the next few weeks flew by. We took the children to Sea World and fed the dolphins, which they loved! Took pictures outside of Southfork Ranch, Dallas, where the T.V. show "The Ewings," was filmed. Drove to San Antonio and did the river walk, and went on the glass bottom boats. The sights and sounds of Texas were larger than life to us. Everything was bigger; the signs, cars, roads, people, even the fly-swatters were bigger.

Upon arriving back home in England, we put in our application for immigration to the States. The next 18 months were taken up with the preparations of selling our home, car, and business. Then the letter arrived. My husband, Brian, opened it. He exclaimed, "We have our appointment time for our interview in London."

"When is it?" I asked.

"In two weeks."

"That's quick, we'll have to take the boys out of school for that day, and get a hotel booked in London."

On Sunday, we went to my parents for dinner, and to say our good-byes to everyone. The food was delicious; as usual. There was juicy roast beef, hot crusty roast potatoes, soft brussels sprouts with a knob of butter on the top, carrots, corn; and the Yorkshire pudding, all puffed up and perfect, all topped off with a rich brown gravy. For dessert my mum had bought

individual mince pies, a plum and almond tart, and a fresh strawberry pavlova, all served with a dollop of double cream. The day was drawing to a close; therefore, Brian said, "We had better make a move, we still have some packing to do."

The thought of saying good-bye to my parents gave me a knot in my stomach, and a lump in my throat, which made it hard to swallow. Dad and Mum hugged us all and said, "We'll see you soon." I know they were trying to keep things light, I tried hard to control my feelings, but try as I might, it didn't happen, the tears just sprang from my eyes and wouldn't stop.

Valentine's Day, 1989, was the start of our new life in the USA. The stewardess gave everyone on board a red rose. After a nine hour flight, eyes red-rimmed and feeling quite exhausted, we made our way to immigration. The immigration staff were so friendly and welcoming it lifted our spirits. They took our photos, finger prints, and had us sign our new alien cards. After a long, drawn out 18 months of waiting, planning, and paperwork, we were now finally legal citizens of the United States of America.

So our adventure had just begun in a new land. Some of our friends said we were very brave to leave family and start over. I suppose we were; our lives and the future of our posterity's lives would be changed forever; due to the vacation of a lifetime that we took back in 1986.

Tina Hall
Monett
Crowder
Gold
Nonfiction

Untitled

Charlene Bergen
Anderson
Community
Gold
B&W Art



How Do You Like Your Dreams?

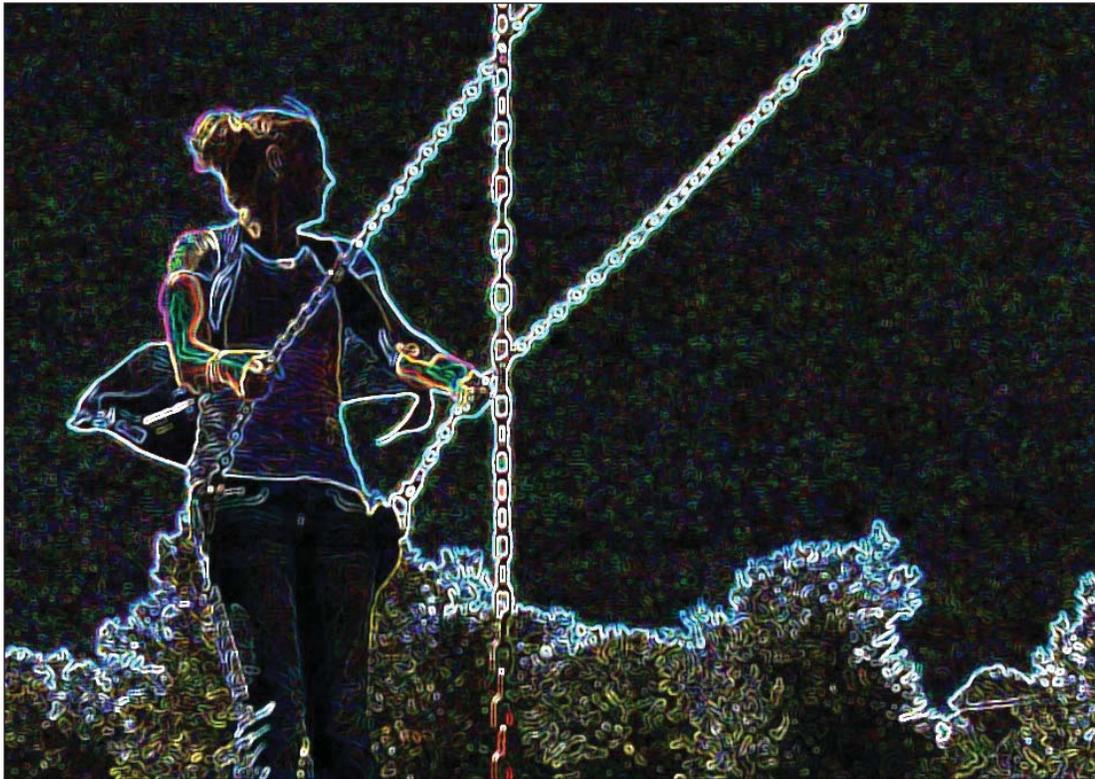
Cheyenne Baker
Neosho
Crowder
Bronze
Poetry

Wild and willing,
Peaceful and thrilling,
that's how I like my sleeping.
Peace of cake,
Piece of pie,
It's really not easy,
Oh how they lie.
Moving on,
Moving on.
No time to think
On times long gone.
Do you dream of me?
Is it I you see?
Is it me you want to please?
Do I get you on your knees?
If I wanted to leave, would you beg me to stay?
Would you fight for our love, or just let me walk away?
Now here's a question,
Short and sweet,
Have I made
your life complete?

Flaming Inspiration

Angela Kuri
Diamond
High School
Bronze
Color Art





Flight

Katelyn Jackson
Neosho Christian
High School
Honorable Mention
Digital Art

[Below]

Flowers Beauty

Angela De La Cruz
McDonald County
High School
Silver
Digital Art



Stumbling into Physics

Daniel Yates
Granby
Crowder
Bronze
Nonfiction

"Destiny is not a matter of chance- it is a matter of choice, it is not a thing to be waited for- it is a thing to be achieved," – William Jennings Bryan

People are always talking about how they hate their jobs and if they could only find something better. Finding something better is a gift few people achieve. This is a story about a man who worked to achieve such a gift.

It was a cloudy Wednesday in late May, 2010; I should have been at work instead of grinding the pavement on my motorcycle. I was going to Kansas City to play in a satellite poker tournament; winner got a trip to Las Vegas and a seat into the World Series of Poker.

Remembering back, I had spent the last decade or so working dead-end jobs, hating my bosses, and leaving friends and acquaintances behind as I moved from one job to another. For the last two years, and while working at my newest repulsive job, I had been learning more about gambling than most Pit Bosses. I proudly taught myself techniques like predicting roulette, dice controlling, and even some unwritten poker techniques. Most people, including my friend Kelvin, have said, "That is impossible, and even if it were possible, you would not be the one to do it. If you are so good (gambling) why are you working at La-Z-Boy?" I then taught him and his wife basic and advanced techniques at craps. They went to Las Vegas and he won \$800 after a one-night session. Now Kelvin said positively, "If anyone can do it, it's you, Daniel, but now I really don't know why you are working for La-Z-Boy."

Unfortunately for me, I can teach other people, and they can go on to become some of the greatest gamblers and perhaps make millions. However, fate seems to have other plans for me. This is the theme of my life. Undeterred by people and my thoughts, I push on to the World Series of Poker, so I do not have to work a regular job while I go to college. There are plenty of ideas floating around my head to get me out of La-Z-Boy. Inconveniently, none of them I want to do for the rest of my life.

As time passes, while rolling down the road I decide to find a faster route to get from the motel to the casino. I get off on the wrong exit. In addition, when I try to get back on, I am stuck in traffic. As I go up a hill, my bike starts

to overheat and the clutch stops working. I get my bike parked at the top of the hill on a small thin island of concrete between the connecting lanes.

I call for a tow truck. Then I take a walk around the fenced-in park that is connected to an overpass so that I can get something to drink. When I get back, I hide from the sun under the overpass not 20 feet from my bike. Thank goodness, there are not a lot of cars driving over the overpass, because when they do a metal thud echoes under it. I try not to think about the disappointment of the trip, but when I do, it feels like I have lost a future. It makes me so angry and frustrated that I am actually calm. People stare at me as if I am streaking through their football game. It has been raining hard for the last hour when the tow truck shows up. I get on my bike and roll it off the island and down the hill onto the truck. We pull off the exit I have been looking at for the last four hours. In addition, it stops raining and I can see the casino I was going to; I could have walked there and back by the time the tow truck showed up.

After getting back to my motel and getting something to eat, I start watching TV. I do not have any channels at the house, and as I channel surf, I stop on The Science Channel, "Through the Wormhole with Morgan Freeman" is on; it is about black holes. I have never studied black holes, but as I watch the show, a light bulb goes off in my head; one I did not know existed. My imagination draws up what's being said on the show, and I understand what they are saying before they finish their sentences. I now know the joy, an anxiety that Mozart must have had when he played his first piano. I wonder what else I know. It is comforting after a heart-breaking day.

The show mentions a book called *The Black Hole Wars: My Battle with Stephen Hawking to Make the Universe Safe for Quantum Mechanics* by Leonard Susskind. That book became the first novel I have ever read cover to cover. Moreover, in that book, I found the world to which I seem to belong. The book introduced me to people like Physicist Dr. Richard Feynman, someone I can look up to, and someone I respect enough to be an example on how I would like to live my life. I finished the book less than a month before turning 26 and starting college.

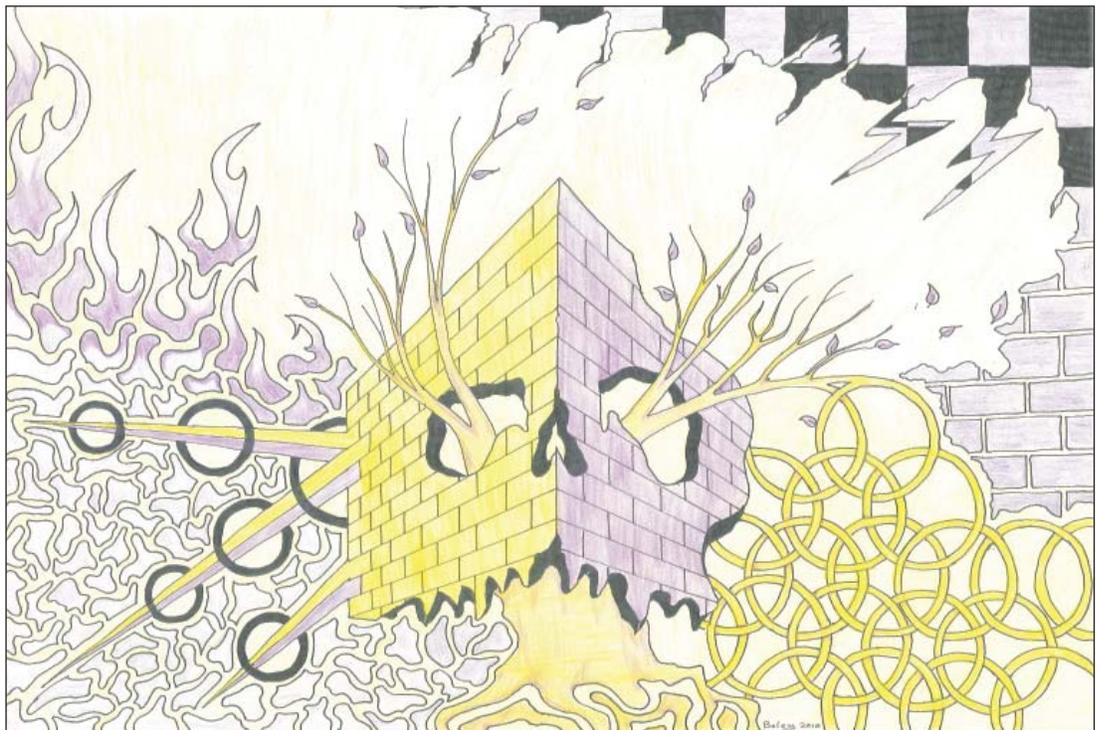
In conclusion, it felt that fate shut the door



to the house I have long struggled to approach. Fortunately, fate seems to have awarded my hard work, and showed me a future that belongs to me. There is a long way to go right before I enter the field of physics, but it is worth it. However, now I have people to believe in and people who believe in me. Knowing where you belong is beyond priceless.

"You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes you just might find - You get what you need."

- The Rolling Stones



Yggdrasil

Joshua Boley | Cassville | Staff | Color Art

Don't Save Me

Jenell Jackson
Waynesville
Crowder
Gold
Fiction

This is a strange question, Dr. Allan. I'm not certain what caused me to come here. I have been in this hospital for three weeks and I'm still uncertain. You asked me to write my life story. I thought starting from the beginning would be a good idea, but *it* didn't start at the beginning. Everything was perfect in the beginning. I am not here to figure out what was perfect about my life. My sister and I were born on an ordinary Friday morning, conveniently after *General Hospital* and Mom's other "stories". July 29, 1988. We were perfectly similar. Everything was perfect. Dad loved art. Mom loved that he loved it. He painted often. There were encouraging words in my house, church on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. Everything was perfect until it wasn't.

