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What the Heart Doth Know: Anthology of Writings from Southwestern Oklahoma State University-Sayre 2012

Southwestern Oklahoma State University

Description
This anthology contains the works of SWOSU @Sayre students from the spring, summer, and fall semesters of 2012.
Sponsors: Language Arts Instructors Judy Haught and Terry Ford. The book was designed and compiled by sophomore Paula Gloria. Cover photo by sophomore Meagan Thompson. Published by Spitzer Publishing, Sayre, OK. 2012. Theme for Photography, ”Western Oklahoma”.

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Community, according to Wikipedia, is a group of interacting people who live in some proximity. Usually, community is defined as a group of people who have a relationship with one another. This relationship can be geographical, cultural, or economical.

The first community children are introduced to is a family unit that raises that child. During young developing years, children are taught important social skills that are necessary and vital. These skills help children grow and be positive members within that community.

Geographical location often defines many communities. For example, in the United States, most people associate themselves with the state that they live in before any other community group. If you ask someone, "Where are you from?" most people in the United States would reply, "Oklahoma" or "Texas" before saying America. Growing up in the same area, geographically, gives people common jobs, accents, and manners, so they feel closer to the people from these areas than from other places. I have lived in Oklahoma most of my life, and when I have met people away from home, if they are from Oklahoma, I always feel a sense of closeness to those people that I will never feel for someone from Maine or Ohio, for example.

Cultural Communities are not bound together by location but by common values, beliefs, language, and ideas. Someone who lives on the east coast of the United States could feel a sense of community with another person who lives in California. In the United States today, many Mexicans have not been to Mexico in years, yet they still feel a sense of community with people who live in Mexico. I was born in Mexico, and even though I have lived in the United States since the age of six, I still feel connected with my birthplace. When walking in the market, or out in public, I will sometimes hear another person speaking Spanish. I immediately feel a connection with that person even though I have never met him or her before.

I often feel that sense of community with many Mexicans and Latinos. I understand the hardships that they have faced when moving out of their native country and to the United States. Many Mexicans who live in the United States have to adapt to this new world and new culture. Mexicans have to learn the English language to be able to work and be a productive member of their new community. There are number of Latinos and Mexicans who do not speak a single word of English, and they cannot communicate with anyone except their own family, so they have a difficult time belonging to the new community they have moved into geographically. When people go to the store or out in public and they hear another person speak the same language it brings them a remembrance of their land, their home, and a sense of belonging.

Economic community greatly differs from both geographical and cultural community. This type of community is bound together by money and status. People with similar social statuses, due to wealth, will often belong to the same country club, or go to the same places for recreation. I feel this is a very loose type of community with very little loyalty.

Today the boundaries of community have become more blurred because of technology. The internet has allowed people from all over the world to connect and find other people who share the same ideas and beliefs as their own. The close-knit societies of the past are fast being wiped out by computers and the ability to communicate with others across the globe. Money, language, and countries of origin no longer matter to the new computer communities of today. The loyalty and love, most people feel associated with their own community is a lasting feeling that starts at a very young age and will continue until death. I will be a Mexican, an Okie, and an Immigrant for the rest of my life, no matter where life takes me.
Many people will ask, “Why would a woman endure so much pain during labor if she does not have to?” It is not that she would like to feel the pain, but she sees the numerous benefits of natural child birth. Another popular way to give birth is through a cesarean, also known as C-section. Even though technology has dramatically evolved, this is still a dangerous surgery for the mother and child. When choosing how she wants to deliver the baby, the woman must think of the well-being of herself and the baby as well as what the complications might be and the recovery time.

During labor the main focus is on the mother and child, so why not have them both fully aware and alert to what is happening? During cesarean section, the woman’s lower abdominal area is cut open to be able to reach the uterus, followed by another incision in the uterus to deliver the baby, and then sealing up the incisions follows. This is much like opening a Ziploc bag, then opening a smaller one inside and resealing them both, but considering it is

(Continued on page 3.)
done with a human, it's not that simple. Even though some women are awake during the pro-
procedure, they are highly drugged for the pain, making them not as fully alert as they would be
during a natural birth. In a natural birth, a woman will use non-medicated ways to deal with
pain, for example: breathing, visualization, vocalization and emotional support. This helps give
her awareness of her body and the baby, because every medication or voluntary procedure
affects not only the mother, but also the child.

With everything comes a risk of complications. Some complications of natural birth are
the baby's shoulder getting stuck on the pubic bone, premature delivery and the mother being
too small to deliver the baby which only happens in one percent of women. Complications in a
cesarean section are infection, heavy blood loss, blood clots and vomiting. As for the baby, it
might face injury during the surgery, weak immune system and have breathing problems like
asthma. Babies that are in voluntary C-sections are three times more likely to have respiratory
problems. If that is not a bad enough complication, a woman who freely chooses C-section is
550% more likely to die than a woman doing natural birth.

If a woman does not die from the procedure, she might think she is during the recov-
ery of a C-section. A woman who has a cesarean might stay three to five days in the hospital
after the surgery and take about four weeks to fully recover from surgery. Not only does her
scar need to heal, but her digestion system will take some time getting back to normal. This
means taking everything slowly and needing more help with daily tasks. As for women doing
natural birth, many feel fine after birth and are able to walk and move around freely. Most
women can leave the hospital twenty-four hours after giving birth, although most doctors pre-
fer they stay for around forty eight hours to get the hang of taking care of their newborn.

After nine months of discomfort and pain, the last thing most women would want is to
add several more weeks of recovery. That's why natural birth should be a woman's first
choice; it has less risk, better for the mother and the baby, and will be the fastest way to re-
cover. A woman should feel accomplished and empowered after giving birth, not in pain and
nauseous. So when thinking of choices on how to deliver a baby, keep the mother and child's
health in mind. What's a few hours of pain to several weeks of it?
The Key to Good Health

By Leslie Aldaz

Exercise. It is a word we all know, although some dread the meaning. There are different forms of it, and a million ways to do it. It ranges from simple to rigorous, depending on the person, but can be done by anyone, anytime, and anywhere. It is an activity we should all bring into our lives to help us enjoy life to the fullest by helping us with our health, helping us live longer and more efficiently, and making us feel better about ourselves.

Everyone knows that exercising is healthy, but do we really know how it helps our health? One of the main ways it keeps us healthy, is by making our heart stronger. When we exercise regularly, we strengthen our “cardiovascular function and helps prevent or delay the onset of heart disease,” as well as strokes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol (Crawford). A better cardiovascular function also means more efficient lungs, this being because the heart pumps harder while exercising and trying to deliver blood to the muscles, forcing the lungs to be more efficient with delivering oxygen. It works just as a car does: the engine is more efficient if it’s driven more. If the car just sits in the garage, the engine might need some work later on. Also, do not forget the organ that is making the heart and lungs function properly. Studies show that exercise is also good for the brain, too. Carson Boddick tells us in the article “How Does Exercise Help Your Brain?”, “the brain is improved by exercise is the result of stimulation of the systems in your brain that impact how you pay attention. It stimulates the frontal cortex, a primary location required for analytical thinking and filtering of thoughts.” Not only does it help learning ability and our memory, but also helps reduce the risk of different forms of dementia. For example, Alzheimer’s along with “anxiety and depression by bringing more oxygen to the brain and cells” (Cooke).

Exercise does not only help reduce the risk of illnesses, but also helps people naturally live longer. If people make the healthy choice of exercising, they help fight off health problems before they occur. Oscar H. Franco of the Erasmus M.C. University Medical Center in the Netherlands found that “those who had moderate-to-high levels of activity had a life expectancy of up to four years longer than those who led a sedentary lifestyle” (Cooke). It also strengthens muscles, which keeps people mobile and independent longer. Along with exercise comes healthy eating, which many start to do once they begin to exercise. People start to pick healthier choices in food, because they need certain foods to help keep them going. If someone planned to run two miles a day, it would not be the smartest choice to eat donuts all day long. This just be looked at just as school work, people give their best work to get the best result. The human body needs carbohydrates to make energy, and protein to form muscle. Some people form strict diets, while others follow portion size and try sticking to the food pyramid. Either way, exercising is important to eating well for a longer life span.
Along with living longer, exercise helps people enjoy life to the fullest in multiple ways. One of the ways, is that it can help improve the way people think of themselves and their esteem. As Bethany Kochan explains in her article "How Does Exercise Affect Your Self-Esteem?" “Self-esteem refers to how well you prize, value, approve or like yourself. Positive feelings are often associated with a more positive outlook and less depression or anxiety. Body image can relate to self-esteem in that it can be positive or negative. It refers to how you view your own body and what feelings are associated with your personal view.” Exercise is almost like everything else in the world, it’s a personal goal that one tries to overcome to better him or herself. Once people reach their goal, they feel accomplished and better about their self-esteem. This gives them more confidence, not only in their body, but also socially, making them more outgoing. Another way it can help people, is by reducing stress, it can help them forget about their problems, or channel their aggression in a healthy way. Letting out stress, helps people to better enjoy their day. Also, it allows them to feel less worried at night, letting their bodies rest and recuperate for the next day.

So why not exercise to live a healthier, happier, and longer life? Any kind of exercise is better than none, and anyone can start at any time. The benefits of exercising can improve a person’s life, not only physically, but also mentally. So we should take that thirty minute walk twice a week, take the stairs at work, run a mile or two, and don’t be afraid of getting a little sweaty. That little bit of salty sweat can be the factor of living four more years or just living life to the fullest.

**Works Cited**


Admirable Person
Mema
By Jaci Alford

As I begin my journey into adulthood, I look to adults in my life for guidance to help me choose my path. My most admirable person is my grandmother, whom I call Mema. She has always given me advice, love, and support. She demonstrated selfless love to my grandfather, was a partner to him during their thirty-nine years of marriage, supports her community, and is the solid rock in our family. She is a guiding force in my life.

My grandmother helped my grandfather throughout their marriage and gave to him tirelessly. When my grandfather found out he had cancer my grandmother was by his side. Mema drove him back and forth to Oklahoma City for chemotherapy and cared for him during several surgeries. When they found out his cancer was terminal, she was the strong force in our family. She worked with us to spend time with him and do things he had always wanted to do. Mema ran her embroidery business and was the sole proprietor throughout his battle with cancer also. Mema always put his needs before her own, and her health faltered soon after he passed away. A year after my grandfather's death, my grandmother had to begin walking with a cane because of back trouble.

My grandmother was not raised on a farm, but learned farming when she married my grandfather. Mema had to learn to ride and care of horses, drive a tractor, and work beside my grandfather during their marriage. No job was ever too dirty or too difficult for her, whether it was digging Bermuda grass sprigs, working cattle, taking care of animals in the barn, cleaning stalls, or working in the alfalfa field. Mema and my grandfather also had a feed business. Mema was his partner, secretary, and worked like a hired hand during their many years together. Mema is still taking care of the farm and horses that my grandfather left behind.

Mema is involved in community service by working in her local church. Mema has always been involved in her small community church and has served in many capacities. Currently my grandmother is the secretary, treasurer, janitor, and the pianist at Strong City Baptist Church. When the church's pianist left the church, Mema enrolled in piano lessons. Mema had learned to play the piano as a child, however, she was not comfortable playing in front of people. She has currently been playing the piano at the church for seventeen years and continues to practice for every Sunday service. Mema has always been a Sunday school teacher, whether in church or at home. She fills in at church now for any Sunday school teacher unable to be there. Mema checks on her elderly friends around Strong City and Cheyenne and visits often. She will usually take one of the grand kids and a home cooked meal to visit someone in the community.

My grandmother is the rock to our family. Mema always encourages anyone in the family to do our best and live a Christian life. You can always go to her to talk about anything, and she will always give the best advice. At the age of seventy-three, she continues to work in her embroidery business. Mema supports every one of her grand kids in their many endeavors. She goes to basketball games, baseball games, dance recitals, pep rallies, rodeos, and 4-H events. When a grandchild shows up at Mema's house, she always will cook a meal and talk to them about anything, putting her personal problems aside.

My grandmother is the most admirable person I know because demonstrated selfless love to my grandfather, supports her community, and is the solid rock in our family. Mema will always be someone I look to for guidance and someone I can talk to when I need sound advice. She is everything a admirable person should be and more. She has taught me so much throughout my life and will continue to teach me through my adulthood. Mema is a guiding force in my life.
Upon the Burning of My House

By Miranda Aranda

Orangish Yellow
The flickering flames from my house
Making me feel it's trapped
And I can't do anything about it.
The crackling flames in my room making
me so frustrated that my sister
Jackie could have been dead,
because she was so content on sleep and
didn't know it.
The misting water on my lips putting
tears in my eyes.
The tears in my family's eyes
putting fear in our hearts.
The sniffly noses and the noises
you make when you cry.
The scents of the matches and the candles just like I was home again
as if nothing happened.
The black, orange, smoky basketball
I throw angrily to the ash covered ground.
My feeling, my emotion, it is nothing compared
to a bad grade or your boyfriend breaking up with you.
Why? To think it happened to us,
a large family and we lost it all.
Orangish Yellow
Red dirt road, please take me back to that place where pick-up trucks would trace that red dirt road, filled with excitement and always a mystery where would it take us, no one would know, with her hills, dead ends, curves, and fishing holes be careful taking that red dirt road not always easy or nice she could reach out and take your life for I will never forget how she changed my life you gotta love that red dirt road.
I used to just be that girl, the one with “the scar,” or at least that is how I felt. But now, I am just “Me.” However, I can remember very well all the many times I was quiet, but in my head I was screaming, “Can I not just be me?” I can remember praying and wishing it would just go away. It seems so long ago now. Sitting in front of the mirror, tilting my cheek from one angle to another, looking at the thin faint curvature was nothing new to me. I had been looking at the very same mark for almost my entire life. It was more distinct, and more frequently noticed when I was younger, which of course was an issue then. Over the years it seems to have faded and is mostly only an attention grabber to those who are not used to it. Although still in plain sight, it goes overlooked by those who know me, unless they are trying to describe me to someone else, and then it is the first thing they mention. I just smile when they do that now. It does not bother me at all anymore. In fact, I have grown rather fond of the scar left from that night. I only know what I have been told. Really, what little I remember from that night is not much.

So here is the story. I was five, and it was my parents’ fifth wedding anniversary, or at least they were celebrating their anniversary that night. That was the reason that they left my little sister and me at the house with another couple they were friends with. I am pretty sure they will never forget that night. It was not fifteen minutes after my parents had arrived back at the apartment from their night out that the accident happened. I guess it made an awful noise, one that nobody could mistake as anything other than bad. I know they were all downstairs when it happened. Dad had said later, “Well not only did the loud crash scare me, but so did the sight of your pregnant mom running as fast as she could up the stairs!” They all raced upstairs behind her to see what happened.

When they got to the top of the stairs and to my room, they found me motionless on the floor. I had rolled off the top bunk bed in my sleep. Apparently, the couple watching us forgot to put the rail up, and I just went right over the edge. But, that was not the worst part of it. The couple also forgot to shut the dresser drawer after getting out our pajamas. While on my way down, I caught the corner of the open dresser drawer with my cheek. Of course, I continued to fall to the floor, and I tore my cheek nearly in half. With my mouth closed, both rows of teeth could be seen from the side of my face. The left side of my face looked as though it had been slashed through on purpose. The tear went from the corner of my mouth all the way up to my cheekbone. They, of course, took me to the emergency room. This is where one of my only memories from the entire accident and healing process occurs.

I was lying on a table or more likely, a hospital bed. A white sheet was draped over the top of my face. I remember looking down toward my feet. My dad was standing at the foot of the bed. I remember I got all excited, and I started smiling, talking to him, and waving my hands at him.

“Daddy! Hi, Daddy!” I said with a giggle.

“Your daughter is in shock. Her brain is trying to protect her in its own way from the pain and physical trauma,” the doctor said from somewhere on the other side of the white sheet. “The plastic surgeon will be in momentarily. I really hate to ask, of course, but you will need to wait outside. I will come get you as soon as we are done and she gets to the recovery room,” he said reassuringly, to try to comfort my parents.

I do not remember anything else. I know I had to eat baby food through a straw, so as to not undo my stitches. I have seen some pictures with a white bandage wrapped completely around my head and under my chin. I do remember a clear glass bottle with a big red E on it that I had to later rub on my scar. I guess vitamin E oil is supposed to visibly reduce the scar, and rubbing my cheek was to help the scar tissue. It took 575 stitches to sew my cheek inside and out. I have no other details about the accident or the physical recovery. However, I do have a great deal of memories about my scar after that.
For several years, most of them were not fond memories. In grade school, the kids made fun of me, calling me names and making it a game to run from “Scarface” the playground monster. For a kid, it was a really big blow to be nominated and held as permanent playground monster. Nobody else ever had to be the monster! Then in middle school, I was not playground monster anymore, but it sure felt like it still. All my girlfriends were getting boyfriends. Not that it really meant anything back then, but I did not have one. And to top it off, the boy that I liked said he would have been my boyfriend if I had not had a big ugly scar on my face. He said I looked like a pumpkin someone tried to carve a scary face on. I felt my heart break with disappointment. I was teased and tormented for years over a silly scar on my face. Kids can be really mean! I think the emotional trauma I endured as a kid growing up, with a distinct mark on my face that stood out, separating me from the other kids was worse than the pain from the actual physical trauma of the accident. However, it is not just kids. Since I have been out of high school, adults try to make me feel like my scar takes away from me. I have had comments concerning my scar that were made to try to make me feel bad about myself.

It took a long time for me to get used to the scar on my face. I am not actually sure when it happened, but eventually I decided for myself that I was okay with having a scar. I was not going to let anyone make me feel bad about the fact that I have a scar on my face. In fact, to be honest, I really like my scar. I do not think it makes any difference now, except I would not be me without it. It might be a flaw to some. I, however, think that it helped make me who I am on the inside. It taught me how to be sensitive to things that might bother other people. It taught me firsthand how to look past the superficial parts of people and to get to know the person inside. And it helped teach me that it is more important and gratifying to truly like yourself, no matter how others feel about you. It has been a part of me for so long that I do not think I would feel right without it.

I would not trade my scar for anything now. In fact, in the last couple of years, my scar has helped me on more than one occasion to help boost someone else’s self-confidence. Sometimes all it takes is showing a little confidence in yourself and giving a little reassurance to someone else so he/she knows that differences have a meaning and a purpose, even if they cannot be seen at the moment, is enough to ease someone else’s pain. I think it is neat that I have seen my positive attitude about my scar help ease someone else’s insecurities. And I do not think there is a better feeling than when you feel good about yourself, except for when you can help others feel better about themselves. It just feels good when everybody is happy. Everybody deserves to have self-confidence, flaws and all, because nobody is perfect. And nobody deserves to have anyone make them feel bad about themselves. My name is Ashley Brewer; I am that girl with “the scar.”
A SURVIVOR’S DEFINITION OF STRENGTH

Tabitha (Smith) Brinkley

Growing up, I was quite the tomboy, much like Ellie Mae Clampett from the Beverly Hillbillies, minus the ravishing beauty. I had no friends that were girls. Girls were “sissies.” I had all guy friends. When I was in high school, I was an athlete, eventually becoming the first softball player in my hometown to be named to the All-State team. I could run 3 miles continuously. I could throw a ball from home plate to center field, quite accurately without much effort (even though I played third base and was a pitcher). I could squat 300 pounds and I could even bench press 265 pounds. I could take a line drive in the face, pick up the ball and still get the out at third. I thought I had incredible strength. Strength is an attribute a person possesses, allowing him or her to exert energy or force greater than expected. You see, I thought strength was purely a physical attribute.