Dad's favorite meal was beef stew. That Sunday afternoon, after a long hot morning at church, my mother strapped Jada and me into our car seats to take us to Delchamps. It was ordinary. I tumble the day over and over in my mind like an industrial sized dryer, as much as I can, trying to find what was different. I hope to see what was wrong. But what's worse is that nothing was wrong. I do remember feeling hesitation in my mother that whole day; hesitation that made me want to crawl out of my skin. When we returned home, I did my usual duty of helping Mom open the dust smeared garage door. It was large inside, dedicated to my dad's art work. Paintings. Wood work. Chalk. Charcoal. As the door slid up, it was not the outsized, half-finished, two-seater, wooden pony meant as a Christmas present for Jada and me that caught my eyes. Instead, there he hung; as if he was a magician, levitating in mid-air. But I caught his trick. The triple braided white rope tied into a noose. A symmetrical wet spot decorated the front of his pants. His neck looked uncomfortably elongated as it dangled his head at an awkward angle to the left, with his swollen tongue bulged out from his mouth. My sister, who stood on the right side of my mother, let out a horrid scream, as if she knew what she was looking at. I think in moments like this, a lot is to be said about an individual's first reaction. My sister screamed and mother turned us away from the scene but still cried. And there I stood, silent and staring off; foreshadowing that I would hold everything in from that day forth, not able to get

past that moment. That is how it turned out.

During the funeral I was quiet and smiled at the grieving faces. I wanted everyone to feel better and ignored the horrific pain that was mincing my spirit like a Sue Chef versus a bulb of fresh garlic. People commented on how strong I was, but they had no idea. That was when my sister and I stopped being so perfectly similar. In the weeks after a death, people must think that families lose the ability to cook food. There was an abundance of food brought to us from people at church, but I didn't eat anything. I think that is when it started. I just did not want to feel good. My dad was dead and I was alive. I was not supposed to feel good.

The lawyer, named Brenden that helped my mother with all the legal documents started coming around the house more often. I never vocalized hatred for him, the way most kids would. Instead, I noticed my mother smiling after months of a constant frown. I only wanted her happy. When I was seven years old, Brenden and my mother married. It seemed that things were back to normal. I started to eat again and smiled every once in a while. I succeeded at things and smiled. I existed. Never lived life, but existed. Did what I needed to do.

It was like that for years. Nothing interesting happened; nothing that other people have in their life stories. No molestation from my charming and charismatic pastor or bullies in the playground who made fun of my weight. Just the constant image of my dad, his tongue, and the growing snowball of knowledge I received that led to his demise. Bipolar. As a child, that is what made him so fun. He would randomly drive Jada and me to random places, sometimes driving for days. He would jump around with us and giggle like a manic jester. He did things on impulse. And then, he wouldn't. He'd sit in the garage for days, not saying a word. I suppose that time, he could not get past the depression. It became too much. He had always had that noose hidden under his bed, in a *Nike* shoe box, ready for when it was needed. His father passed down a gun to him as a keepsake. Instead, Dad used it as a way to ensure he wouldn't live. A gun. A noose. Overkill. He really did not want to be saved. Not that time.

When I was thirteen, the need to not eat came back. It came with friends. Depression. Hatred. Fat. I always saw fat. I disgusted myself.



I didn't give in until I went to the hospital for a physical to play basketball. I wanted to stay logical, and besides, only girls starved themselves. Brenden always hounded me about not doing anything "manly". Basketball seemed manly and secretly I figured I would lose some weight. It was not a secret that I was tall. I was jealous of my sister because she was so normal at 5'6 and 137 pounds. She and I both started puberty early. But it seemed like I got the worse of it. At that appointment the nurse told me I was 5'9, very big for a thirteen year-old. I agreed and I was ashamed. On the scale, I found myself praying that the number would be low. No. I weighed in at 147 pounds. She commented that it was slightly low, but the number terrified me. I ended up passing the uncomfortable physical, but everything went downhill as soon as I stepped onto that court. My days were consumed with studying, not eating; basketball practice and exercise afterwards. The first month I lost twelve pounds, but it was not enough for me. I researched ways to lose weight. Obsessed. Brenden didn't like it when I stood in the mirror, asking Jada if she thought I was fat.

"It's not normal," is what he would often tell me. He didn't realize that I would never be normal. After seeing your father overkill himself because he could not stand to be around us for another second, no one comes out normal. Even Jada became super Christian, longing to make sure that no one would feel so low that they would turn to suicide. Mom lost herself after dad's suicide. She was no longer super confident and Miss Independent. No one stays normal after that.

The months dragged on, the weight dropped off. But never fast enough. There were nights I found myself sleeping near the toilet in my bathroom because sixteen, 5 mg. laxatives tend to work very fast, leaving little time to run to the bathroom before taking affect. Tiny sips of clothing detergent was something I got used to, helping me stay so sick that I never could digest anything. It took me an hour to weigh myself on all six of my scales. I don't recall ever staying still except for maybe a few hours while I slept, only if that sleep was not interrupted by laxative overdose. Everything quickly went out of control. I was kicked off the basketball team because I missed many practices and had

[Continued to 56]

Praying for Peace

Autumn Hanks
McDonald County
High School
Honorable Mention
B&W Art



Don't Save Me

[Continued from 55]

blackout spells in the ones that I actually could attend. The school became involved when I was found passed out in the left wing stairwell with a pool of blood around me. It had only been seven months since the beginning of the school year and I had managed to drop down to 100 pounds, but had somehow grown to 5'10.

I was taken out of school for a medical leave, but I convinced my mother and Brenden that I could gain the weight at home. The school advised that I go to a treatment center, but people seem to get forgetful that a guy with an eating disorder should have the same urgency. I simply said I would stop and they believed it. They badly wanted to believe me. During that month at home, sick as a dying infant wombat, I continued with every trick I could think of. Jada found a few of my journals of what I was doing, with all the ugly details, and she immediately told Mom and Brenden. That night was the first and last time I attempted suicide. I finally understood my father's state of mind. It was comforting, thinking that I finally understood him. I wrote a suicide note to everyone. No details in particular. One simple sentence: *Don't be sad because I am with Dad now.* That is all I had to say. They didn't need to know my reasons. They didn't need to know that it was only a matter of

time before I would die from this disorder. They didn't need to know the constant guilt I felt no matter what I did or said. They didn't need to know the overwhelming sense of loss and lack of control I faced each day. I did not need to burden them with my crap.

Cutting your wrist open is not as easy as they make it look on TV. You cannot sit there, crying, slowly pressing a razor horizontally across your wrist. It takes swift motion. It takes a mess and hesitation marks. It takes a deep breath and a brain filled with every regret and pain you have endured so you can convince yourself this is the only option. It's not gracefully falling back on a bed of white sheets. It's pain and agony. It's messy and not pretty. It's cold. And losing consciousness over and over until...until Brenden came storming in. It's not a loving touch and a confused face looking up to God asking, "Why?" It's a strong man's hand slapping your face and cursing at you, ripping a shirt out of your closet and wrapping it around your wrist. It's pain shooting up your arm when you are supposed to be dead. It's not simply fading into darkness and floating up to heaven. It's random people filling your room to save you while you scream, "Don't save me!"

Fighting Endless Adversity

Pluck the wings straight from my back.
I plummet to the ground.
Then thrust my fist into the air,
Before I turn around.

Once I've turned my back on you,
To head the other way,
I find you in my face again,
Ruining my day.

I try to take life day by day,
Without you coming near.
I find myself within your grip,
Filling me with fear.

Secondary thoughts appear,
Enabling my rage.
This tertiary emotion
Tells me to turn the page.

When I try, the paper tears,
I bottle up a fit.
A fight breaks out inside of me.
I start chomping at the bit.

In endless adversity,
I seem to live my life.
When will all this struggle stop
And free me from my strife?

TJ Pfeifle
Goodman
Crowder
Silver
Poetry

Snowflakes Falling on Mr. Blue Jay

Shelby Little | Neosho | Crowder | Gold | Color Photography





Rain

Megan Wynn
Lockwood
High School
Silver
Poetry

What am I supposed to do?
Me just sitting in the rain.
Wondering where you are,
Because it's sure not here with me.
What happened to the promises
To I that you had made?
This downpour must have washed them out
Because from me you have strayed.
"How can I get them back?" I ask,
A stupid thought, indeed.
For clearly you are gone to stay,
No matter how I plead.
There's no way now for me to change
The past that happened here.
I can only thank God for the rain
To camouflage my tears.

The Lighthouse

Adrift on an ocean of uncertainty
Waves of despair crashing down on me.
Challenging the gods to a battle of fate,
Dying to love, living to hate.
Deafening roar from the wind of lies
Hard, cold truth stinging my eyes.
Frenzied reality consuming my mind
Old lives and lost loves being left behind
The ebony abyss tugs at my soul
Ever determined to swallow me whole.
But the part of me that's dying to love
Searches for hope in the skies above.
First a flicker, then a brilliant glow
Illuminates my struggle on the sea below.
It slices through the clouds like a golden knife
Lighting my way out of a cold, dark life.
The winds die down, my eyes become clear
My mind is now focused on the shore that is near.
The sea is now calm and the gods are defeated,
I want you to know, you were the lighthouse I needed.

Carmen Wilks
Joplin
Community
Gold
Poetry



St. Augustine

Rachel Anders
Neosho
Staff
Color Photography

Endless Summer

Rick Nichols
Leavenworth,
Kansas
Community
Gold
Nonfiction

I've thought about my father a lot this summer, shedding quite a few tears in the process (and I'm not ashamed to admit it).

I guess it's the weather, as much as anything, that has made me think of Dad. You see, as the mercury shot up well into the 90s day after day, baking the earth to a rock-hard finish while thoroughly drying out the vegetation, my mind went back to that summer in the 1970s when similar conditions prevailed.

It was then that Dad, moved by compassion for the wildlife that regularly frequented the property, rolled his wheelbarrow around to the front yard, put some large rocks in it, and then draped the garden hose over the side, allowing water to slowly trickle into the basin where it could be easily accessed by the birds, squirrels, and stray cats. Now this was before it ever occurred to him that there had to be a way (and there was) to salvage the water the air conditioner created as it took the moisture out of the air so that the water could be used in the garden. Just the same, here was a man who fully understood the value of water and couldn't bear to let even a drop of it go to waste. In fact, whenever he decided that the car needed to be washed, which was maybe once in a blue moon, he parked it somewhere on the lawn so the runoff would ultimately reach the grass.

Dad's appreciation of water as a source of sustenance for which there is no substitute probably had something to do with the large ranch along the Nebraska-Wyoming border where his aunt and her husband struggled to eke out a living during the Great Depression.

He spent some time there as a boy, enough to be aware that what little rain fell in cattle country was highly treasured by the Ellicotts and thus eagerly captured, then used sparingly as the need for water arose. Or it probably had something to do with the summer he lived in Kentucky with a different aunt and her husband, the Troxels, who had a few acres with a barn, a cow, and a brood of chickens. Still shy of his sixteenth birthday, he regularly labored in a neighbor's tobacco fields and quickly real-

ized that without a sufficient amount of rain to stimulate growth, the plants wouldn't be able to deliver a decent crop. Then again, it probably had something to do with the summer of 1954 when so little rain had fallen in the southern plains that he and Mom could drive the family car, a gray Hudson, down a slope and right onto the bottom of the Grand Lake of the Cherokees in Oklahoma. I was there, but I was too young to remember the trip, which, for Dad, represented a pleasant change of pace from the regular routine he was most familiar with as a soldier (Army National Guard) assigned to Camp Crowder near Neosho, Missouri.

Is it any wonder, then, that by the time he was 30, one of Dad's favorite songs was, "Cool Water," by Sons of the Pioneers?

"But I really miss Dad,
and when I reach the point
where I can't hold back
the tears any longer,
I freely let them fall onto
the nearest tomato plant."

Two years after Dad and Mom were married, they constructed a four-room house (parlor, kitchen, bathroom, and utility room) with an unscreened front porch to live in. It was basically a glorified country cabin, but the interesting thing about it was its orientation with respect to the street. Instead of positioning the house so that it was aligned perfectly with the north-south grid, Dad shifted

the one end a little to the east to give the large windows adjacent to the porch more exposure to the sun, especially during the winter months (September through March) when the sun appeared in the sky at a relatively low angle. He wanted his home to have as much natural light as possible, and at the same time, he figured, the move would save him some money by reducing the need for gas and electricity.

Soon a combination bedroom and living room was added to the rear to accommodate a growing family. Here, Dad put heavy rafters at three-foot intervals along the ceiling to support a flat roof that was topped off with tar and fine gravel. Why a flat roof? He had seen other houses with flat roofs in the area, and the roofs were designed to trap the rain that landed on them to produce a natural cooling system for the rooms below.

In the 1960s Dad had the notion that the purchase of a farm-style windmill would be a

wise investment to make in light of its ability to generate some “free” electricity. He even went to the trouble of ordering a plain-looking catalog from a small company in Ohio, but for some reason – perhaps the realization that all three of his academically-inclined children had college aspirations – never placed an order. But at least his heart was in the right place by wanting to be “off the grid” as much as possible.

Because of the mild drought in the Kansas City area, I haven’t had to do much mowing at Dad’s place this summer. But earlier in the year, when it was necessary to cut the grass in the small pasture beyond the back yard, I noticed the clover and remembered how he routinely allowed most of it to keep growing – a stand here, a stand there, etc. – so the bees could take full advantage of the nectar. And, I would note, this was a number of years before people were asking the question, “Where have all the bees gone?” and the scientific community had coined the term, “colony collapse disorder” to describe this puzzling (and most alarming) phenomenon that threatens to drastically reduce the world’s food supply.