I have since learned that strength is not being the girl that can lift more than the boys; it is not being the tomboy that all of the guys were afraid of because she could hit harder than they could; it wasn’t being the one in the family that moved the furniture in the house for my mom; it wasn’t the ability to do stupid, dangerous things and not get injured. Strength is facing obstacles in life and with every ounce of everything I have, overcoming said obstacles. It is accomplishing things I once thought impossible. It is surviving unthinkable situations. It is losing a loved one and making it through the day without shedding too many tears.

The last five years of my life, I have learned that strength is much more than a physical thing. You see, I was in an abusive relationship. When I was 21, I married a man that I knew when I was a young girl. He was quite the wooer. When he and I were dating, I thought he was a kind, hopeless romantic. He once sent me a dozen roses just to see me smile. Oh, to be young and naive. One afternoon, when I was six months pregnant, my eyes were opened fast to reality. I had just started picking up the house when I started feeling ill. I thought I would hop in the shower to cool off. Out of nowhere, the curtain flew open, and I got punched in the chest, knocking me to the shower floor. I then learned that I was to have the kitchen cleaned before he got home. Sadly, things only got worse from there. Even though the abuse was tough, I never told friends or family. I didn’t want to burden them with my problems.

My once husband eventually moved in with his girlfriend. This was a hard thing for me to deal with. I thought I needed this man. I slipped into a terrible depression and quit eating. In the midst of all of this, God blessed me with a good friend that came to my rescue. It was at this point I realized that strength isn’t so much physical as it is mental. I realized that, even though I was once able to bench press more than some grown men weigh, I had finally gained strength, strength to face evil and file for divorce, strength to start eating, strength to be okay with being a single mom, strength to start living again, strength to grab an extended hand and pull myself out of the pit. This same strength has allowed me to forgive the things that have happened to me and move on with my life. Strength has given me the ability to still see the good in the world and even trust in marriage again.
I'm small and fragile, but I hear I have your smile.

I haven't seen you around for a while now, but I can still feel your warmth somehow.

Mommy whispers to you late at night, as she holds me tight.

And even though you're not really here,

I still feel you near.

Sometimes my oldest sister cries,

but mommy is always there to dry her eyes.

And even though you're in heaven,

Daddy ...

I'll keep you in my heart,

where I've kept you from the very,

very start.
Making a tie dye anything is a fun family friendly activity. A t-shirt would be my opinion of the best way to start for beginners. The necessary products will be an old or new white t-shirt that is 100% cotton. If the material is anything else such as polyester the color will not attach itself properly. Secondly, you will need a tie dye kit from Wal-Mart, Hobby Lobby, or any other craft store. This kit will include rubber gloves, rubber bands, squeeze bottles and dye. Also grab some trash bags or some kind of plastic to cover your home if you are doing this activity inside. The next step that will be left out of the kit is adding warm water to your squeeze bottles that are already mixed with urea, soda ash, and dye (urea is a chemical that either helps dissolve dye in smaller volumes or works as a water attractor to help absorb water and keep your shirt damp enough to hold color.) Make sure not to use hot or cold water with your dye because it will not mix properly and then you whole project is over. A few more things to be sure to have around would be old towels and paper towels because spills are very possible and also be sure to wear old clothes and sneakers so you don’t ruin any of your favorite clothes.

Beginning the activity soak the t-shirt in warm water, about the temperature of a baby’s bath. If you bought a new t-shirt you must wash it first because the “newness,” will restrict the dye from holding properly in the fabric. Ok, so once your t-shirt is soaked, squeeze out as much water possible (run it through your spin cycle on your dryer or have a friend help.) The shirt only needs to be damp not wet because the color will soak better and last longer.

There are many ways to shape your shirt for different patterns of tie dye but I am going to use the pie process. Grab a pen, wooden spoon, or even a friend’s finger so that a place is held in the middle of the shirt as you twist your shirt into a pie shape. Clockwise and counterclockwise does not matter in this process because it will be twisted all the same. However, this step is very important keeps your shirt in a tight “pie” because a messy pie will mean a messy shirt.

Once you have your shirt twisted you can now apply your rubber bands. Place the rubber bands as if you are slicing a pie. Start with an “X” and go from there placing one horizontally across the middle of your “X” and etc. It does not a matter how many rubber bands you use between 4-7 is fine but if you desire more that is also ok because this is your creation after all.

Now your shirt is ready for dye. If you are not doing this activity outside again make sure everything is covered with trash bags, plastic, or tarp so your home doesn’t get stained. Also make sure to have your old clothes on and do not be afraid of the dye. If it happens to get on your skin that is okay it will wash off between 3-4 days but skin only.

(continued on page 15)
When tie dying usually only three colors are used fuchsia, turquoise and yellow. When you start your project, begin with the lightest color first because once it’s on there and you mix another color with it there is no getting that white space back. Yellow mixes better with everything and gives you other colors such as blue and green so using yellow for a base is also good.

Now you have your shirt in a twisted pie shape with your rubber bands holding it tight in place. Your dye is mixed your old clothes are on and you’re ready to go. Grab your dye and begin from the middle of your pie once slice at a time with any different colors you choose. While applying keep your squirt bottle close to the shirt and covering all the white. When you are finished with this side, lift your shirt, wipe down the area below and place the colored side down (now showing the other white side of your shirt.) All the colors that you applied on the other side of the shirt you want to apply them in the same place on this side meaning: blue behind blue, yellow behind yellow, and etc.

Your shirt is almost finished. If all the white is now covered place your shirt in a trash bag by itself, and seal the bag tight. This is the hard part leave your shirt for 24-36 hours but no longer because your colors will not come out correctly.

Finally, the moment you have been waiting for is here. Put your gloves and old clothes back on and un-wrap your shirt. The astonishing colors and the excitement I feel every time I tie dye is never tiring. Take your shirt and place it in the sink or water hose and let your shirt rinse clean. At first it will look like black is running off your shirt and all the colors are washing away, however this is normal. Once your water is clear you may hang your shirt and let it dry. It is ok to wash your shirt with other laundry after the first few times but rather safe than sorry. Now your creation is final and you have a lovely new t-shirt just for you and you can even make them for friends and family. Enjoy!
Butterflies, palms sweaty, knees shaking, the anticipation of competition, adrenaline rushing, waiting to go into to the show ring for the very first time. A 9 year old, long brown haired girl walked her pig into the ring. Eight years later that same exact feeling continues as I am in the holding pen waiting for my class to go into the ring.

Hi, my name is Kayla Brown. I am a 17 year old senior at Merritt High School. I am the daughter of Jarrod and Kimberly Brown of Elk City, Oklahoma. I have a younger brother, Colton Brown. I have attended Merritt Schools from Kindergarten and I will graduate in May of this year. I have been active in basketball, fastpitch softball, slowpitch softball, and FFA. I have been to the state tournament in slowpitch softball three times during my high school years, one of which I was the starting right fielder. I have been to the state tournament in basketball one year. I have received just about every award imaginable at the Merritt FFA chapter, from Star Greenhand, Star Chapter Farmer, Blue & Gold and T&D Meats Top Salesperson to Parliamentarian, Secretary, and President. I am currently attending Southwestern Oklahoma State University at Sayre as a concurrent student.

At first I was unsure of the idea of showing pigs, but as the time came around for getting more show animals for some kids, I was getting my very first set of show pigs. My grandparents raised pigs and my dad and two aunts showed pigs, so I thought I had to keep the tradition going.

My first show was our county show. I thought to myself, we will sure see how much I'm actually going to like this. By the end of the day, I had won the title of Grand Champion Barrow at my county. I wasn't quitting, that's for sure! By the time the Oklahoma Youth Expo (OYE) was my next show I was more than ready. Getting fourth in my class was great with all of the pigs I had to compete against, but when it came time to load my pig on the truck that was one of the hardest things I had gone through at that age. I remember it like it was yesterday. My dad and I walked back to the trailer, his arm around me, comforting me and his exact words were, "Kayla, we are going to get more pigs. You'll have more to play with and work with." From that point on I knew I was meant to be in the show barn.

The next year, I had learned a lot about the showmanship part of showing. I have won numerous showmanships by spending endless hours with my pigs and learning how each individual one works. At this point, I was learning about feeding and about what I would change about my animal to make them better.

In 2006, it was cold and I had two shirts on and my 4-H jacket. I had my pig "Dozer" in the holding pen trying to keep warm. Before I had entered the ring my dad brushed the side of my pig and told me good luck. The judge took one hard look at my pig and didn't look at me for the remaining time, until the last three pigs were in the ring. He placed me first and we all went back in for the champion cross drive. It took the judge a little while before he figured out his decision. He grabbed the microphone and told the pig that he thought was champion. He walked over and shook my hand. Later in the day we waited for the grand drive of the 2006 Southwest District show. Again, the judge took his time picking the winner, but when he grabbed my hand and told me congrats I had this feeling in me that is unexplainable. I immediately called my mom. She had to stay home with my brother because he was sick. She didn't believe it was true at first, but then she finally started to believe us.

(Continued)
In 2007, my family started our operation of raising pigs. We started with 5 gilts and this spring we will farrow out 17 litters. We currently have 25 sows and gilts that we breed and farrow.

Showing pigs was my everything. I was in the barn at my house all the time, you couldn’t get me out. My brother was getting extremely sick in 2008. It was one of the hardest years of my life. Colton, my brother, had Cystic Fibrosis. I was showing his pig for him at our county show when the doctors told my parents that my brother wasn’t going to live much longer. Four years ago, around this time, I lost my brother to the battle of Cystic Fibrosis. We had many donations and thoughtful condolences sent to our house from the people that knew us from the pig barn.

When it was time for another set of animals my dad talked me into showing sheep. I wasn’t good nor did I even know how to show a sheep. We had picked out my first lamb and he was at the house and we were bringing back my second one. My dad jumps into the trailer to catch my lamb when the door flung open and out jumped my sheep. Now before I go any further I want to mention that we live not too far from the interstate. My lamb took off down the driveway prancing like a deer through our neighborhood. It was dark and my lamb was roaming the streets. My dad took off on foot to find my sheep and my mom and I jumped in the car to go look for him. After about an hour of searching my dad called for some backup. We finally had the bright idea to get my other sheep and tie him up so maybe the loose lamb would come to him. He did just that, but the tricky part was catching him from there. My dad slowly crept up on the sheep and as soon as he had gotten close enough the sheep jumped and my dad landed on top of him, but he caught him. That lamb from then on was to be called “Lucky Larry.” He continued to be lucky and made the sale at the Tulsa State Fair.

My next few years, I went on to learn about the basics of the sheep as I did with the pigs. Traveling to national shows was quite the experience for me. I went to Denver, Colorado with a lamb named “Dos.” I entered the show ring hoping to have a first or second to make the sale. I was given a third place ribbon and sent out of the ring and there waiting for me the dreaded sliding door. I had my eyes fixed on that door as walked my lamb towards it, tears filled my eyes. My dad and one of my show family members took one look at me and headed the other direction. The guys took my sheep from me and put him through that door. I was heartbroken. All my hard work with my lamb just to see him taken away from me. Kansas City, Missouri was another one of the national shows I competed at. Not doing so well didn’t stop me from having fun. Going to the haunted warehouses is now a must when we go to the American Royal Show.

Every year I would watch the grand drive at the OYE, with the stretch white hummer limo. The music of “thunderstruck” played, the lights dimmed, the spotlights were going everywhere, and the lowering of the trophies. I had always dreamed of being the one sitting in the limo and stepping out with all the parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, friends, and Ag teachers clapping and cheering for you. Last year, on March
19th, I walked into my Crossbred class and won my class. I never imagined I would have Breed Champion Crossbred Wether and get my very first chance to ride in the limo. Getting out of the limo was bitter-sweet. I was so nervous to walk into the Grand Drive. Finally, after what seemed like forever, the judge had the microphone. My heart raced. The judge walked over to me and shook my hand. I didn’t know whether to cry because of the excitement or to scream because I couldn’t believe it was happening.

Later in the year, I was at the Tulsa State Fair with my all-time favorite lamb I had purchased from Matt & Jalene Kennedy. I knew my lamb was pretty good and he might have a shot of being in the top of the class, so I walked into the ring ready to go to the extremes of getting this lamb shown. As the judge walked up to handle my sheep I braced him, but as soon as the judge put his hand on my lamb I heard a loud pop and I was fell to the ground. My lamb just stood there looking at me, wondering just as all of you are, what I was doing on the ground. My knee cap dislocated and I thought all of my hard work with this lamb is not going down the drain. One of my chapter members stepped in to hold my lamb for me while I exited the ring and walked around for about 5 minutes. I tightened my brace, wiped the tears and sweat off of my face, and entered the ring ready for every circumstance to get this lamb shown. By the end of the show, I was Reserve Grand Champion Market Wether at the Tulsa State Fair.

I recently had knee surgery to secure my knee cap in place and I plan to show for my last time in March at the 2012 Oklahoma Youth Expo.

As my show career is ending, I would like to say some special thanks to the people that have been there for me through some of the best times and the worse times of my life.

Dad, thank you for helping me with my animals all these years. Thank you for pushing me to do my best even when I said I can’t. You’ve taught me so many life lessons and I’ve enjoyed spending time in the barn with you. Thank you for being on the sidelines for me all these years. I couldn’t have done it without you. I love you.

Mom, thank you for being my biggest fan and giving me the pep talks when I needed them. I’m so glad to have you. Thank you for putting up with me after a long day at a show and after a tough loss in a softball game. Thank you for sitting along the fence and taking pictures of me from the start and for being the loudest person in the crowd when I did well. I love you.

Colton, thank you for being my angel, my inspiration, and my best friend. I can’t wait to see you again. Please watch out for me through everything I do and help me make my tough decisions. I love you, bubba!

Grandma, thank you for being at all of my events from shows to school events. I can’t remember a time when you’ve missed something. Thank you for hauling me around when I was too young to drive and buying me the world. I couldn’t imagine life without you. I love you.

Cooper, thank you for standing by my side through everything I’ve been through. Thanks for helping me show when I needed you and for being the big brother I didn’t have.

Ty and Nicole, thanks for giving me the opportunity to be a part of your show family. I appreciate all of the endless hours of teaching me to show and getting me to and from the ring. Without both of you I wouldn’t be where I am today. I am glad to have you in my life.

I would like to thank my family, show family, friends, Ag teachers and my FFA chapter for all of the support and help through the past eight years of my show career. I would also like to thank all of the show people that gave my family prayers and love during the time of my brother’s death. What you did for my family is something I will always be thankful for.

My future plans are to attend Oklahoma State University at Stillwater, OK. I plan to major in Animal Science/Pre-Vet and achieve my degree as a Veterinarian. After graduating college, I hope to move back southwestern Oklahoma and start my own vet clinic.
We all want our special knight in shining armor, but how do we know if we’re his damsel in distress? It’s always best to be straight forward and ask how they feel, but special circumstances call for a little investigating. Men can be hard to read, but they do leave a few clues for us to pick up on along the way. How often they want to see us, if they’re desperate to impress, and how often they go out of their way to make us happy are all clues we should look for in our mysterious games of love.

When men see something they want, they’ll do everything in their power to get it. Gillian Reynolds, writer of an E-zine Articles column, says “You want him to be beating down your door to spend every available moment with you that he can. A man in love can’t get enough of his woman and will do almost everything he can to be with her.” It’s pretty clear whether they want to spend time with us or if they feel like they have to. If they feel obligated, they probably won’t make it their top priority to impress us either.

In addition to wanting to spend time with us, men are always striving to impress. In today’s world, men’s social value holds a lot more weight than physical strength or even intelligence. That doesn’t mean that they need to have tons of friends or have “high social status”, but it does mean that they’ll want to play their cards right and convey their strengths and value in the best way possible. That’s what courtship really is: the opportunities we each have to convey our value to one another (Steele). They may get dressed up, take us to a fancy restaurant, or just try to impress us with their wit. These are ways they’re trying to prove their value and hook us for good.

Along with impressing us, men who are in love will do anything to make sure that we’re happy. Sometimes there are days that just don’t get better. If a man is truly interested, they will do their best to turn the world upside down to make everything run smoother their girl. They’ll send you flowers on a terrible day, or turn a sob into a giggle. Men will make it their unofficial job to always put a smile on a sad face, and that takes a lot of love and dedication.

The game of love is mysterious and sometimes endless. But, there will always be somebody who will travel to the ends of the earth if only to make us happy, who will do everything imaginable to impress us, and beg to see you every chance they get. When that knight in shining armor comes a long there should be no doubt in our minds that we’re his damsel in distress.

**Works Cited**


LIGHT

By Devon Connell

A Beacon of light
outstretching the way to safety
Among the vast, endless waves
One flickering light that inspires hope
Among the black darkness in the waves
An outstretched hand calls for me
To pull me to safety
But I swim away...
Away from the beacon of light
Away from the hand
Away from safety
And I am swallowed by the darkness
In the vast
Endless waves....
WESTERN OKLAHOMA FRIDAY NIGHT
BY DEVON CONNELL
U Can Wait

By Joshua Esquer Davis

A Persuasive Speech

In Massachusetts, an 18-year-old boy was convicted of killing a 55-year-old man. His weapon of choice was a cell phone.

According to the University of Utah, the use of a cell phone while driving slows a driver’s reaction speed to the equivalent of someone with a blood alcohol level of .08 percent. Texting is very common as a mode of conversing, but in the hands of a driver, this combination can be deadly. According to Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, a texting driver is 23 times more likely to be involved in a car accident than a non-texting driver. Sadly, this trend is becoming increasingly popular among teens and young adults.

A 2011 Harris Poll stated that over 49% of drivers under the age of 35 send or receive text messages while driving. A text message on average takes the driver’s eyes off the road for five seconds, but in this time, the car will have traveled over the length of a football field! This is easily enough time and length to have a serious accident.

Twenty-eight percent of all accidents are caused by cell phone usage. These accidents kill over 920 people a year in the United States alone. Sadly, there are many people who tend to overestimate their own skills when operating a vehicle. If this 18-year-old has not over estimated his skills, this death of someone’s father/husband/friend could have been avoided.

When people text while driving, they not only endanger themselves but everybody on the road with them. Do not text and drive. These conversations can wait.
In Greek mythology there is a myth called Pandora's Box. The story begins when Prometheus, a titan, stole fire from heaven. Zeus being offended ordered Hephaestus, the god of craftsmanship, to create a woman who had many talents--beauty, music, persuasion, and more. The woman was named Pandora, which means “all-gifted.” After she was created, Zeus took vengeance by presenting her to Prometheus’ brother, Epimetheus. Pandora was given a jar which she was carefully instructed not to open under any circumstances. Curiosity drove Pandora to open the jar, and all the evil that was contained in it dispersed throughout the earth. She hastened to close the lid of the jar, but all the contents had already escaped except one. Hope was all that was left.