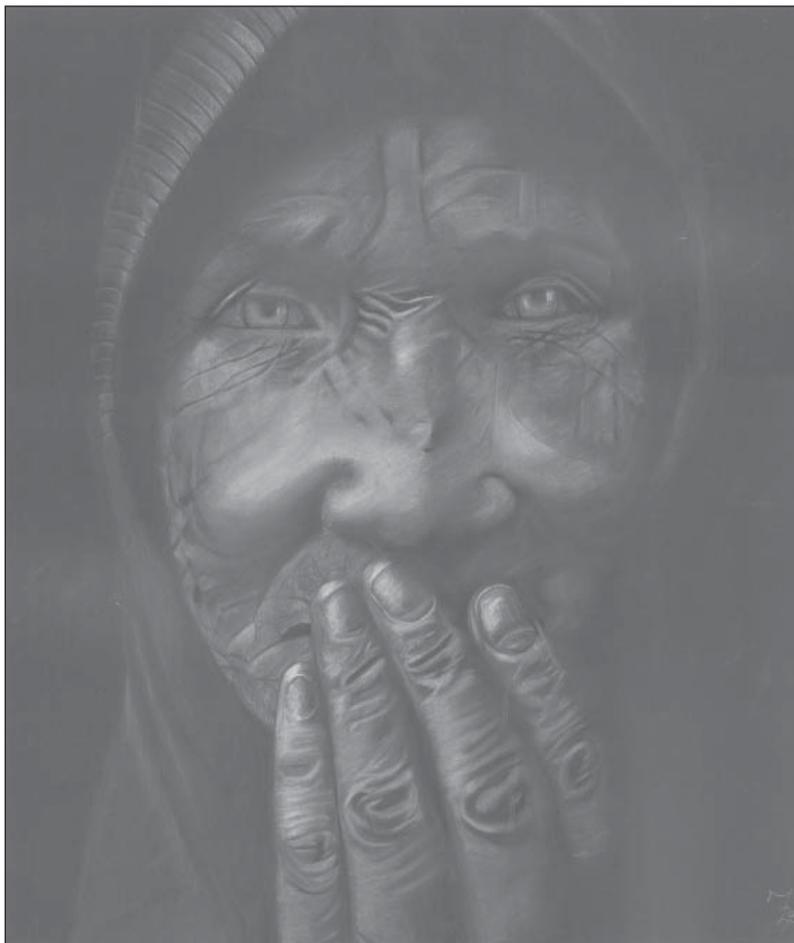
Was Dad particularly fond of honey? No, he seldom touched the stuff, but he had already made the connection between happy bees and a healthy planet. While no one ever referred to Dad as an “environmental wacko,” he had one pet peeve he undoubtedly shared with other environmentalists: he hated to see slices of cheese wrapped individually within the plastic package encompassing the product, being of the mind-set that it only added to America’s trash problem. So whenever my mother went to the grocery store and sliced cheese was on her shopping list, she made it a point to buy the rare brand that wasn’t guilty of over packaging (if she could readily locate it on the shelf).

Of course, Dad, like a true environmentalist, refrained from spraying

pesticides on the lawn, flowers, fruit trees, and vegetables. He knew what had happened one year when a neighbor tried to eradicate a patch of Russian thistle with chemicals: a dead bird here, a dead bird there, etc. That was the only evidence he needed to see.

Yes, I’ve thought about my father a lot this summer, because this is my first summer without him. But at least we’ve got a lovely urn with his ashes in it since he had decided well in advance of his death that he wanted to be cremated and not buried. After all, he was worried that eventually there wouldn’t be enough room left in the world for another cemetery. Often thinking ahead and often envisioning the big picture. That was Dad.

So as I work in and around the garden trying to do the things Dad did as long as he was able, I strive to apply what I learned from him by being a good steward of the limited resources available to me. It’s just one way to honor him as I attempt to pick up the pieces and somehow move forward. But I really miss Dad, and when I reach the point where I can’t hold back the tears any longer, I freely let them fall onto the nearest tomato plant. It’d be a crying shame to waste the water!



Poverty Hurts

Zoe Ellis
McDonald County
High School
Gold
B&W Art

Vanity

Scotti Holweger
Neosho
High School
Silver
Fiction

She's headed to school in her brand new, 2012, red Corvette Convertible. It's the end of summer and the first day of school. The leaves and grass haven't even started to fade into fall, so naturally, the top is down on her car and her long, wavy brown hair with soft blond and hazelnut highlights is flowing behind her as she pulls into the school parking lot. Her big, designer sunglasses cover a third of her face. She turns off her car with the touch of a button and peers into the rearview mirror one last time to make sure her hair and makeup are in order.

All the students in the parking lot stare as she steps out of her flashy car that stands out against all of the other used cars in the lot. She is wearing three-inch leopard print heels, custom skinny jeans with holes strategically placed to keep them in school dress code, a fitted soft pink shirt, and a baby blue scarf with a shine to it. Everything fits her size zero body perfectly.

She turns to close the door of her car and pulls a blue Coach backpack and black Coach purse out of the back seat. As she walks away from her car with her backpack over one shoulder and her purse on the opposite arm, she holds one hand up over her shoulder. There's a confirming, higher pitched honk assuring her that her car is locked.

Everything she owns is designer. Her single daddy makes sure she only gets the best. He's a well known stock broker, who takes only the highest paying clients. This explains why she gets a shopping spree at least once a week. She has a reputation of being the best dressed girl in school with the attitude to match. It makes sense since she is the head cheerleader with the quarterback of the football team as her boyfriend.

As she walks inside, she pushes her sunglasses to the top of her head which pulls her hair back and out of her face. This reveals a pair of half-carat diamond earrings hanging from her ears, which match the diamond necklace hidden under her scarf. While walking down the hallway, she turns all the boys' heads and gets an eye roll from nearly every girl. She walks with a strut that makes her look like a model with no balance. With each step she takes, the sway of her hips gets a little more exaggerated until it seems as if her lower body is a different entity than her upper, yet somehow she keeps on walking.

When she arrives at her locker, her boyfriend, Todd, is waiting for her. He is wearing his deep blue letterman jacket with three years of football, basketball, and baseball letters on the big crimson "B." It is covered with "All District" and "All State" patches. Todd had been extremely successful in sports and academics, with an "A" average since he started school.

"Welcome back to Bute High School. Are you doing okay?" he greets her with a kiss on the cheek.

She pushes him away with one hand and protests in her valley girl voice, "Makeup, Todd! You're going to mess it up."

"Well, soooooorry," he apologizes, slightly annoyed as he backs up with his hands in the air.

"Uh!" she gasps with a roll of her eyes. "I tell you all the time, don't kiss me in the morning because it will ruin my makeup for the rest of the day." She opens her locker and begins to unload her backpack of clothes, hair and makeup supplies, and assorted accessories.

Todd watches in amazement as she continues to pull item after item out of her small Coach backpack. His eyes open a little wider with every new thing she places in her locker. It seems as though it will never end. "Why do you need all that stuff? And where are you going to put your books?"

"Well, if I'm going to keep up my image, I need to wear something new every other hour, which means different accessories, makeup, and hair to match the new outfit."

"What about your books?" He questions.

She looks at him lost, "What books?"

"You know...those things teachers give us in relation to their classes?"

"Oh yeah! I just don't get one," she boasts.

"What? How do you pass your classes?"

"Easy. All I have to do is pay a nerd to do my homework or take someone else's homework to copy."

That being said, Todd walks off in disgust. Meanwhile, she continues to organize her locker for easy access to her clothing changes throughout the day. She just finishes when the first bell rang and she went to class.

She sits down in a desk and pulls out a compact mirror. She begins fixing her hair and makeup while the teacher hands out a syllabus. She is so absorbed in making sure she looks perfect, she doesn't even notice the teacher is



standing right in front of her. When she looks up, Mr. Harris is looking down at her over his thick, black framed glasses.

"If you're quite finished," he scolds, "I would like for you to join class now."

She slowly closes and puts down her compact. She looked up at him with a small smirk on her face. "Do you know who I am?" She asks.

Mr. Harris looks at her dumbfounded then replies with an even tone, "You are my student. As such, you will participate in class just like everyone else. If you would like to question the matter, I shall warn you, it will not be pretty. No one in my class questions my authority or receives special treatment because of who they are. Do I make myself clear Angelica?"

She stares back at him in complete shock. He did know who she was. Only one other teacher had spoken to her like that. He got fired. Her daddy's contributions to the school had always

been important enough that no teacher would talk to her like that. She stand up, although Mr. Harris was still taller than she; her voice is firm, "How dare you speak to me in that way. I..."

He cuts her off, "You are just another student this year. Your dad's contributions can no longer influence teachers." She has anger on her face but confusion in her eyes. "Wait, you don't even know. Do you?"

"Know what?" she asks with annoyance in her voice.

"Oh no..." his face drops. "Your father," he pauses, "he was arrested yesterday for money laundering. You no longer have any money to your name."

Her eyes get wide, her mouth drops, and she freezes. After the longest five seconds of Mr. Harris' life, she runs out of the room with tears in her eyes. He mumbles under his breath, "She didn't even know."



Blue

Lindsey Gregory | Neosho | Crowder | Honorable Mention | Digital Art

Man Enough

Lea Carter
Salt Lake City, Utah
Community
Bronze
Fiction

I knew there was something wrong the second the footsteps stopped, just outside my door. There was a lump in my throat even as I looked up. It was McKinley, my father's aide, and there was a... strange expression on his face.

"He's dead, Jack."

Dead. Phil, my brother...my *big* brother. The guy who carried me home when I twisted my ankle, who taught me how to look myself in the mirror so I wouldn't duck away from the bullies anymore. The guy with the biggest heart in the world.

"Eva know?" I asked, forcing the words around the lump in my throat.

McKinley didn't answer.

Opening my desk drawer, I pulled out my keys and stood up.

"Tell Dad I'll be home for dinner," I said, as I brushed past McKinley. Something about the way he swayed when our shoulders touched, the vacant look in his eyes, caught my attention. I stopped, really looked at him. "Wilson," I snapped, my gaze never leaving McKinley's face, "take Mr. McKinley to my house."

Wilson responded immediately.

"Have a seat, Mr. McKinley," he said gently. "I just need to lock a few things up before we go, all right?"

I knew from our time in the service together that Wilson could handle things from there, so I took off. I didn't bother aiming for my brother's house. I just drove. As it always happened when I had a problem, I wound up there anyway. Several minutes passed while I sat at the edge of the driveway. I could see the whole front yard and porch, the garage...

It had taken us two weeks to get the garage and house painted for the winter. We'd finished a mere forty-eight hours before he'd disappeared. Subconsciously, I rubbed at the paint stain from where I'd touched my steering wheel before wiping my hands. Shifting back into gear, I eased my car into its place beneath the apple tree. The birds and the apples made a mess of things, but it was just an old beater anyway.

The front door creaked a little as Eva stepped out. She was thinner than I'd ever seen her, and looked exhausted. I could barely breathe as I looked at her, the reality of what I had to tell her pressing in on me like a compac-

tor on an old car.

Suddenly, a baby's wail split the silence. Eva's head swiveled in the direction of the sound, and I snapped out of it.

"Hey, Eva," I called as I unfolded myself, coming to my full six feet three inches. The car door slammed behind me as I vaulted the fence and strode up the walk. "How's that boy of yours always know when Uncle Jack's here?" A grin had started making tracks across my face before I realized it. Then I saw the hope in her eyes.

Then she saw the truth in mine. An uncommonly perceptive woman, she didn't need any more telling than that. The light faded out of her face, and she crumpled into my arms. I winced as I lifted her. Even in her current malnourished state, her weight was enough to pull at an old souvenir from Iraq.

"Hey there, mister," I greeted the baby as I settled Eva on the divan. "What seems to be the problem?" Scooping him up, I raised him up high. He gurgled and stuck his fingers in his mouth in delight. "Yeah," I laughed at him, "you're easy. It's your mom I'm worried about. What're we going to do about her, huh?" I gave him a quick check-up, found he was in working order, and placed him back in the bassinet. Adding an obnoxiously noisy toy to the equation seemed to satisfy him, so I turned back to Eva.

Wake her? or let her sleep? It didn't take long to decide on letting her sleep. Her pulse was a bit fast, but her breathing was normal. Between taking care of the baby and being worried sick about her husband, she couldn't have been sleeping well.

Never one to sit still, I headed for the kitchen, wheeling Baby Jim along with me. He kept me company as I raided the pantry, started dinner, and piled into the dishes. I suppose it was my clattering about that woke her up, though she didn't say so.

"They're sure?" She asked simply, one hand on Jimmy's back.

"McKinley was," I answered briefly.

"Haven't talked to anybody else."

She sank wearily into one of the kitchen chairs.

"What do I do, Jack?" She whispered. "I'm so...confused. I don't know where to start."

Drying my hands on a dish towel, I leaned back against the counter. Knowing her as I did,

I knew she wasn't asking me to tell her how to go on living without her husband.

"Start," I answered, "with the basics." With a smile, I nodded at the baby cup and crackers that were just out of Jimmy's reach on the table.

Smoothing his hair a little, she handed him a cracker.

"I'll spend the night," I offered, "help you pack a few things in the morning. You can stay with Dad for a while." Sensing a forthcoming protest, I added, "It'll do him good, seeing you and the baby." I relaxed when she nodded. "I've got some business that'll take me out of town after the funeral," we both winced at that word, "and I'd appreciate it if you'd stick with him while I'm gone, sort of keep an eye on him."

She looked away. "And you will tell him the same thing, to keep an eye on me while you are gone." It was a statement, not a question. "Where are you going?"

Now she looked at me, looked me right in the eyes. Even if I had been going to lie to her, I couldn't have done it like that.

"There's a chance they'll catch his killer yet, Eva," I answered honestly. "Maybe I can help." Neither of us said anything for a while after that.

"You're like your brother," she said at last. "When your mind is made up..." Shrugging slightly, she stood and straightened herself a bit. "Call your father," she nodded at the phone, "I will check dinner."