What is hope then? Is it a type of unsure optimism? Is it a belief in faith? Hope is an abstract noun that can be defined by many different concepts such as literary, psychological, or religious depending on the situation.

In a literary concept, hope can be defined as the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best. Throughout western literature the theme of hope is frequent mainly in classical and contemporary works. Hope is a concept that can be very motivating for the course of a story. It allows characters and the plot to propel toward a greater ending. In the novel *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck, the main character takes his family on a journey from Oklahoma hoping to find better things aside from the Great Depression’s difficult times. The main theme throughout the story is hope.

Throughout psychology, hope can be defined depending on the type of situation a person may be involved in. It is an emotional state that is opposite of despair. The thought of hope promotes an optimistic outlook related to events and circumstances in someone’s life. Having hope allows someone to remove the knowledge of fear, despair, and also reality. It offers a belief, desire, trust, and confidence allowing someone the capability of looking forward to a brighter future.

(continued)
In a religious concept, hope is defined by centering expectations in which a person or thing is centered. In Christianity hope is being equal with salvation and its blessings, past, present, and future. A scripture in the Bible from Romans 8:24-25 states:

“For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.”

Hope is known as a trustful reference to the fulfillment of God’s promises. It is the confident expectation and certainty of what God has promised. People who endure hardships tend to look for hope in a god they worship.

Hope can be defined by many different concepts. It can be a belief, a trust, an obligation, or even an unsure optimism. In the myth of Pandora’s Box in Greek mythology, hope is said to be left on earth. When all else has left, hope is there.
Oscar Wilde was a very talented, proficient, and versatile writer, but he had a personal life that most in his time would not approve. He had to live a “double life” in order to be seen for his talent because in his day, being homosexual was against the law. It was very much frowned upon, and not many people could understand why a person would choose to be that way. He tried to be the man everyone wanted him to be, and he even married a woman and had two children. Even though deep down, his love did not belong to his wife, but to the man that was believed to be just his friend. His works consist mainly of feelings that he was experiencing that he could not express to anyone, so he hid it in his art. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, many characters had secrets they were trying to hide.

In Oscar’s life, he used letters to speak his thoughts of love to Bosie. One of his characters, Cecily, had a secret compartment of letters from her “Earnest.” Algernon: “My letters! But, my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.” Cecily: “You need hardly remind me of that, Earnest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener.” In her mind, all was right with her relationship, even though she still had not met her future husband yet. When they finally come face-to-face, she is so enthralled by her fantasy that she is about ready to give herself to him completely. It shows resemblance to Oscar’s one-sided relationship with Bosie.

Another similarity of Oscar’s life to the play is when Jack and Algernon make up their make-believe friends in order to escape from the reality of their lives. Algernon: “I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunburyed all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?” Jack: “My dear Algy, I don’t know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It’s one’s duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one’s health or one’s happiness, in order to get up to town, I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest who lives in the Albany and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. That my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.” I believe Oscar came up with this idea for the script after making up his own stories at home to his wife.
He and Bosie were lovers for about four years before their secrets were revealed, so I can imagine what stories his wife Constance was subjected to in order for him to get some time away from home.

Finally, Lady Bracknell and Miss Prism kept a life-changing secret for many years. Miss Prism never told the story about the baby in the bag until she was confronted by Lady Bracknell in front of everyone to see, as in this exchange: Lady Bracknell: “Prism! Come here, Prism! Prism, where is that baby?” Miss Prism: “Lady Bracknell, I admit with some shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is forever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old, but capacious hand-bag in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinet and placed the baby in the hand-bag.” Oscar and Bosie’s relationship was also brought to light for the world to see. Their relationship was brought before the courts, and a judgment was placed on them both regarding their homosexuality. Miss Prism held onto this secret that meant a lot of changes for a lot of people, just as Oscar and Bosie’s secret changed the lives of many. Once found out, Oscar’s wife moved away with their children and changed her name.

Oscar Wilde was a talent for the world to admire, but was soon shunned by the same world for the decisions he made. He was only searching for his own happiness without having to be judged for it by society. This script being his last says a lot about his character, and I feel as if he wanted this to be his way of coming out discreetly. A life of secrets can be hard for anyone to hold onto for so long, and I feel his love for Bosie affected his decision to come clean. The things we do for love are reflected in this script, as well as Oscar’s life.

The flamboyant writer, Oscar Wilde
RED SNOW

By Dani Farrell
Only One Chance for Goodbye

By Chelsea Fish

It happened so sudden I didn’t get to say goodbye.
We were living in the past and I can’t recall why.
When I look back on that moment, your words couldn’t be more clear.
I love you, baby, and I’ll be home sooner than you may think.
We were fighting about the past; I didn’t tell you I love you,
I didn’t say goodbye.
That’s what I remember.
I just hung up the phone and was left all alone
I cried myself to sleep that night and woke just before first light
There was a knock at the door where two men stood in uniform;
They told me you were coming home,
How grateful they were for what you’d done.
I don’t recall the rest because I was thinking about goodbye.
All the things I left unsaid and all the reasons why;
Did you know that I love you?
Or that I really do care?
I didn’t dare to say what was really on my mind.
And when the men handed me that flag
That you so dearly loved,
The flag I became jealous of,
I burst into tears and dropped to my knees,
Begging God to forgive me, Please!
They tried to tell me to just calm down; that they understood.
I looked them in the eye, said, “No, you don’t.”
I didn’t take my chance to tell him that I love him,
That I really do care;
I said, “I just want you home.”
I never dreamed it would be this way.
I wanted you in the home we shared,
Not down the road a ways.
Definitely not without goodbye;
I can’t imagine what you thought,
I can’t bear the fact that I chose that day as the day
Not to say goodbye.
Eye Essentials

By Kalyn Fuchs

When was the last time you had your eyes checked? Having your eyes checked regularly is important for keeping your sight. Most doctors recommend getting your vision checked yearly. I learned about optometry firsthand by job shadowing for over 40 hours this summer. Although you may not be experiencing any symptoms such as blurry vision or pain, it does not necessarily mean that nothing is wrong.

There are several conditions that have no symptoms but they could be destroying your vision. Glaucoma is one of these conditions that is caused when eye pressures get too high. When untreated it slowly takes away someone’s peripheral vision. According to the Center for Disease Control glaucoma occurs in 2.2 million Americans over the age of 40. Glaucoma has no symptoms until it is very dangerous for the eyes by the pressure spiking way too high or when much peripheral vision has already been lost. My dad has Glaucoma, and it may not have been caught early enough because he did not get his eyes checked for 27 years. It is a disease that typically happens in older people but my dad developed the disease fairly early in life. Thankfully he did not lose his vision, and his Glaucoma is now well controlled with treatment.

Many other health problems such as diabetes and hypertension can be detected in the eye before the rest of the body. While most eye diseases start later in life, some conditions can occur at any age, and often some problems occur because of trauma to the face or eye. There are also many problems that can occur in children that are treatable if caught early enough. One example of this is when a child is born with a big prescription difference in their eyes. Then their brain starts to use the better eye. It is treatable at an early age by patching the good eye and making the brain learn to use the bad eye. At the office of Dr. Bintz and Ellis in Elk City, they perform free eye exams on children under 1 year of age. If there are children in your family it is important to get their eyes checked as well as your own.

Your vision is a very precious part of your life. You use it every day, so don’t take it for granted, because many eye problems are preventable if caught early enough. Eye care is essential!
Western Sky

By Todd Garrett
Amaree Is My . . .
. . . Sunshine
Precious Face
Mr. Jankins
Pooty Pants
Love of My Life
Pooty Jankins
My Princess at Football Homecoming

By Paula Gloria
Sandcastles

AT

LAKE TEXOMA

By Paula Gloria
Friends ‘till the End

Years go by
while time stands still

There’s a place in my heart
only you can fill

We’re not so young
But we’re not over the hill

Our Friendship I cherish
And always will

By Paula Gloria
My Heart
By Paula Gloria
I love you all equal
Yet each one is different
A love like this
Must be heaven sent
I love your nose,
And your pointy chin,
I love your smile,
And your heart within
I know I have been blessed by the Father’s touch
I have never known a heart could love this much
A Lesson Learned

by Cheryl Harrell

In life we all make mistakes. The important thing is that you learn from them. I've made mistakes all my life and just carried on like nothing happened or that it didn't matter, but there is one mistake I have made that taught me a lesson.

I will never forget it. It was when I was attending Southwest Technology Center in Altus for the Practical Nursing Program. It was during our clinical semester, and the class was learning how to pass medication. The rules were to check the medication order, the patient, the medication dose and the medication three times. I thought I had done it right. I checked it all three times, but I was so nervous due to the teacher staring me down, asking me what my steps were and what the medications were for that I did not realize that one of my medications were for 1800 hours. 1800 is 6:00 P.M., and my shift ended at 1400 or 2:00 P.M.

Although my mistake didn't hurt the patient, I still had to fill out an incident report. Any time a nurse makes an error in medication no matter how small it is, he/she must fill out a report. I felt so stupid, and I was embarrassed. Although I am not licensed yet, I still know to check my medication and my patient three times. I do it five times now just to be certain. I never want to make a medication error again because the next time could potentially harm my patient. One can NEVER be too careful or too SAFE in nursing.
My reserved personality was screaming for me to turn around, grab my bags, and race back to the car. I was about to embark on a journey thousands of miles away to Washington D.C. with hundreds of rowdy teenagers I had never met. This was most definitely not my small town, country girl cup of tea! I convinced myself to go anyway, thinking that since it was only a little over a week, it couldn’t be that bad.