* * * * *

I was startled to learn from the Officer in charge that the case was closed. I'd come nearly a thousand miles to help solve a mystery that had apparently unraveled without me. He explained on our way to the courthouse, where the first day of the trial was about to begin.

"We had a pretty good idea where to look for his killer once we found the second body," observed the officer as he led me through the crowded halls.

"Second body?" I asked, surprised again.

"Young woman," he acknowledged, "former girlfriend of one of our local problems. In here," he removed his hat as he opened the door to a courtroom. "Your brother happened by while she was trying to break up with him," he shook his head.

The explanation ended there. From the expression on his face, I could tell that defending the weak wasn't something that happened often

on his beat.

We both ducked as a shot rang out. There was blood on his shirt as he slid down the door.

Acting without stopping to think, I ripped open his holster and brought the pistol up. More shots were being fired, but not in my direction. Straightening from my crouch, I had my target, a man in a gray jumpsuit and chains, in my sights before he even saw me.

For a moment, as his pistol barrel swung to bear on me, I was a soldier again. Fighting, killing even, was like riding a bicycle. Once you've learned how...

Exhaling slowly, I squeezed off the shot. The gun slipped from his nerveless fingers to the floor. I was already moving, my one thought to subdue him. He was a danger to everyone present. Adrenaline rushed through me, making the sound of his pistol hitting the floor

sound like a slamming door. A splinter jabbed me in the finger as I vaulted the low, decorative fence between the spectators' benches and the lawyers' tables. Skidding to a halt, I noticed a picture on one of the tables.

I froze, my pistol trained on the prisoner. The picture was frozen in my mind. *Phil...* This prisoner, I thought dully, is the man who killed my

brother.

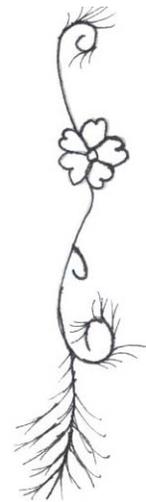
"Finish it!" spat the prisoner venomously, his right hand pressing against the hole in his left shoulder. "Scared?" He lunged to his feet, trying to scare me.

I didn't flicker an eyelash. I couldn't even move. I was caught between the overwhelming urge to apply just a little more pressure to the trigger and the knowledge that it was the wrong thing to do. I was barely aware of the rest of the room, of the sound of a guard groaning in pain, of the acrid smell of gun smoke from the shots he'd fired. Was it my imagination, or was I the only person in the room that wasn't injured or terrified?

"What's the matter?" he raged at me, contempt now in his voice, "ain't you man enough?"

Man enough... Suddenly I could breathe again. My shoulders relaxed and I almost felt pity.

"What would you know," I asked, genuinely curious, "about being a man?" I gestured with the pistol, and ordered, "face down, on the floor. Now."



My Big Brother

June Tippett
Shell Knob
Crowder
Gold
Poetry

No Fooling- School is Grueling,
Tooling the Brain- for Fueling.

Cannot Crawl-Life is Calling!
Cannot Wait-Life's Completing!

Yearning,
Learning.
No Fool,
Good Tool.
Not Tough,
Enough,
Never.
Forever,
Growing.
Schooling.
Bursting,
Thirsting.
Knowledge,
College.
Graduation,
Imagination!

Career,
New Year!
Living,
Loving!
Marriage,
Carriage!
What Joy!!
Oh Boy!!!
Times Four!!!!
No More?
Live Life,
No Strife,
Cherish,
Perish.
Too Young-
Death Comes!

No Living-nor Competing,
Only Loving-Accepting!

*Dedicated to my big brother, who died in
an Industrial accident at age twenty six.*

Solitude

Latonia Bailey
Staff Adviser
Goodman
B&W Photography





My Brilliant Friend

My dearest friend, you've left me
Standing all alone.
My body is numb with sorrow
I don't know my home.

I'm lost, depressed, and frightened
For you're not with me
And somewhere deep inside my heart
My friend, you'll always be.

I know you couldn't help it
And you didn't want to go.
But nonetheless you left me
Sad and all alone.

Although I have my parents
And other friends so close,
I don't know why it is
But I loved you, friend, the most.

Your kindness unto others
Has washed up onto me
You helped me out when times were tough
And you helped to make me see.

You have been so good to me
And as I let you go,
I know you were a true friend
And for that I love you so.

For as long as I can recognize
You've helped me to be strong,
And given me the courage and faith
To keep moving on.

So with my sad and heavy heart
This part comes to an end,
But I will not say good-bye
You'll always be my friend.

Shelby Trout
Seneca High School
Gold
Poetry

For Kayleigh Savannah Teal

Moving On

Austin Fehring
Neosho Christian
School
Silver
Nonfiction

It was one of the hottest days in the summer and I was sweating so much that my clothes felt like they were pulling me to the ground. I had been up since the crack of dawn getting the cows ready to milk. From the beginning of that morning I knew it was going to be a long day because the cows were usually up and ready, but today they just lay around like slugs. Getting ninety-two lazy cows into the holding pen on that warm, foggy morning was as bad as herding turtles.

After coming in from the field, I went and fed my chickens and dogs, but something was not right. It seemed as if time had stopped. Finally it hit me, I did not hear the sound of the cows being milked. This worried me, why wasn't dad in the milk barn? I dashed to the house to make sure dad was alright. Bursting in the front door I found my dad at the table eating a big bowl of Raisin Brand. "Why aren't you milking?" I asked.

He just said, "We were not milking anymore."

My parents had planned to retire from milking for a long time, but never told me. The farm was my life, and I didn't want to leave it. I was born and raised there and that was all I knew

and I really liked it. I would miss raising animals and living in the country.

Two big silver trucks soon came to take eighty of our Holstein cows to a new home in the smokin' hot state of Texas. Soon after, another big truck came, and took the other cows to a small farm on the east side of town. It was very sad to see the cows leave, but at least they would be able to live the rest of their lives on a farm. Out of two hundred cows we had, we only kept thirty calves that were too young to sell.

By the next year all of the calves had grown into big pregnant heifers. We were down to two small heifers, the rest we sold to nearby dairy farms. It seems like every time we sold one of the cows, both the cows and I would be saddened by their departure. To show our sadness, we would sit at the long white fence and watch as the other cows faded into the horizon. One cow would look out the back of the trailer and moo back to give her good byes to all of her friends.

I knew I would probably never go back to the hard life of a dairy farmer, but I knew I would really miss it. To this day I sometimes wish I could go back in time and find some way to stay there.

Fresh Taste of Home

Kayla Tarwater
Neosho
Crowder
Bronze
Color
Photography





Double Trouble

April Burr
 Neosho Christian
 School
 Silver
 B&W Photography

My Buddy

My heart is heavy
 On this very sad day
 No longer may I call
 Herb Lottman out to play

A man of character
 And he was one too
 In need of a smile?
 He'd give one to you

He filled me with his wisdom
 But never did he preach
 My life is so enriched
 By the things he did teach

Dave Horvath
 Neosho
 Staff
 Poetry

He was such a great man
 While inside, a kid
 He made me feel important
 With everything he did

He was witty, and so funny
 A master of charm
 You always felt at home
 While down on his farm

Though I didn't see him much
 lately
 I will miss him very deep
 My many memories of him
 Close to my heart I will keep

Herb always wore a smile
 He was quick with a joke
 He was filled with compassion
 Herb was downright a good
 folk

The fishing, the feeding
 A walk through a field
 I harvested a grandpa
 And oh, what a yield!

He belonged not just to Ruth
 Herb was a national treasure
 Each moment with him
 Was an hour of pleasure

In memory of Herb Lottman upon learning of his death. I never had a grandfather, but spending time with Herb and Ruth on their farm gave me a better grandfatherly figure than any real grandfather could have been. The man was treasured by all who knew him, and I was lucky to become so close to him.

Doodle

Bernice Isham | Neosho | Community
Honorable Mention | Color Art



Take My Hand

Carlee Ballard | Joplin | Crowder | Silver | Color Art



Heart Takes Flight

Katelyn Brisco | Cassville | Crowder | Bronze | Color Art

The Coffee Waterloo

I had been in a deep sleep, lost in fruitful dreams and endless thoughts. Now I was only drifting in emptiness, with a film of blackness over my eyes. It wasn't a true darkness like it was only a moment ago. There was a faint light that was slowly growing brighter, bleaching out the blackness.

I felt something furry . . . It was on my face . . . No, it was rubbing against my face. I slowly cracked my eyes open to see my tabby telling me that it was time to get up. "Morning Echo," I greeted as I scratched her head. "What day is it? . . . Saturday. Aren't you supposed to let mommy sleep in on her day off?"

Echo purred as she rubbed her creamy fur against my face. "I guess you think that I've slept in long enough, huh? Are you hungry?" She meowed, and used my bed as a diving board to launch herself to the floor.

"You're one spoiled cat," I grumbled, as I forced myself out of bed. Me and Echo were Yin and Yang when it came to enjoying the morning. She was an energy drink completely filled to the top, while I on the other hand was the couple of drops left of a soured lemonade.

I put a can of chicken into her I'm Precious bowl, after I tossed her stuffed sugar glider onto the kitchen floor, her favorite toy that she likes to hide in her food dish. She also likes to drown my hair ties in her water bowl. I then started to brew myself some coffee. I used to be a beautiful morning dove, who every morning would feel like opening her wings to greet the day and sing like a Disney princess. Then nightshifts came. And coffee became the magic potion for an artificial morning dove with but a remnant of the joy that once was.

The morning didn't faze Echo though; she was a ball of beaming energy. She had chowed down her chicken in no time and had jumped onto the counter to spy on what I was doing. Echo knew better than to be on the counters, but I was still too tired to get onto her.

Let's see, what do I have for breakfast?

There was an empty bread bag near the toaster, so I opened the fridge: I had one egg left in the carton, a fourth of a gallon of milk (probably spoiled), and my storage of yogurt for the next depression was nonexistent. Breakfast bar again—I really needed to go shopping.

I opened the cabinet and snatched a bar out of the box. Unwrapping a breakfast bar was one thing that I could do without a cup of coffee. I think I've only given myself one paper cut by doing so in my lifetime.

The coffee machine beeped, announcing to the world that my elixir of life was finished brewing. I finished scarfing down my breakfast before I grabbed a mug from another cabinet and poured the steamy liquid into it. I smiled as the dark roast steam whiffed into my nose. It smelled so fresh, so wonderful.

"Just needs a little creamer," I said to myself.

My hands regretfully left the mug next to the machine. We'll be coming back, I thought, trying to comfort my depressed phalanges.

The creamer was in my hand when I turned around and saw a heart dropping moment. Echo had dipped her little face into the mug to take a sip. She meowed when the coffee burned her tongue, and jumped off the counter to run away from the fluid that had hurt her. But her tail flicked the cup and sent it hurdling to the floor. It shattered into six pieces and covered the tile floor with coffee.

"Thanks Echo," I grumbled.

Just what I needed, a mess to clean up. A great way to start the day.

There was coffee on the ground! Coffee! This was worse than the time that Echo had tangled the whole living room in red yarn from the ball that I had given her to play with.

I wanted to be mad at her, after all, she broke one of my favorite mugs (a smiling snowman face), but she had done it out of curiosity and innocence, not spite. She was just a cat, a domesticated animal that knew nothing of the troubles of the world, and only thought that she had had a bad day if she had a meal that had been late. How easy life would be as a cat. But would it be as rewarding?

I scooped up the pieces of the mug and threw them away before I grabbed a cloth and mopped up the fluid. It was a crime to clean up such a beautiful liquid that did not deserve to be touched by the unclean floor.

It was another two minutes before I was finally able to taste the warm energy that seeped through my lips and began to enchant my body with new spirit.

Logan Stark
Neosho
Staff
Fiction

“There was coffee on the ground! Coffee!”

The Escape

April Burr
Neosho Christian
High School
Honorable Mention
Fiction

Whoosh! Bam! Allison jumped as the wind blew the door closed behind her, plunging the room into darkness. Slowly she felt along the wall for the light switch and flipped it on. Nothing happened. Somebody must have cut off the power to the house. Feeling her way over to the shelf, she fumbled for the flashlight, praying that the batteries wouldn't be dead.

Light flooded the room. Allison shined the flashlight around the room. It was a disaster! Papers were strewn all over the floor, pictures had been torn off the wall, and the lamp in the corner had been smashed. The rest of the house looked the same, with shards of glass and broken furniture everywhere and everything scattered about. A sick feeling began to creep through Allison. They had been here. She had been found.

Sunlight streamed through the window as Allison slowly opened her eyes. Everything seemed so peaceful and quiet. Then the memories of the night before came rushing back. They had found her, after three years of safety they had discovered her once again. She had been on the run ever since that awful December night almost seven years ago when she had witnessed something that she wasn't supposed to see. Ever since that night, the men whom she had seen commit that gruesome crime had been tracking her. Last night she had grabbed a few clothes, hopped in her car, and left her New York home. She had driven for several hours before stopping at a motel somewhere in New Jersey too exhausted to continue.

After grabbing a quick breakfast, Allison stopped at the local gas station to fill up her car and buy a map before hitting the road once again. She didn't notice the silver Cadillac that inconspicuously pulled out behind her.

After driving into Pennsylvania, Allison decided it was time to stop for lunch. As she changed lanes she noticed a silver Cadillac do the same. Thinking it was a coincidence, she continued. Seeing a McDonald's sign up ahead she took the next exit. The Cadillac followed. Nervously Allison turned onto the street and glanced in her rearview mirror. The man she saw riding in the passenger's seat of the car sent

shivers up her spine.

Fear gripped Allison as she sped into downtown Pittsburg. She turned left, then right trying desperately to lose the silver Cadillac. Quickly she turned into a parking garage. She whipped her car into an empty space in the middle of an aisle and shut it off.

She could feel her heart pounding as she waited to see if the men in the Cadillac would spot her or drive on up. Slowly the Cadillac pulled into view. She held her breath. After what seemed like forever, the Cadillac slowly began to drive up to the next level. She waited until she could no longer hear the Cadillac before she started her car and drove away.

It was time to abandon her car. It wouldn't be long before they found her again. Dashing around the city, she spotted a bus station. Across the street from it was a huge parking lot. That would be the perfect place to ditch her

car. She found an empty space in the middle of the lot and parked her car. After grabbing her belongings from the trunk she hurried across the street to the bus station where she bought a ticket to Lexington, Kentucky.

Mile after mile the bus took her closer to safety and farther away from those evil men. Kentucky was the last place they would think to look for her. She had always stayed in big cities where she could blend into the crowd, but she had always eventually been found. This time she was trying something completely different. Just before her last move she had secretly purchased a remote cabin on the shore of a little lake, in the hills of Kentucky. She had never laid eyes on it but she knew it was a safe place, one where they would never think to look. It was a place where fear wouldn't consume her every thought.

After a 5 hour drive, the bus arrived at its destination. Allison rented a car, got directions to her cabin, and headed out. The drive took about 2 hours, winding and twisting back into the hills to the lake.

Allison slowly drove up the lane to the cabin, taking in her surroundings. The birds and the trees, the view of the lake, and the quiet solitude all represented the peacefulness of this place. As Allison parked the car and got out one thought overwhelmed her. She was SAFE!

“A sick feeling began to creep through Allison. They had been here. She had been found.”



The Hunt

Beating to a slow drum, the heart finds its way through the damp forest ground.

The leaves wave goodbye, murmuring together into a simple whispered sound.

Talking together, the arms decide to shade the eyes.

Legs forged into one spot discover the lies.

A deer creeps into view as the arms converse quickly together.

Fingers yell as daggers pull out from a secret pocket hidden beneath a feather.

Eyes shake slowly as the arrow pierces through the heart, making it stop beating.

The legs give into the pain as shock hits the heart bleeding...

Beating to a slow drum, the deer's heart smiles seeing the man lie dead,

Unaware the man was the victim instead.

Prancing to the body, the deer takes a picture,

Catching the criminal that once turned antlers into light fixtures.

Tola Ferris
Noel
Staff
Poetry

Death is Just the Beginning

James Walls
Neosho
Staff
Fiction

Death. It comes for all of us, waiting in the shadows for when we least expect it. Some consider it a turning point, like that of some spiritual doorway to another world. As for me, that is only half true. It was indeed a turning point, and the beginning of a much worse nightmare.

Sitting here in this darkened room, I can remember it clearly as I look back on it now. That moment my car spun out of control on that dark, tragic night will likely be etched into my mind forever. My brakes had refused to work, denying me a safe alternative from what was to come as my old Camaro sped off into the ditch, hitting the bottom with great force. Though I try hard to block it from my mind, I can still feel the sting of the lacerations as I was thrown through the windshield. I had been screaming, but my screams had been silenced due to the pain and shock of it all. And as I lay there bleeding in front of my wrecked Camaro, I could only stare off in horror at what was to befall me.

But I didn't die. Not completely. Instead, *he* showed up...

"The door is open, Alex," the man in the black suit said, an impish smile upon his face. "You can go, or you can stay."

"I can stay?" I'd asked, my voice hopeful. At this, the man just smiled even wider.

"Yes. That is, for a price."

As I looked into his rusty brown eyes, I tried to make sense of his words. The blood was soaking my dark brown hair, plastering it to my aching head. My body wouldn't respond, and every one of my limbs seemed lifeless. All I wanted was for the pain to go away and for me to leave this place; for me to leave this deserted highway and get back to some resemblance of reality. I wanted to pretend this was all just some bad dream, and that I'd soon wake up from it... alive.

"What kind of price?" I then asked, feeling as if I were making a mistake.

"Oh, no worries, it's quite reasonable. You work for me, and I let you live," the man replied, a slight gleam in his eyes as he spoke. He had looked out of place in the still night, dressed in his expensive suit, his black hair slicked back out of his face. But, then again, he hadn't seemed to

be part of this world anyway.

Taking out an unlit cigar, he looked around with a sense of casual concern. "A fair trade, wouldn't you say?" he then added after a moment's pause, soon turning to look me in the eyes.

It was then that I felt a stab of pain pierce through my skull, causing me to cringe as I ground my teeth from the excruciating agony I was in. "All right, fine. Just... don't let me die. I have too much left to live for," I cried, unable to cope with the pain. I didn't want to die, not then. Especially like that. The pain was too excruciating for me to bear at the time.

The man had given a dark and wicked grin at

my reply. "Good, that's the answer I was hoping for," he spoke, stepping over to me. Then, taking my limp hand in his, he sealed the deal with a handshake. "Just remember, if you fail me, Alex, then your soul is *mine*."

Yes, that night had indeed been a turning point for me... one I could never take back.

Now, sitting in this darkened room as I look back on it once again, I only wish I'd chosen to die instead. It would have been a much better alternative. However, it was too late to change my decision now. I had made my pact with the devil, and he had kept his word. I would keep mine as well.

Staring at the wall, I looked at the seven names written upon it in chalk. Six of them had been crossed out already, leaving only one name left untouched. Looking at it with a solemn frown, I let out a slow breath.

"Forgive me, Maria, for what I must do," I said into the silence as I slowly rose to my feet. My body was cold, my senses numb. Taking the gun from off the dresser, I stared into the mirror at my dark reflection.

This was who I was now, a mere dealer of death, delivering those who lived in sin to their own personal Hell. I never asked what they did to cross the line. I didn't care. It was hard enough living this way, knowing that each breath I took required someone else to forfeit theirs. But this was my life. This was my existence.

This was my Hell.

"Taking out an unlit cigar,
he looked around with a sense
of casual concern."

Burning Giraffe Rendition

Kathrine Reynolds
Diamond
High School
Honorable Mention
Color Art



Tune It or Die

Patti Richardson
Fayetteville, Ark.
Community
Honorable Mention
Digital Art

The Rest of the Story

Steve Chapman
Monett
Staff
Nonfiction

“Hello, Americans! This is Paul Harvey. You know the news. In a moment, you’re going to hear... *The Rest of the Story!*” From 1976 until his death in 2009, Paul Harvey kicked off his radio segment, *The Rest of the Story*, with these words. The show, which had an audience of up to 24 million listeners, was a favorite across the United States.

Downtown Louisville

Latonia Bailey
Goodman
Staff Adviser
Digital Art

On the air, Mr. Harvey would spin a yarn to his audience that would start out with what appeared to be an ordinary story. Towards the end, however, he would deliver a twist in his tale. Sometimes, the twist would reveal a surprising tidbit of information. On other occasions, it would seem that Mr. Harvey had been

talking about an apparently ordinary person, only to reveal at the end that the story had been about someone of significant historical or cultural importance. Regardless, Mr. Harvey’s unique stories won him the hearts of listeners across the country. To honor him, these five original stories were written in an attempt to recreate his unique storytelling style:

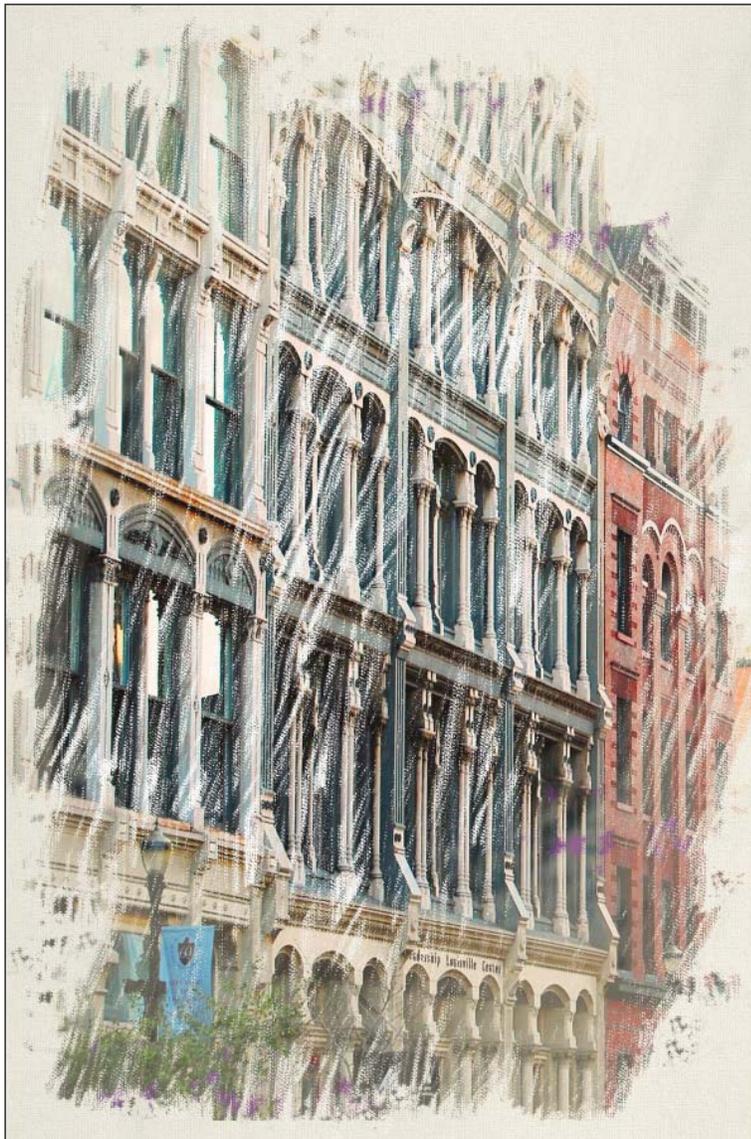
Johanna

If anyone had ever gotten a rough start in life, it was definitely Johanna. She had been born to poor, Irish immigrants in Massachusetts. Because her parents were both illiterate, they did not try to have her educated. It got worse. As a toddler, Johanna developed trachoma, a disease that attacks the eyes. Her parents could not afford to have her treated, so Johanna was blind by the age of seven. An even crueler blow came at the age of eight, when her mother died. Two years later, her father abandoned Johanna and her siblings to the state poorhouse. While they were there, tuberculosis claimed the life of Johanna’s only brother, James.

All might have seemed hopeless, but then fate provided an unusual stroke of kindness for young Johanna. At the age of fourteen, she was given the opportunity to go to a special school in Boston for blind students. There, Johanna received an academic education. She also learned how to communicate in sign language so she could speak with a friend and fellow student who was both blind and deaf. Moreover, she was given an operation that partially restored her eyesight!

Six years later, Johanna graduated from her school as valedictorian. Not long afterwards, the school’s headmaster approached her. He had received word that a little girl, one who had lost her sight and hearing at an early age due to illness, needed a teacher. There were no schools for the deaf and blind where the girl and her parents lived. Would Johanna possibly consider becoming the girl’s teacher? It would mean traveling to the Deep South, far away from any place Johanna had ever been or anyone she had ever known.

Johanna decided to accept the opportunity. In March of the following year, she boarded a train that would take her to Tusculum, Alabama. And so, Johanna, better known to many as Anne Sullivan, became the teacher of Helen Keller.





Joanne

By her own reckoning, Joanne was a failure. True, she had a B.A. in French and Classic Literature, and had even taught English abroad. But a year after they had married, she and her husband separated. Left unemployed and a single mother, Joanne and her daughter were living on public assistance. So great was her depression that, at one point, Joanne contemplated suicide.

But there was one glimmer of hope. A few years earlier, Joanne had started writing a young adult novel. Now, alone with her daughter, Joanne decided to finish her book. As a single mother, Joanne found it was easiest for her to write when her daughter was asleep, and the easiest way to get the girl to sleep was to take her on walks. To this end, Joanne would often work on her novel in coffee houses after a long stroll while her daughter slept nearby.

Eventually, the novel was completed and Joanne submitted it for publication. It was rejected a number of times. Finally, she found a publishing house willing to take the book, with one condition. The chairman of the publishing house was concerned that boys might not want to read a book written by a woman. If Joanne's novel was to be published, it would have to be under a pen name that used her first two

initials instead of her full name. Joanne agreed, but there was a problem. Joanne had no middle name; all her life she had just been Joanne. Where was she to get a second initial? The answer was remarkably simple.

Joanne decided that she would adopt a new middle name and chose Kathleen, after her grandmother. With no further barriers to inhibit her, J.K. Rowling published her first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, better known in the United States as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

Friends

It seemed unlikely that James and Dave would get into a fight. They had been friends for some time. However, when it comes to money and gambling, even the best of friendships can go sour. Dave had beaten James in a game of cards, and James didn't have the money to cover his hand. Dave decided to take James' pocket watch and hold onto it until the debt was paid.

But it wasn't enough for Dave to just have James's pocket watch; he began to boast that he was going to wear the watch and flaunt it around the town square, like a trophy. No one

[Continued to 78]

Ramshackle

Jessica Cole
Neosho Christian
High School
Honorable Mention
B&W Photography
(Sepia Tone)

The Rest of the Story

[Continued from 76]

is sure why. Maybe Dave thought that doing so would give him a tough-guy reputation. Maybe he had never really liked James as much as it had been thought. One thing was for sure; thin-skinned James was not about to put up with such a humiliation. He told Dave that if he would wait at the town square the next day, and if Dave came around wearing the watch, their guns would settle the matter. The next day, July 21, 1865, James and Dave each came to the town square. Dave was wearing James' watch. Both men were wearing guns.