This scene took place the summer before my senior year, and, little did I know, it would be the time of my life. It all started a few months earlier when my FFA advisor shoved an application in my face and told me I was going to this conference whether I liked the idea or not. Assuming there was not even a chance of being accepted, I filled the papers out, mailed them off, and never gave it a second thought. I had forgotten all about it when one day, a few weeks later, I received my acceptance letter.

Determined to find an excuse for not going, I mapped out every single event, big and small, that I
had planned for the summer. After double checking at least five times, I did not have a single thing that would interfere with the conference. On the verge of going to share the news with my advisor, I found a way out. The trip would cost over three thousand dollars! The next day I marched my smug self into his office and explained, “Hey, I got accepted to the Washington D.C. conference, but I have looked it over, and there is no way I can afford that. You need to call to tell them I cannot go.” He looked at me, gave me a knowing smile, and replied, “No worries! Someone has already paid for you to go.”

Astonished, I left school that day having decided that this must be something pretty great for someone to pay my way. Once I finally arrived at the bus stop, I gathered up my courage, put a smile on my face, and climbed aboard. My attitude was instantly changed as I was met with an incredible amount of energy from many fellow FFA members. I had seen many FFA events and knew they were fun, but I had never seen anything like this.

A couple fast-food stops and twenty-seven hours later, we finally arrived in Washington D.C. We had all become great friends as we sang karaoke, complained about not having phone chargers, and mapped out crazy plans for when the old Greyhound bus broke down. Even after the seemingly endless bus ride, all the energy from the beginning of the trip was still very much alive as we checked in at the hotel.

The trip I initially assumed would just be something to suffer through was quickly turning into an unforgettable experience. During the week we not only got to tour the famous monument and memorials, but also had the opportunity to meet many past and present national FFA officers. One highlight of the tour was witnessing a motorcade for the President who even rolled down his window and waved at our group.

Much of our week was spent developing a *Learning to Serve Plan*. These plans allowed us to step back and look at our lives to determine if they were headed in the direction we wanted them to go. Critically examining myself, I realized I was tired of always being reserved and shy; it was like swimming upstream and would never allow me to reach my goal. Throughout the week I realized I wanted to be the person that lit a room up with energy when I walked in, rather than simply going unnoticed. I would no longer shy away from opportunity. Instead, I would seek it out every day. Watching the group leaders and listening to their advice, I realized that my goal was certainly achievable and vowed to see it through.

At the end of the week, I found myself hesitant to climb on the bus once again. This time it was for a very different reason. I did not want to go back home. That week had been a blast as I built lasting friendships and discovered I could be anyone I wanted to be.
Beyond the Soiled Curtain

Alyx Keyes

David and Beth Grant are the founders of a great organization called Project Rescue and they team up with the Bombay Teen Challenge, in Bombay, India. Their line of work is ministry that deals with girls of all ages being sold into sex slavery. In 1977, David and Beth received a call around midnight from K.K. Devaraj. He had led many church services there in Bombay and many of the women who attended would come up to him and ask him to take their children from the brothels. After hearing what K.K. Devaraj had to say, David felt that this is where God had been calling him and his wife and what He had been preparing them to do for a long time. K.K. Devaraj asked David and Beth if they would start a children's center that would take care of the children that come out of the horrible brothels there in Bombay. They immediately said yes.

Beth had a husband named Brian before she met David, and he died when Beth was 25. Brian and David had been friends for many years and when Brian died David would call Beth regularly to check up on her to see if she needed anything and see if she was doing alright. After nearly a year of calling Beth, David prayed and told God that if it was his will for him to stay single then he would be fine with that, but if not then he suggested Beth. He felt that God was giving him the desires of his heart. Later that week he flew out to meet with her in Philadelphia, and over lunch explained everything that he felt God was telling him about marrying Beth and all she said was that he was entitled to his opinion. Six months later he officially proposed and the rest is history.

Some cultural differences that David and Beth faced when they moved to Bombay were the value of a woman. Women in Bombay are treated like they are worth nothing. Most every girl either is or has been involved in sex slavery, whether it was their choice or not. If a woman gets married and does not have a little boy then her worth goes down because if her husband dies then she would have no one to carry on the family name. Women have to cover their faces in public and if a woman is widowed she is not allowed to get remarried. When David and Beth came to Bombay it came as a shock to all the women who attended the services that Beth remarried after her husband died. Bombay women say that when your husband dies your identity is lost. After a few services that the Bombay Teen Challenge and Project Rescue held, the view of how women should be treated and be valued changed among the people of Bombay. These two programs teaming up together was a great thing. Church services are held and the girls and their families are being taught about the word of God every chance (continued on next page)
they get. People who attend are sometimes still in the brothels of Bombay. They have not rescued any teens yet but they are still allowed to attend the services as long as they go straight back to the brothel they came from. Children as young as seven years of age get caught up in this sex slavery business.

A father and his ten year old daughter from Nepal had a meeting with a procurer. The procurer took a look at the little girl and told the father she was very beautiful and would do well. She looked at the little girl and asked her if she would do whatever they wanted her to do. The girl was shy and hid behind her father. The father was eager to get the money and didn’t really care what would happen to his little girl. He began to get frustrated with the little girl because she wouldn’t answer the nice lady. The lady ensured her and her father that the little girl would have a promising job in the Bombay factory and that she would make enough money to never be in poverty again and to also be able to send money back to her family living in Nepal. The woman asked her one more time if she would be willing to do anything and finally the girl nodded her head and said yes. From that point on the little girl, unknown to her, was immediately shipped to Bombay and began working on the streets as a ten year old prostitute never to see her family again and lived in the worst of conditions. She had very little food and no money what so ever. Parents like these sell 7,000–9,000 daughters a year into sex slavery in Bombay, India. Others get drawn into sex slavery by how it is perceived. There are billboards and advertisements all around making prostitution look fun and exciting and a place with a lot of money, so many young teenagers see that and get sucked into it. Little do they know what is really in store for them.

Throughout this book I have learned what actually goes on around me, without having to go to these kinds of places. It is people like David and Beth Grant that we need more of. To show the love of Christ and to genuinely care about others and to listen to what God is placing on all of our hearts. I am so inspired by their story to hopefully later on in life, go to a place like Bombay, India and help with the sex slave trade going on worldwide. Project Rescue is a great line of ministry and I only hope that I can help in any way I can. I attended a college called James River Leadership College, and during my time there, the students and I got a chance to actually meet David Grant. He personally told us his story of how he met Beth, how they fell in love, and how Project Rescue got started. It was really cool to see his passion for missions and getting girls and children out of sex slavery instead of just reading about it.
Calm Waters
By Jacob Leah
Dirt Road Lightening

By Jacob Leal
“In The Car”

By: Erica Lynch

There I was in my red car,
As happy as I could be,
Fixing to drive down the sidewalk,
To see who all I could see.

My big brother wanted to come with me,
But in my little red car,
There’s only enough room for me,
So I waved goodbye as I took off.

Looking back at his face,
Thinking was I a disgrace,
But I still went on in my little red car,
Tooting my horn, BEEP BEEP!
In seventh grade about six years ago, I was taking a class called Home Economics, or what I like to call Home Ec. The class was for students who wanted to learn how to cook and how to sew. I had some experience with both cooking and sewing from growing up around my grandma, who worked in restaurants all her life and sewed for a hobby. Of course, I took the class because I thought I could pass it without a doubt, but also because it was a fun class.

One day in class, my friend Chelsea asked me if I wanted to come over after school to hang out. I took her up on her offer and told her I would be there in a dash, after school let out.

I arrived to Chelsea’s house at about 4 o’clock in the afternoon. We were unsure of what we wanted to do. Therefore, we sat on the couch while we contemplated what to do for entertainment.

“Do you want to bake something?” asked Chelsea.

“That would be fun!” I said. “Just like Home Ec class.”

We scrambled through the cabinets to see what all we could find to bake. We came across cookies, brownies, cake mixes, and pudding.

“Which do you want to make?” asked Chelsea.

I looked at her with a train of thought and exclaimed, “Brownies sound good!”

Next, I started reading the directions on the back of the box, looking for all the ingredients that we would need. The basic directions usually say turn your oven on to preheat at a certain temperature, mix your batter, spray the pan, and then pour the batter and bake.

Chelsea and I worked as a team to get all the right ingredients to whip of the batter for the brownies. The mixture was smooth and creamy with just a few clumps like tapioca pudding. The batter was ready to pour in the slippery greased pan. We then put them in the oven. We set the timer for approximately 24 minutes to let the brownies bake.

When the timer chirped, I went to the kitchen to check to see if the brownies were cooked all the way through the middle. Opening the oven door I realized they were still completely gooey, and I knew something was not right. I ran my finger over the top of the runny brownies to see they were not even warm.

“I think there is something wrong with your oven.”

“Why?” asked Chelsea.

“The brownies are not cooking and the oven is like an ice box.”

(Continued on page 47)
Chelsea then began to examine the oven, turning knobs, flipping switches, and to try to figure out what is wrong. She didn’t see anything out of the ordinary. I asked her how we were going to cook them if the oven did not work. She suggested, cook the brownies on the stove top. I looked at her with doubt, but said “Why not? Wouldn’t hurt to try.”

After deciding to use the round, brown burners to cook our brownies, we waited patiently for them to cook. Since we weren’t sure how they were going to turn out we made sure we kept watch on them just in case something went wrong. As each minute passed, we could smell more of a sweet, mouth-watering scent throughout the air. We checked on the brownies to see what they looked like and the next thing we knew, they were beginning to sizzle like bacon.

“Oh, my goodness,” I said. “I don’t think these brownies are going to cook right because they are made for an oven.”

Chelsea looked at me like she couldn’t believe we both thought the brownies would cook on a stove top. We both burst with laughter.

In the end, Chelsea and I realized our bright idea of using the stove top was a flop, and so were the brownies. We came to conclusion maybe there are directions for a reason.
Love Is

By Samuel Maddux

Love is the fiery passion burning in our soul like a volcano waiting to explode
Love is the butterflies in our stomach constantly fluttering about
Love is like the ocean slowly churning but never telling what is beneath the surface
Love is like space as we no longer feel anchored to the earth but to the one we love
Love is like a tornado all these emotions whirling around inside you
Love is like the lightning so beautiful and graceful yet it can turn ugly in a moment.
My Love
by Samuel Maddux
You are the sun that lights up my day
You are the sculptor that molds my heart as if it were clay
You are the moon that is gently soothing to my eyes as I lay
You are the guide that never leads my heart astray
With this final line I give to you
My heart to subdue
Revolvers and Pistols: How Do They Compare?

By Rachel Mauldin

When I was a child, much of my free time was spent with my father in his business. He worked with guns. Mostly, he cleaned and repaired rifles, shotguns, and revolvers. So growing up, I didn’t have much chance to learn about semiautomatic pistols. As I’ve grown older, however, I’ve encountered more chances to obtain knowledge about semiautomatic handguns. Almost all law enforcement agencies utilize semiautomatic pistols, so I also had a stake in gaining as much knowledge about these machines as possible. I personally prefer pistols to revolvers, and would recommend them for use, as well. When faced with a life or death situation, a pistol would serve a home or business owner better, due to its convenience, maintenance, reliability and capacity. Of course, before finding oneself in a like situation, it is highly recommended that he or she undergo firearms training. Proper and thorough firearms training works for a person like a solid foundation works for a house: without it, there is no reason to go any further.

A major difference between the two firearms is convenience. While revolvers may afford the handler only a small deal more control due to the fact that he or she would have to re-cock the firearm between shots, semiautomatic pistols are much more convenient when it comes to “rapid fire.” Just the other night I was walking down a dark alley when I saw a pair of headlights turn toward me. My heartbeat increased, all my senses came on full alert, and my first thought was, “What will I do if the person driving that vehicle tries to attack me? I’m not armed in any way.” I would have been sorry if the driver was actually packing heat. As it turned out, the person meant me no harm. But let’s assume we were both armed; I with a revolver, and her with a semiautomatic handgun. Because it was dark, I would have to make a fairly good guess about where that person would be after getting out of the vehicle, and at first I would have only one shot. Had the driver been intent on harming me, she could have gotten two shots off in the time it took me to discharge one. Pistols, assuming they are reliable and cleaned properly, allow the handler easy access to more rounds if they are needed.

Another aspect of firearms to keep in mind is maintenance. Like every machine, firearms need regular maintenance, especially if used often. All guns should be properly and thoroughly cleaned after every trip to the range, or between uses. Revolvers are rather “easy” to clean in comparison to semiautomatic handguns. Cleaning is more involved when it comes to pistols. Gun cleaning kits can be found at your local gun range or sporting store. One requisite for obtaining a gun permit includes successfully completing a course in training. Course instructors teach potential gun owners how to clean his or her firearm(s).

Because semiautomatic handguns need more maintenance and have a more complex structure, that means there is also more of a potential for something to go wrong at inopportune times. This is where reliability becomes an important factor. Six guns (another name for revolvers), however, tend to be fairly reliable unless they aren’t cleaned properly. Imitation firearms also tend to be more at risk for jams, backfires, etc. Just a couple of weeks ago, my father and I were out practicing with one of his rifles and his semiautomatic pistol. He had only discharged a round or two from the pistol when one shell got caught trying to eject from the barrel. This particular firearm is not a name brand, so there was no guarantee as to its reliability in action. So while name brand guns may cost a bit more, if it saves a life (or several) isn’t it worth it? Overall, if you treat your handgun well, it will take care of you.

The last (but certainly not least) characteristic of firearms to be considered is capacity. Revolvers hold a maximum of six shots or rounds, while pistols can hold at least 10 in one magazine. Some magazines have the capacity for 17 rounds. Capacity does differ depending on the caliber of the round and the manufacturer of the firearm, but semiautomatic pistols have, by far, the biggest capacity when it comes to handguns.

Taking into consideration convenience, maintenance, reliability, and capacity, semiautomatic handguns are without a doubt the more desirable of the two options. Simply because semiautomatic handguns require a bit more maintenance doesn’t mean they should be disregarded based solely on that requirement. Since they are the better choice on three out of four points of comparison, I would say they are the better overall choice.
I believe that laughter is the key to living a good life. Laughter, an expression of happiness, is like the motor oil to an engine. With motor oil, an engine runs smoothly and is able to function properly. I believe that laughing keeps me functioning every day in this world. When I laugh, I forget my problems and just focus on the moment of humor. Laughter helps relax the body and is important to being a healthy individual. Laughter also is a form of communication that helps connect people and strengthen relationships amongst friends and family. For these reasons, laughter is a very important part of my life.

I often look to my four-year-old brother for inspiration on why laughter is important and powerful. Just recently he felt sorry when he accidentally smacked my older brother in the lip. Tears welling, lips trembling, my four-year-old brother started crying at the sight of blood dripping from the busted lip. I really wanted to cheer him up, so I thought making him laugh would be good medicine. I took him outside to help me pour dog food from a large sack into a bowl. I purposely dropped the bag and dog food spilled everywhere! My little brother, startled and amused, started laughing his head off. His face brightened, and the tears, tiny drops of sadness, were a thing of the past. He forgot the reason for his salty tears and was busy giggling at the dog food covering the floor. I believe that laughter could not have made a better difference for my little brother in that one moment.

I believe that laughter should be used as a tool in the same way I used it with my little brother. If I see people who are having a bad day, I don’t miss the opportunity to make them laugh and forget their problems for at least one precious moment. Countless times I have heard the phrase, “Thanks. I really needed that laugh.” Many times this phrase has also escaped from my mouth. Even though laughing naturally feels good, it has been scientifically proven that laughing relieves stress and makes a person healthier. What more reasons do I need to laugh?

I believe that a laugh a day should be a goal. When stress is overwhelming, I find something to laugh at or someone to laugh with. A crowd with a contagious laughter in which one person gets it started is certainly something to be a part of. I believe that when I am old, I’d rather have fine lines and wrinkles from laughing instead of stress. Even when stress is not a problem, it doesn’t hurt to laugh. My brother and I know the power of laughter. When things aren’t looking too bright and you are searching for the silver lining, just remember, have a laugh.
The Gospel Story

By Alicia M. Moglia

I want to tell you
an old, old story,
About a man from glory.
He is over 20 centuries old,
So I have been told.
He was born in Bethlehem,
By a righteous virgin.
His initials are “J.” and “C.” His name is Jesus Christ, you see.
At 30 He was baptized by His cousin. He performed miracles by the dozen.
For all His good miracles, He had many obstacles.
His own disciple friend, Became the biggest enemy in the end.
Judas offered Him a tree,
Jesus gladly took it for you and me.
His blood is to heal our soul.
His body is our sustaining tool.
Do not be sad,
For the end should make you glad.
On Sunday morning,
All Hell went into mourning.
Jesus in the grave no longer lay,
For death He did slay.
To His disciples He did show,
How in the Holy Ghost they would grow.
On the fortieth day,
Jesus ascended Heaven's way.
Now I will leave you with this hope,
While for another story I grope.
God will send you a Holy Ghost,
To help you to Heaven's Post.
For Any Reason Things Happen
By Sarah Morgan

Anything that happens to you here
For any reason things happen.
Happiness . . . or painfulness
They are perfect for you
And is not anything personal
Anything can happen in your travel.
For good . . . or for bad
It’s just only learning.
Those things are more difficult for you to accept
For any reason it happens
Was caterpillar the butterfly
Before they can fly . . .
And that anguish, it is burning you,
And occasioned sleeplessness
Tomorrow could be the spectrum
More twinkle in the sky
For any reason things happen.
And when you look back to your old painfulness,
You will see, in what beautiful form
it changes
Turn all your painfulness in flowers
And the ones of major delight . . .
. . . The ones with aspect of affection . . .
They are the only ones you don’t wash away
When you are crying!
When winter was Unfear
An amazing way,
With that brave belief,
You can change into roses,
The thorns from that moment
If the peace go with you
Or if your thoughts destroy you.
In both cases my friend . . .
For any reason things happen
THE LOSS OF MY HUSBAND
By Sara Morgan

It was wintertime, in 2010. The love of my life needed to travel from Oklahoma to Brian College Station, Texas. It was snowing, very, very cold, and the power poles were dripping with icicles.

It was midmorning, when the phone rang. I didn't want to get out of bed because it was cold, but my 7 year old daughter jump up to get it. She answered the phone, and we all knew it was “Daddy” who was calling us. She didn't talk too much on the phone; when she got back to room with the phone, wasn't more in line. So, we didn't know what happened in that moment, I told my babies he will call back later. But that moment never happened.

Approximately an hour later, our friend Diana, from Texas called me, to let me know that my husband was on the way to a hospital in an ambulance. I knew something was wrong. I only was hoping that GOD was helping him to be ok and get back home with us soon. But no. That did not happen.

After we had been waiting for more than one hour, the phone rang again. It was Diana crying and she just said, “Baby, he didn't make it to the hospital.”

“Please, don’t tell me that,” I said. I started to cry and hugged my babies.

In that shocking moment, my life came crashing down. I didn't see a picture without him. I wasn't able to think of anything. The only name that came to my mind was Mrs. Joyce, a lady who was like a mother to me. My mind was completely blind. I was really in shock. Then our friend from Texas called me again.