James told Dave not to come across the town square. Dave's response was to draw his gun, at which point James also drew his. Both men fired. Dave's shot missed, but James' struck Dave through the ribs. And so it was that James Hickok, better known to most as Wild Bill Hickok, killed Davis Tutt in Springfield,

Missouri in what is considered to be the first quick-draw duel.

The Corporal

Author's note: I heard my father tell this story once. I haven't been able to verify its complete accuracy, but it seemed a fitting addition to this collection.

During WWI, a young corporal was sitting in a trench, eating his lunch with his squadron. Suddenly, he heard the commanding voice of a lieutenant bark, "Move!" Startled, the corporal looked around, but he saw no officers nearby. Shrugging it off as his imagination, the corporal returned to eating.

Suddenly, he heard another voice, this one sounding like it belonged to a major, command, "Move!" The corporal again looked around, but once more, there were no officers in sight. Nervously, the corporal returned to his meal,

Iwo Jima

Tori Leonard
Neosho
High School
Silver
Color Art





but kept looking around him for a sign of any officers approaching. As he ate, he again heard a voice, this one sounding like a general's, shout, "MOVE!"

The corporal, now scared out of his wits, had finally had enough. He ordered his squadron to get up and move with him to another part of the trench. Just as they sat down and started eating again, an enemy shell suddenly struck the area where they had been just minutes before. All of the other squadrons were killed; the corporal and his men were the only survivors. The young corporal would go on to survive the war and eventually influence the world in a way never before seen. His name was Adolf Hitler.

The Policeman

For Harry Aurandt, an officer with the Tulsa Police Department, Sunday, December 18, 1921 was just supposed to be another day that he and his buddy, Detective Ike Wilkinson, would go out to hunt rabbits. They never dreamt that they would fall victim to predators themselves.

While Harry and Ike were driving to a rural area, they came across a car. Four armed men jumped out and tried to rob them. Ike aimed his shotgun at the would-be robbers, but when he pulled the trigger, his weapon misfired. The four men started shooting and both officers were

seriously wounded. Despite his wounds, Harry managed to floor the gas pedal and drive himself and Ike about a mile to a farmhouse. He died two days later, while Ike was rendered a paraplegic for life.

The next day, the gunmen were apprehended and taken to the Tulsa City Jail. When word of this got out, a large number of people began to surround the building. Out of fears that the crowd might turn into a lynch mob, the four were smuggled out of the jail and taken ninety miles away to McAlester, Oklahoma. There, they were held for their safety. In April of 1922, they were tried, convicted and given life sentences.

Now, for the rest of the story. Harry Aurandt had been a family man. When he was killed, he left behind a widow, a 12-year old daughter, and a three-year old son. Harry's son took a job at 14 with a local radio station and went on to a career in broadcasting. Throughout his career, Harry's son made a name for himself, gaining fame and recognition across the United States. He even contributed to our modern-day English lexicon by inventing the term "Reaganomics." The name of Harry's son was Paul Aurandt, but his audience knew him by the name he used on the air -- Paul Harvey. And now you know...the rest of the story.

Silence

Crystal Moody
Rocky Comfort
Crowder
Bronze
B&W Photography



Dinnertime Duke

Dave Horvath
Neosho
Staff
Poetry

As best friend, I'm first rate
A sweet lover, my predominant trait
I'm the captain's first mate
We take every chance to recreate
I keep you, Master, in a happy state

Now, sloppily, I salivate
Anticipating a real hot date
Dinner's here, let's congregate
I lie next to you and wait
Staring intently at your plate
My hunger- you can't calibrate
For your leftovers are my fate
Toss the peas, those I hate
Chunks of meat would be great
Put it down, open the gate
My stomach is beginning to agitate

Going stir-crazy, I'm in a crate
Time for me to celebrate

So, let me get this straight...
Ate it all? An empty plate?
You insensitive, miserly cheapskate
A dirty, stinking ingrate
This action, I cannot relate
The consequences, there's no debate
Severe actions I will contemplate
My fierce anger will dominate
Expect some trouble I'll instigate
Yes indeed, I'll reciprocate
Your skin, my teeth will penetrate
And you my friend, I will castrate!
May the rest of your life be celibate

F-5

So many people gone
done at the beat of a drum
It was here
we screamed in fear
The overwhelming feeling of
sadness fills the rooms
And the overflowing bodies fill the tombs
Nowhere to run nowhere to hide
we tried to ride it out inside
We held on with all our might
the tornado in clear sight
I will never forget what we saw there
sheer horror everywhere
The faces I saw alive and dead
will never leave my throbbing head
All those people
all that pain
they struggled through the filthy rain
just to find their glasses
their children or a pet
but the rain never seemed to let
Searching for loved ones
though buildings weighing tons
Some people made it out alive
but so many people should have never died
We made it out with our lives
but I can never forget the size
of the Joplin F5.

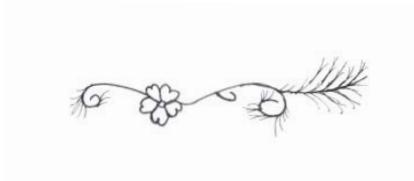
Fidelity

We'll walk our road together,
Two paths joined as one.
Sharing all we've come to be
And all that's yet to come.

I'll share with you your sorrow,
To relieve you half the shock.
I'll partake in all your glee,
To amplify its stock.

Even if not in body,
you're always in my mind.
I carry your essence in my heart,
Every day, all the time.

Fidelity, the base of my promise;
Yours is the only in my heart.
My desire, for all eternity,
is for us to never part.



[Left]
Jenni Jones
Webb City
Community
Bronze
Poetry

[Right]
TJ Pfeifle
Goodman
Crowder
Honorable Mention
Poetry



Lightning Study

Kelly Stout
Neosho
Community
Honorable Mention
Color Photography

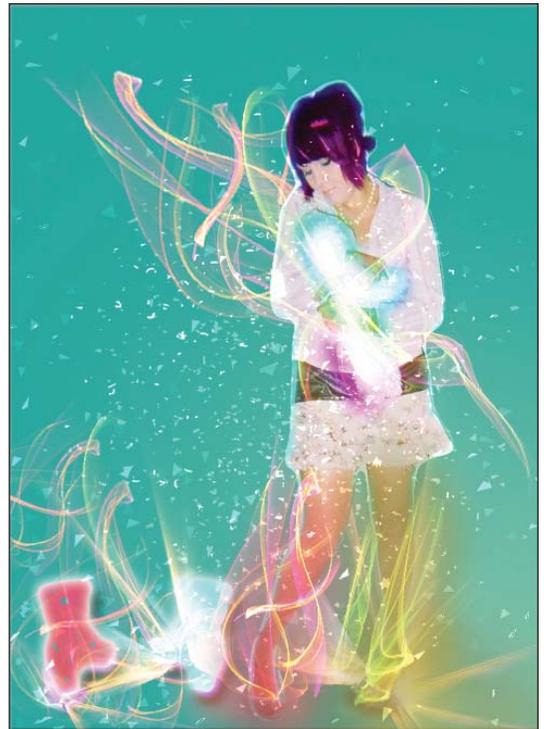
[Left]
Mask Mark
Truth

Aubrey Donaldson
Staff
Joplin
Digital Art



[Right]
A Child's
Perspective

Aubrey Donaldson
Staff
Joplin
Digital Art



Sea of Distance

Jose Garcia
Staff
Purdy
Poetry

Between you and me, there's an ever growing sea of distance that keeps us apart

I am trapped in an island of loneliness

The distance has snatched me into limbo

Hopelessness to see you once more

Everyday I don't see you, it's a grain of me that the ocean washes away

Little by little finishing off what's left of me

Oh how I wish I could swim across and be with you

You! The stars that light up the dark when I trip in the fog of uncertainty

How I wish I could look deep into your eyes where I once dived and drowned in love with you

To those hands who brought me to my rebirth of euphoria

To witness that smile that inspired me to smile as well

The sea of distance will not stop me from being with you

It does not matter that the waves crash against my tireless effort

I must swim across fast before the winds drag me further from you

In Gold

Days will come and days will go
For that is certain, I think you know.
But one secret for you, I haven't told,
 Is how I care for you in gold.
 Feeling's come hard for me to say,
I hope you're not thinking that I'm at play.
My smile comes easy and my spirits are light,
But my desire for you can only be right.
 Take it from me, I really do care,
 A love so real, is also so rare.

Dean Myers
Walnut, Kansas
Community
Honorable Mention
Poetry



Flash of Red

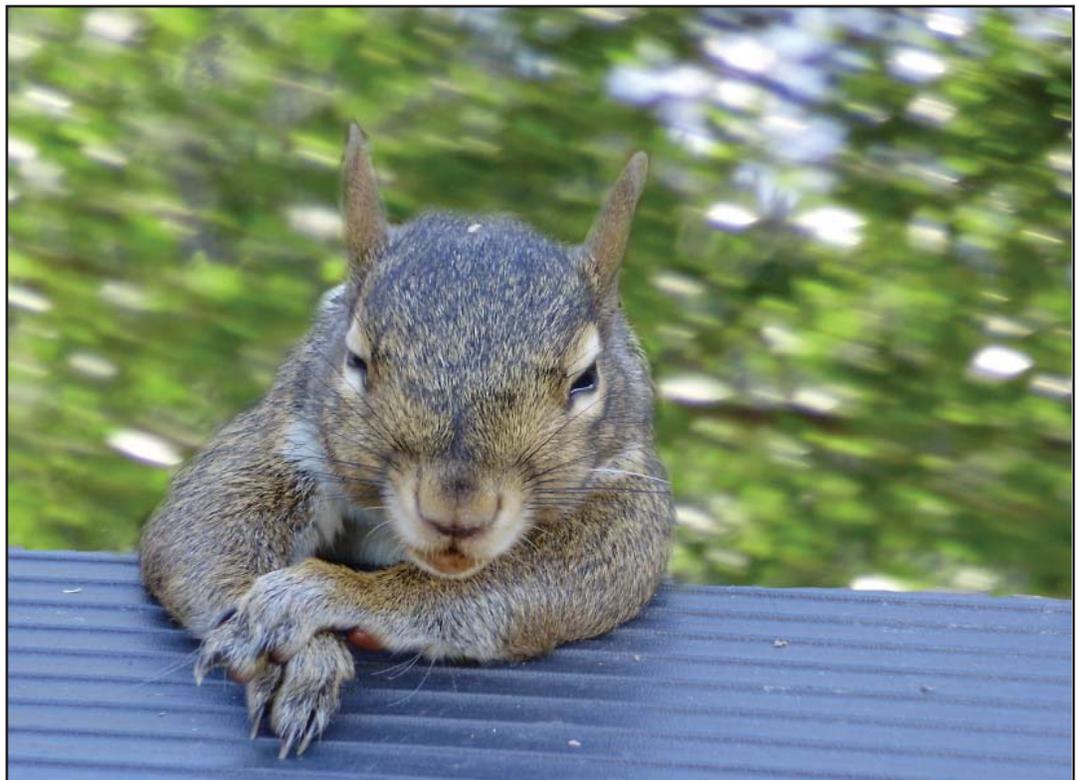
Joshua Boley
Staff
Cassville
Color Photography



[Above]

Cheetah

Patti Richardson
Fayetteville
Community
Gold
Color Photography



Hey There

Austin Fehring
Neosho Christian
High School
Silver
Color Photography



I Stand Alone

Carlee Ballard
Joplin
Crowder
Gold
Color Art

[Below]

Pet Raccoon

Dustin Miller
Diamond
Bronze
Community
Color Art



Sis' Emma

Noey C. De Leon
Neosho
High School
Gold
Fiction

I step into da church, Lawd it was hot. I bring me some ol' corn husk an' fan myself, waitin' on the Pas'a. I sits me down in the third pew; been in this seat fa years, ev'a since I was a girl an' mama bring me. I looks down at my church dress, I be one a da lucky ones that got somethin' ta wear ta church, it's got a hol' in it. I gotta sew dat. I dun have this thing fa years, sewn it from left ova material my ol' Masa's wife made her hu'ban's undawear from. It's white, for da Lawd's evalastin' purity. Now it's goin' brown with the dust ou'side, it's gettin' col' an' windy. Winta comin'.

Pas'a come in dress in some ol' brown trousas an' a white cott'n shirt, likely he stol' 'em from his las' Masa in Georgia. That Masa be so mean to Pas'a. He not let 'em tell the otha slaves the Scriptures! Sayin' he tempt them ta go 'gainst the law an' run 'way like they free. The Masa was los'; know nothin' 'bout the Lawd and how good He is. Reckin' he ain't neva been to no church in a long time.

Pas'a start talkin' 'bout how you should always ask fa Forgiveness from tha Lawd and include Him in everythin' you do in the day. Then he say, "Today the day Brotha Benjamin has chosen ta join da Holy battle, an' accept the Lawd Jesus Chris', as his Savior!" We all start clappin' and hawlerin' praisin' His name.

The gospel choir start wit' my favorite hymn, "All ta Jesus, I surrenda. All ta Him I freely give. I will eva love an' trus' Him, in His presence daily live." Then the whole church join in the refrain, "I surrenda all, I surrenda all. All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrenda all." You could jus', *feel* His love today. *Mm*, sends a chill up my back.

Da church deacons take Brotha Benjamin who sittin' at the first pew, to da pail that in the front of da church an' get the cup dat in there an' soak his head wit' da Holy water. The whole church sit up an' sing, "I have decided to follow Jesus! I have decided to follow Jesus! I have decided to follow Jesus! No turnin' back, no turnin' back!"

Throwin' his wrinkled hands to the air above, Pas'a say, "Would the congr'ation rise for da closin' of the baptismal, of Brotha Benjamin

McDaniel." Sista Emma git up from her pew, weary of da floor unda her, she walk up to da piano in the front of da church. She wearin' her mama's yellow dress, like sunshine. The yellow make her brown skin even darker. She don't look too good. Lookin' like she tired o' hungry. It's only in her face, still holdin' herself like she a woman, tall 'n proud, unafraid even.

She lean ova searchin' for da piano bench with her nimble fingas, her face forward. She was ol'. She places her hands on da piana keys in front a her. Raise her face upward and pray in a whisper, "Lawd help me."

**"Wha's da matta,"
Charity ask, eyes
worried. "It's Sis'
Emma she won't
move or talk. She
jus' rockin' herself
back an' forth."**

Her face come up from her chest an' she look at the choir ahead and nod to start the choir togetha, "Amazin' grace!" Her voice fill tha church with such spirit and love, she sound like angels, harkenin' to da heavens! There was a pause as she catch her breath, piano still a-ringin' from the power she put in it.

In an echo, quieter, the choir respondin' to her call, "How sweet, da sound." Sista Emma went on an' sing all the chorus' of da song. Da choir hum in backgroun'. Emma

so lovin'. She fill da church like a hundred men. Such heart and confessin'. Straight ta Gawd! She was there wit' 'im. She keep her face up ta Him like she yellin' in His ear. Talkin' to Him like she an ol' friend.

When she finish an' she put the whole church ta tears, she sit up an' walk ova to da front pew an' sit. She neva do dat. She always walk ova to her pew, two down. She sit legs togetha wit' her arms crossed converin' each other with her hands. For da rest a da service she rubbin' her arms wit' her hand whisperin', "Gawd, oh Gawd, oh Gawd. Stay wit' meh, stay wit' meh. Gawd, oh Gawd, oh Gawd. Keep wit' meh, keep wit' meh."

The service end an' I hear the rest of da congr'ation already out the door to da meal waitin' outside: fried fish, potatas, an' sweet corn. Ev'n Pas'a outside. All that stay is Sis' Emma. Still on the pew. Whimperin'. She got her head hangin'. Eyes set on the floor.

I walk up, rub her back, "Sis' that was such a lovely paformance! Why you make up yo mind ta play it now? You ain't played fa years." She don' ans'a or move.

"Wha's wrong? Come on, le's eat. They's got potatas, yo' favorite! Come on now" She don' budge, so I call on my friend, Charity Lawrence.

She comin' up the step of the church. She a beautiful lady. High cheek bones an' a beautiful smile. She a little olda than me. She always checkin' herself, fixin' her skirt an' her 'do. Ain't nuttin' but a pony.

"Wha's da matta," Charity ask, eyes worried. "It's Sis' Emma she won't move or talk. She jus' rockin' herself back an' forth. An' keep on utterin' 'Gawd, oh Gawd, oh Gawd.'"

I had neva noticed how tall dat woman was 'til that moment. Her legs is so long, she could easily outstand *any* man. She got the broad shouldas too.

I tell Charity, "Get me a glass of wata. Hurray, it might be the heat getting' to her." She run an' get her a tall glass wata. It almos' fall from my hands 'cause the sides of the glass was sweatin' from the heat lingerin' in da church.

I hand to Emma but she don't move. I tell her, "Please Sis' Emma, drink a little. It will make you feel betta. Jus' one sip of it." Her eyes finally meet wit' mine. I could feel them tellin' me 'Don' make me. The Lawd has me unda His love.' In givin' up, she lift her arms an' take the drink wit' both hands, carefully takin' it to her mouf. Everyone 'round her and me watchin' ta make positive she don' choke. She take a sip or two an' hand ova to me, our eyes connectin' again.

She take my hand an' I feel her hands cold as snow. I say, "She not hot, she col!" Charity come ova an' feel her fingas. "You right! Col' as the wata in da creek! Lawd."

Finally Emma say in a whispa, "My hu'ban done die... He done lef' me... here fo' years 'go, by mahself. I done suffa on dis earth... longa dan he. Don' suffas mo' on da fieldsas, dan he. He awlways got the pro'lems wit' his bones. It hurt 'im ta move in da winta. Cain't eva lif' nothing' heavy, or bend ta picks da cot'n. I awlways work as much as man." She started cryin', "One day, I come home an' find him wit' a noda woman, a slave from da Henson Plantation in Ata-lanta. She younga and cookin' fo him! In *mah* kitchen! Wha's lef' of da cornbread I made, da pork dat was given ta me an' I cook, an' da corn I pick! Who da hell he thinkin' he is? Bringin' *that*

thin' in ta mah home an' touches *mah* man, eatin' *mah* food." She shrug ova to where she not facin' us. "I's tired. I been through so much... too much wit' him." She give a sigh, "I don' call on da Law, an' he done answa mah prayers." She took in a breath so big she shook an' shouted as loud as I eva heard any woman speak, "Lawd! Oh, Lawd! Take meh naw! Take meh naw!" She squeezin' ma han' like she grippin' her Bible.

I looks up an' sees Charity all teary-eyed, prayin', "Lawd oh Lawd, take her. Take her to da land *flowin'* wit' milk an' honey." Then, jus' like dat, she gon' to da Lawd.

Shumake with Berries

Katelyn Brisco
Cassville
Crowder
Honorable Mention
Color Art



Insert Witty Title Here

Rachel Mallory
Neosho
High School
Honorable Mention
Nonfiction

“Running through the hallway as stealthily as I could, I made sure that no one was following me. Coach Hail was right behind me. He scanned the area for members of the other team as well. Empty. All the other students not in our epic Nerf war were in their respected classrooms, waiting for the announcement of the winning team. I knew that the final showdown would be between Jason and me, as I’m sure the others knew too. The only problem would be knowing when everyone else was out. Well, it was for the other team. I was glad my team had decided to leave Logan up on the roof, with binoculars, to be our lookout. Coach and I were expecting a text anytime, telling us how much the other team had declined.”

Maybe I should rewrite that last sentence. Anissa should probably read over this for me and help me fix what I miss. She is just as much of a Grammar Nazi as I am. Of course, she did say she would help me anyway. Okay, erase, erase, erase.

“Coach and I were expecting a text any moment now, informing us what members were out.”

Okay, that’s a little better. Some of the dialog further on seems off, but I can fix that later. I need to start working on the other parts. Wow, I really need a better system for writing these things.

I have never had a set order for writing papers, or for anything else I write. All the steps generally happen at once. I just go with the first thing that pops into my head, and I just start writing. It could literally be nothing but song lyrics or something about a cookie; it is whatever comes to mind. This is usually how a lot of my short stories start out. If I don’t like what is written, I keep it for a wall that I can bounce ideas off of. It is a lot like one of the walls tennis players use for practice. If I do like what I have, then I write some of the ideas down until I draw a blank or get bored.

I am extremely lazy (at least I admit it). So once I become bored with writing, I just need do something to relax. Usually I get on the computer, read, sleep, or sketch. These keep my mind off my writing or anything else I have to do. It is nice to just relax after working hard on something. Of course, this normally ends with

my mother nagging at me about not doing my homework.

When my writer’s block leaves me, well it’s more like it takes a nap, I start to write whatever it is I am supposed to write. Most of what I write down is just randomness that is impossible for me to stop. Luckily, I do know how to clean it up. I also happen to be, as I like to call it, a Grammar Nazi. The bad part is that I am not the best at grammar.

“Why can’t Microsoft be right all the time? It would make writing this so much easier. I’m talking to myself,” I mumble, drawing out the and. “Well it’s not the craziest thing I’ve done.”

“Lying down, I couldn’t help but think about the friends I’ve made after moving to Hope High.”

Wait, is it lying down or I laid down? One’s for object, right? Or is it just lying down for everything? Is it the right tense? Great, the internet is out just when I need to use it for an actual educational purpose.

I try to do everything right in the initial writing, but I do catch a lot of mistakes. Instead of going on and editing later, I rewrite whatever

I have to in order to make what I am writing right. This goes on until I think I’m finished writing. After writing everything, I have to go back through to make sure my crazy randomness does not sound like it is just that, crazy randomness. It is not as easy as it sounds, but I am used to it by now, so it is not as hard as when I first started writing.

Even after all my revisions, I usually change a few words and sentences around to get everything right. Most of the changes are because I cannot spell to save my life. Even worse is that it is the small words I misspell and not the bigger ones. I have misspelled ‘me’ more times than I can count and I am pretty sure that I’ve never misspelled ‘sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia’ (it means brain freeze).

I finally figured this out while I was writing one of my stories. While trying to write when Raven and Coach Hail, two of my main characters were walking down the hall, while they were in the auditorium, I misspelled ‘text’, ‘good’, ‘me’, and several other easy words, but

“I just go with
the first thing
that pops into
my head, and I
just start
writing.”



Butterfly Sitting on a Daylily

Chelsea Corum
Seneca
High School
Bronze
Color Photography

had no problem with announcement.

“Okay, Anissa, for the life of me, help! I can’t think of what to name this,” I cried.

“Seriously,” she asked.

“Yes, I know it’s pathetic, but just help me!”

The only part of writing that I don’t like is making the title. Whether it is for an essay, poem, or story, I can never think of a title. It is just not in my arsenal of creative writing skills. Because of this, I save that part for the end because that is one part of writing I can never get down. Sadly, even the title for the story that helped me realize my process/style of writing is bad, in my opinion. I suppose, though, that no piece of writing is perfect, especially mine.



Chinese Tradition

Jessica Cole
Neosho Christian
High School
Gold
Color Photography

If Women Ruled the World

Martin Ferris
Noel
Community
Honorable Mention
Fiction

“As I told
you before,
I *can*
do this job.
Any woman
can do it.
And women
will rule
the world.
And it starts
here – and now.
We now
have a new
womannual.”

Amanda lived in Manchester, and she was ambitious. She went to college and got her degree. Then she got a job at the Manchester Zoo, but she was soon bored. She wanted to move up, so she asked her boss for a promotion. He said no, and gave the promotion to a man instead. She was not happy.

Finally the boss left, so Amanda asked to be the boss. They laughed at her. They said she couldn't do the job. Nobody else wanted it, so she asked again. They said nothing would change. Still no one wanted the job, so she asked again, and finally she got that promotion.

The next day Amanda called a meeting. "I am the boss now," she started, "and now *I* am in charge. And things will change!"

Some chuckled, and some moaned, but no one liked it. When the meeting was over, everyone left quickly, and Amanda went back to her office. She found a note on her desk. It read, "You can't do this job. You're a woman. Nothing will change." Everyone had signed it.

Amanda was mad. She knew better. She thought and thought, and finally she had a plan. The next day she called another meeting. It lasted half an hour.

"You think a woman can't do this job," she concluded. "You'll see. Any woman can do it, and *I* can do it. And there *will* be change!"

"Yeah; right!" grumbled someone in the back. Amanda was fuming.

"You just watch!" she snapped. "And for that matter, women can rule the world! Meeting dismissed!"

As they left, she realized she was right. After all, she wasn't just the boss – she was the manager! The sign on the door said so. But somehow she still didn't like it. What was it about that sign?

Suddenly it hit her. Her father was a man. Her boss was a man. The president was a man. The preacher was a man – and he had the nerve to end all his prayers with "A-men!" Men, men, men! And they made her, a woman, the MAN-ager! She was incensed. She took that sign down, and put up a new one. It said "Womanager."

That was a start, but more needed to be done. She stepped outside to look around the zoo. She saw a praying mantis in a bush. She passed the lions and the bears, and walked into the aquatic exhibits. There she saw the manatees, the manta rays, the salamanders, and the Portuguese Man of War. Amanda had to make changes. She returned to her office, called a sign maker in Manhattan, and ordered some new signs. Then she left for lunch.

Amanda ate at a Chinese restaurant that

day. The food was good, but she didn't like the waiter. He spoke Mandarin, and she didn't like his fu-man-chu moustache. No tip for him!

That evening she thought about all she had seen. She had to make her contribution to mankind – no, *womankind!* She called all the women she knew, and they all agreed with her plan.

The next morning at the zoo, there was no meeting. Time to start a new manual. The old one would have to go. They wanted change; they would get it.

About mid-morning there was a knock at the door. It was the delivery man, Herman. (Now *that* was a man she could live with!) He had the new signs from Manhattan. She set them aside, and worked on the manual until lunchtime.

This time she went to the zoo's snack bar, and had a Sloppy Joe. It was delicious, but then she saw the cook making the next batch – with Manwich! Amanda got up and walked out.

On the way back to the office, she passed the flamingos by the mangrove tree, and the parrots in the mango tree... More changes were needed.

Back in her office, she ordered more signs, and worked on the new manual. By the end of the day the manuscript was done.

The next day was Amanda's day off. After breakfast she went to get a manicure – no, a *womanicure*. When she got back, she turned on the TV. A program about Manchuria was on. Wouldn't watch it. Click. She changed the channel. Two and a Half Men. No way! Click. A documentary about the invasion of Normandy. Click. The News... OK, she would watch that – but not for long. A story about a manslaughter suspect, another about the sale of a mansion... Enough! Click. She turned the TV off. A minute later, the mail came. This time it was delivered by a mail woman! Finally a sign of hope! But it still bothered Amanda. Wasn't she a *female* woman?

Later that day she went to a concert. The first performer after intermission was a mandolin player. Amanda left, and didn't return.

The next day, Amanda went to work and promptly called another meeting. It was mandatory – no, *womandatory* – for everyone. She glared at every man that came in, especially at Manny. Then she started.

"As I told you before, I *can* do this job. Any woman can do it. And women will rule the world. And it starts here – and now. We now

have a new womannual...”

“A *what?*” asked someone.

“The manual was old, so I wrote a new womannual. You will all get a copy. I sent the womanuscript to be printed today. And you will be seeing some changes in the zoo – some new animals...” She turned off the light and turned on the projector. The new signs were in place. “The first, as you can see by the new sign, are the womanatees... and here are our womanta rays... and the salawomanders... and the Portuguese Woman of War!”

“New females?” asked another, and everyone laughed.

“No, males *and* females! All these years the females have been referred to as males. Time to treat them right. Now the males can see what the females have been through all along. And, here are the flamingos by the womangrove tree... and the parrots in the womango tree.”

As she turned on the lights, she continued. “At the snack bar we will now be serving Sloppy Josephines, made with Womanwich.”

“Makes good sense, A-MAN-da,” said a man. “Witches *are* women!” Everybody laughed – except Amanda.

“This is no joke!” she snapped. And from now on, it’s A-WOMAN-da! *Is that clear?*” No

one answered. Then Amanda, or now, Awomanda, unrolled a map.

“As I said, women *will* rule the world! And here is our new world. We are already working on these changes. As of today, this is the Womanchester Zoo. This will be Womanchester; that will be Womanhattan; and that will be Womannheim, Germany. And, schoolbooks will be rewritten to tell about the invasion of Norwomandy, and about the life cycle of the praying womantis...”

“Man, oh man!” said someone. “This is going to be a long meeting!”

“Excuse *me!*” exclaimed Awomanda angrily. “You have no manners, er, womanners! You are not to interrupt your womanager! And – from now on, it’s ‘Woman, oh woman!’”

Then another spoke up. “Awomanda, I think I understand your plan, and what you’re doing. It’s interesting. But let me ask you, and tell me if I’m wrong... Those who need psychiatric help go to a womental institution, and what we clean up in the elephant exhibit is womanure, right?”

At that, Awomanda shrieked and stormed out the door, never to be seen at the zoo again. It was later rumored that she had moved to Canada, and was living in the newly renamed Winnipeg, Womanitoba.



Your Move

Jessica Cole
Neosho
Christian
High
SSchool
Gold
Digital Art

List of Contributors

About the Contributors

The magazine is a compilation of winning entries in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, photography, and art from aspiring authors, artists, and photographers. Entrants generally reside in the communities within a 100-mile radius of the ten Crowder College campuses in southwest Missouri, including Cassville, Neosho, Nevada, McDonald County, and Webb City, Mo. They may be high school students, Crowder College students, or community members. The employees of Crowder College are classified as "community" in order to avoid competition with Crowder students.

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Carmen Wilks	The Lighthouse	Poetry	59
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2012 Contest Participants

High Schools

Carl Junction High School
 Diamond High School
 Lockwood High School
 McDonald County High School
 Neosho Christian School
 Neosho High School
 Seneca High School

Crowder College students from

Cassville
 Exeter
 Goodman
 Granby
 Joplin
 Monett
 Neosho
 Noel
 Nevada
 Pierce City
 Purdy
 Rocky Comfort
 Shell Knob
 Waynesville
 Wheaton

Community members of

Anderson
 Aurora
 Diamond
 Fayetteville, Arkansas
 Granby
 Joplin
 Lamar
 Leavenworth, Kansas
 Monett
 Neosho
 Noel
 Salt Lake City, Utah
 Walnut, Kansas
 Webb City

2012 Traveling Trophy

The award is presented to the high school winning the most awards for its entries in this issue. The award is calculated on points: gold entries and covers count as four points, silver as three, bronze as two, and honorable mention as one.

Neosho Christian School, 1st place
 Neosho High School, 2nd place
 McDonald County High School,
 3rd place

Biographies of staff contributors

Rachel Anders, an aspiring photographer, gave birth to her second daughter earlier this semester. She judged photography, designed pages 8-15, and her color photograph "St. Augustine" was honorarily chosen to be published in this edition.

A 2011 *Crowder Quill* award recipient, **Joshua Boley** is a Journalism and Public Relations major. His poetry and photography is featured in this edition, and he judged art based on training in art and graphic design. He designed pages 4-6 and 16-19.

Steve Chapman, an adjunct English instructor, wrote "The Rest of the Story," which is a tribute to Paul Harvey, for this edition. He judged nonfiction and designed pages 31-39.

Amanda Cook, Journalism and Public Relations major, plans to write inspirational material as well as books. She judged fiction, designed pages 86-89, and her nonfiction account "Going after the One" was honorarily chosen to be published in this edition.

Brigham Cook, Journalism and Public Relations major, judged nonfiction and designed pages 22-25. An entrepreneur and new father this semester, he was the "great communicator" of the class.

A Graphic Design major, **Aubrey Donaldson**, designed the covers and created the back cover. She judged digital art, designed pages 71, 80-81, and 84. She also had several art, digital art and photography entries honorarily published this edition.

A published author of *My Life Far Away: Adventures in Cambodia*, **Tola Ferris** judged nonfiction, designed pages 64-67 and also wrote stories for this publication. She is currently working on a fiction novel.

Jose Garcia, a Journalism and Public Relations major and freshman, wrote the poem, "Sea of Distance," which was chosen to be published. He judged poetry and designed pages 20-21 and 68-70.

Radio news veteran **Dave Horvath**, a Journalism and Public Relations major, showed his creative side with poetry, judging it and also had two poems chosen to be published. He designed pages 27-31.

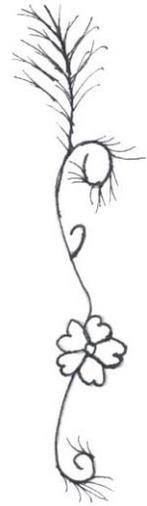
Alesha Odenbrett has studied art, judged art, and created "Loss of Liberty" black and white art for this edition. A General Studies major, she designed pages 54-63.

Logan Stark is currently working on a fictional account of the nearby May 2011 F-5 tornado in Joplin. A Journalism and Public Relations major, he judged fiction, designed pages 7, 40-49, and had a fictional piece published in this edition.

A 2011 *Crowder Quill* award recipient, **Brad Stout**, Journalism and Public Relations major, is an aspiring writer and filmmaker. With graphic design experience, he judged the digital art entries, designed pages 72-79, and had digital art, poetry, and fiction published this semester.

James Walls, a founding member of the campus writer's guild and aspiring author, judged fiction, wrote a fictional piece for this edition titled "Death is Just the Beginning" and designed pages 50-53.

Misty Willet, who fell in love with photography at age six and is now a portrait/landscape photographer, judged the photography category. She has photography in two categories – color and digital art – published in this edition. She designed pages 82-83, 85, 90-91.



Awards from the American Scholastic Press Association

2011 First Place with Special Merit
2010 First Place with Special Merit
2009 First Place
1992 First Place
1991 First Place with Special Merit

1990 First Place with Special Merit
1989 First Place with Special Merit
1988 First Place with Special Merit
Outstanding Service to the Community
1987 Second Place



Judges pictured
 Back row, left to right:
 Brad Stout, Joshua Boley, James Walls, Brigham Cook, Steve Chapman.
 Middle row: Logan Stark, Dave Horvath, Latonia Bailey (adviser), Aubrey Donaldson, Alesha Odenbrett, Jose Garcia.
 Front: Tola Ferris, Amanda Cook, Rachel Anders, Misty Willet

About the judges

The primary task of the *Crowder Quill* staff is to produce the magazine as a result of the contest entries, not produce the contents. However, staff members are required to submit entries as a class assignment to be judged by honorary judges. This is done in order to demonstrate their expertise in their field of judging. Winning entries are honorarily published but do not receive awards. The staff entries published in this issue were judged by the following honorary judges:

- Poetry entries:** Literature instructor Debra Brown
- Art entries:** Art instructor Brienne Fulton and students
- Digital art entries:** Graphic design instructor David Kocurek and students
- Photography entries:** Photography instructor Patti Richardson and students
- Fiction and nonfiction entries:** Quill faculty adviser Latonia Bailey

Staff members publicize the contest, select winning entries, and design the magazine. A variety of majors are represented on the staff.

Colophon

This publication is designed annually by Crowder College students enrolled in Comm 111, Magazine Production. Text was set in Bell MT 10 point regular. Story titles were set in Papyrus 36 point regular. Other fonts used include Adobe Caslon Pro, Arial, Bodoni, Letter Gothic Standard.

The *Crowder Quill* was produced using Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign CS5. The magazine was printed in the Crowder College print shop on the Neosho, Mo., campus. The cover stock is Sappi Flo Gloss Digital Cover 12 x 18 80 lb. 7TP coated, and inside pages are on 11x17 70 lb. white Husky Opaque Offset Domtar.

Funding of the publication comes from the college as a means to provide a cultural link with the community and for an outlet for creativity and expression.

For the 2012 contest, more than 700 entries were received, and 126 awards will be presented in a public ceremony and poetry reading in May. Award winners will receive certificates and be published.

Please send all entries except traditional art as digital files.

Refer to General Entry Guidelines on the other side for details.

Make sure to attach the entry file named the same as the entry title. For example, a photo entry titled "Sunset" should have an attached file also called "Sunset," NOT "Picture 3" or "IMG559."

Please type the entry information in the email body:

Division (high school, Crowder, or community)

Category (only choose one of the eight*)

Title of entry

Source

Date

Phone

Name

Address

City, state, zip

Email

More than one entry may be sent in each email if each entry is clearly identified by category and title.

*"Digital art" means photographs extensively altered in photo-editing software OR art generated on a computer program, not just a digital photograph.

<input type="checkbox"/> High school, grades 9-12	Teacher/School _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Crowder student	<input type="checkbox"/> Community	
<input type="checkbox"/> Poetry	<input type="checkbox"/> Fiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Nonfiction
<input type="checkbox"/> Black & white art	<input type="checkbox"/> Black & white photography	<input type="checkbox"/> Color art
<input type="checkbox"/> Color photography	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital art*	
Title _____		
Copy-art Source _____		
Date _____	Phone _____	
Name _____		
Address _____		
City/State/Zipcode _____		
Email _____		
Contact Preference: <input type="checkbox"/> e-mail <input type="checkbox"/> postal service		
<input type="checkbox"/> High school, grades 9-12	Teacher/School _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Crowder student	<input type="checkbox"/> Community	
<input type="checkbox"/> Poetry	<input type="checkbox"/> Fiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Nonfiction
<input type="checkbox"/> Black & white art	<input type="checkbox"/> Black & white photography	<input type="checkbox"/> Color art
<input type="checkbox"/> Color photography	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital art*	
Title _____		
Copy-art Source _____		
Date _____	Phone _____	
Name _____		
Address _____		
City/State/Zipcode _____		
Email _____		
Contact Preference: <input type="checkbox"/> e-mail <input type="checkbox"/> postal service		



Literary & Graphic Arts Competition

Winners published in the *Crowder Quill* Magazine

Crowder Quill
 Newton Hall-2nd Floor
 Neosho, Mo 64850
 (417) 455-5410

Entry Postmark Deadline:
 Feb. 1 each year

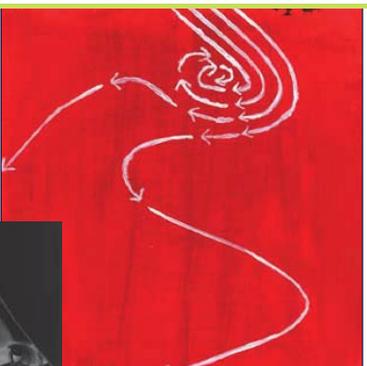
WHAT IS THE CROWDER QUILT?

The *Crowder Quilt* is a literary-art magazine published annually by the Magazine Production class at Crowder College. It is our goal to encourage and showcase the creative abilities of local writers, artists, and photographers as well as provide a cultural link between Crowder College and our surrounding community.

GENERAL ENTRY GUIDELINES

- Postmark deadline: **Feb. 1**
- Deadline to be announced for electronic submissions and hand-delivered entries.
- Individuals may submit up to four entries per category in every category.
- All entries except traditional art should be sent electronically if at all possible.
- Send entries to Quill@crowder.edu or LatoniaBailey@crowder.edu via email attachment.
- The attached files should be named the same as the entry title; type entry information in the body of the e-mail or attach the scanned entry form.
- Multiple entries may be sent in the same e-mail; make sure to clearly identify the categories if different.
- Email LatoniaBailey@crowder.edu or call 417-455-5410 to make arrangements for hand delivered entries.
- Failure to meet all guidelines may result in automatic disqualification.

If you do not receive confirmation of your entries within three days, please email LatoniaBailey@crowder.edu. The Quill is not responsible for technical malfunctions associated with sending entries.



GRAPHIC ARTS

- **Artwork, photography, and digital art**
- The digital category is *extensively* altered digital photographs and computer-generated art.
- Good contrast, composition, and creativity reproduced from real life or from memory.
- A model consent must be submitted for photo or art entries of live models. Please do not use children's names as entry titles.
- Copy art from magazines, cartoons, books, posters, and comic books must include a source. Artists should always give credit for reproductions.
- Traditional art entries should be mounted, matted or placed in clear plastic sleeves for their protection. Please do not send entries in frames or with glass. Art may also be scanned with a high-quality scanner and sent digitally.
- Attach entry form to the front left-hand corner with single-sided tape.
- Photography and digital art should be sent electronically following the general guidelines.

LITERATURE

- **Poetry, fiction, and nonfiction**
- Whether free verse, blank verse, rhymed or metered verse, poetry should make a point, state emotion, or relate an experience.
- Fictional writings should have clear plot development and well-defined characters. 1800-word maximum.
- Character sketches and personal essays should make a statement, whether serious, dramatic, or humorous. 1800-word maximum.
- All literature entries must be typed and double spaced and preferably submitted via email; multiple pages should be numbered.
- Entries are not returned.
- Literature entries should be sent electronically if at all possible following the general guidelines; electronic copies will be requested from winning entrants.