“What are you want me to do?” she asked. “How can I help you? Do you want me can call his son?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Who else?” she asked me. “I don’t know,” I said, and then I thought of Aunt Minnie, his brother, his friends and I don't know who else.

So, I called Mrs. Joyce and I told her about what happened to Joedy. At that moment, she came to help me. She made the calls for me. Also, our preacher from church came to our home. I remember he was asking me about Joedy, but I don’t have any idea what he was asking me or why he needed all the information.

Anyway, after all the questions and calls, I had an appointment at the funeral home and had everything ready for him. The appointment was ready for Monday. Mrs. Joyce was in charge, to help me in everything. On Monday morning, she called me. At that moment when the phone rang, I thought for a second on the possibility that my husband was alive, and he was calling to tell me “I am ok, I will be home soon,” and “I love you.”

But it was not him.

It was Mrs. Joyce who wanted to know if I was ready to go to the funeral office to sign the papers.

I heard myself answer “yes”, but really nobody is ready. It’s something that humans need to do. It’s just a requirement of life.

With the love and support of the people from church, we keep going on. Yes, between our sadness, loneliness, and heartaches.

“Why do I have to make this decision and do what it takes?” I asked myself at the moment. For me and my three little ones and my loved ones; in memory of my husband. Because I know, he loved us with all his life, and for sure he never wanted to see us crying and never give up. Life needs to keep going on for good reasons. He had many, many plans and dreams with us. But without him our lives gave a dramatic change in us, emotionally and physically.

The personalities and character of me and my daughter Elizabeth, changed a lot. The loss of my husband made us feel the fear of the opportunity to be unable to say good bye, to hug or to kiss him after almost two weeks without seeing him. Every event that showed brings joy, only through sorrow, because he wasn’t there to share it with us. We found ourselves in immense pain.

The first few months after his death, I was in shock, confused. I was even smiling at friends when inside I was crushed. The weight of grief was devastating. I felt an important part of me ripped away, leaving me desolate and empty and some days without hope. Not just for myself, but our beautiful little girls. They were going miss him forever.

Being frustrated sometimes flows over into anger.

The time will come when the major issues of the loss are solved; freeing energies to be reinvested in new relationships and new ways of living. Because when the door of happiness closes, another opens. But often we look so long at the closed one, we don’t see what is open for us.

The pain and emotions you go through move back and forth. We must take time alone to cry, reflect, and be in touch with other feelings; writing out our thoughts and feeling as we do.

Finally, we must believe we will heal. It will take place in our lifetime, healing the pain for a "best friend." We can get peace to be happy again.

We can't go on well in life until we let go of our past failures and heartaches. To be able to identify with all the emotions we feel it will take time.
Life as a College Student

By Autum Poston

Many students enter college expecting good times, knowledge, friendships, and a new sense of direction. They soon find out that college comes with challenges and struggles because of the great demands and expectations that are put on the importance of education. College students experience a great deal of stress, especially when they are trying to balance a full-time job, raise children, and have a social life. The demands of doing many different things with very little time can become overwhelming.

Working full time and having other obligations can leave a college student physically and mentally exhausted. There are several students who work full-time jobs and attend college full time as well. Still others work late and get up early in the morning trying to fit all the required tasks of school and work into one day. Students often find they are more exhausted when they are trying to schedule tasks, because there just does not seem to be enough time in one day. Putting in long hours and worrying about class schedules adds an abundant amount of stress to a student’s life.

Students who have children are faced with guilt about not being able to spend time with their children. Not only does college take an abundant amount of time but so do children. Children come with needs such as help with homework, preparation of dinner, and the need to be tucked into bed at a certain time. The thought of not being able to keep up with the responsibilities of a child is very stressful and can be depressing to both the child and parent.

College students find very little time to enjoy extracurricular activities. Even if they attend any major school functions or games or date, they will regret not getting that term paper done that was due the following day or week. Many students begin to feel pressure that often leads to depression and social isolation. The fear of being a failure and of not measuring up to someone’s expectations adds more pressure to the sleep-deprived, stressed-out student.

College students are often left with no personal time and must learn to manage jobs and families. College has many rewards if students do not get burned out and give up too soon. The pressure and time management can all be worked out with patience and lots of understanding from family and friends.
A Veteran’s Tale
By Ian Ray

Throughout our lives there are challenges. There are times of both great strife and great happiness. In our own minds and in those of others, we are often defined by how we cope with adversity. Did we crumble under the pressure of a situation that was just too big for us, or did we summon great strength and face down the moment trying to crush us? Though many may summon strength, in the long run, the burden must be shared.

It was a Thursday in the middle of July 2009. I was off to work early and had two options that day. Should I drive west to inspect a cell phone tower that was having communication problems, or should I drive east where more towers were in need of attention? Traveling west would bring me near my hometown where I could stop in and check on my stepfather who had fallen to the drink lately, but I chose to head east and didn’t give it another thought.

The hour was nearing five in the evening. I had wrapped up my work for the day and was driving home when my mother called and requested that I accompany my brother and her to Hinton, my hometown, to check on my stepfather. This was to be a welfare check as well as a desperate attempt to offer him help out of the bottle he had fallen into. I, of course, agreed to go and met them in Yukon so we could make the journey together.

On the ride over, we talked about how much we cared for my stepfather and how mad we were at him for letting himself go like this. He had been a hero to my brother and me, and we accepted that now it was our turn to step up and be a hero to him. The closer we got to the house, the more impassioned we became about what we wanted him to do. We would take him with us and check him into some facility where he could get help and clean up. We had it all figured out and wouldn’t take no for an answer.

My stepfather’s name was Jack. He was in his early sixties and had lived quite a life. Some may say he lived the life of Reilly, and when referring to his childhood, they would be correct. However, when the Vietnam War broke out Jack approached his father about going to college. It was well known that a young man was less likely to be drafted if he were in college. The response he received was less than favorable. Knowing the draft was inevitable, he volunteered for the Army, and before he could soak in what he had done, he was in Vietnam.

He arrived just before the Tet Offensive, a monumental counterattack by the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong. It was hell. He saw things so horrific that a normal person can’t begin to imagine. He was constantly on guard and woke from sleep regularly to run to a bunker to avoid the shelling. This stayed with him all of his life.

Back to the story, we had arrived at the house. The three of us got out of the truck walked up to the door. My mother and brother went inside while I remained outside to finish a cigarette that I desperately needed. He was constantly on guard and woke from sleep regularly to run to a bunker to avoid the shelling. This stayed with him all of his life.

Back to the story, we had arrived at the house. The three of us got out of the truck walked up to the door. My mother and brother went inside while I remained outside to finish a cigarette that I desperately needed. A moment later, my brother came out and told me to get my mother and escort her out of the house and back to the truck. He looked pale, like he had turned to stone. I did what he said. My mother was confused and started to cry. I told her everything would be fine and I would go and find out what was going on.

(Continued on page 57)
When I returned to the house, I walked in and found my brother removing a rifle
from the hands of what appeared to be my sleeping stepfather. Then it hit me. He
wasn't sleeping.

"Is he dead?" I whispered.

"I think so," said my brother.

Just then I approached my stepfather, and the situation became gut wrenching-
ly clear. He had shot himself, and there would be no chance of survival.

In this moment I felt nothing. Sadness did not cripple me, nor did fear. I made
my way to the kitchen, where the phone was, and calmly called the police. We met
them at the street and explained the scene. Then I escorted the chief inside where he
confirmed that life indeed was absent.

My mother weighed heavily on my mind. She cared for him a great deal. I could
not bring myself to tell her what happened. I only revealed that Jack wasn't okay. In
the end, it was the police chief that would finally tell her the grizzly truth. She was
destroyed. Her whole world had fallen apart in an instant.

After several hours of working out the details with the police, we were allowed
to leave. It still didn't seem real to me. I began to wonder if something was wrong
with me as I had not cried, nor felt any real sadness. Didn't I care about Jack enough
to cry in the wake of his suicide? I was sure I did, but still no tears came.

We drove an hour to my sister's house where my wife, infant daughter, and sis­
ter awaited our arrival. They did not yet know what had happened. After we arrived,
the news was delivered, and they broke down into tears. No one knew what to do ex-
cept to be together. It was the greatest source of comfort to just sit and talk with
family. Eventually we decided to go and see Jack's children as they would likely need
comfort as well. My wife and I stayed behind briefly in the apartment.

It was then that it all hit me like a ton of bricks. I hadn't been aware that I was
in shock, and it was now wearing off. I burst out crying like a baby. It was like I was
puking out all the pent-up tension and terrible images from the event. I felt human
again, not like the stone figure I had been for several hours now. It felt good, but I al-
so now had to face the reality of what had happened. Jack was gone.

In the years that have followed Jack's death, I have come to terms with some of
what happened. He was a tormented man, suffering from PTSD following his experi­
ences in Vietnam. Some issues remain. Jack used to speak of terrible nightmares that
interrupted his sleep, images of his past that he tried to bury. I suffer from the night­
mares now. Graphic interpretations of what my waking mind tries to hide. They aren't
as bad as they used to be, and hopefully, if I don't hide from this reality, someday they
will stop. I try to remember the good times with Jack. I try to remember how he
helped my family so much, and how happy he made my mom. He was a good man, but
a scarred man. The past finally got the better of Jack, but I thank God he was here
long enough for me to know him.

Jack's example is now being used to help newly returning veterans with
PTSD. The issue is getting more and more attention now as the consequences of igno-
rance are becoming more apparent. Our troops overseas are facing down terrible situ-
ations every day. They are bearing the weight of the world on their shoulders. While
it is possible to bear this weight in the short term, they must have help in the long
run. If not, the weight will eventually crush them.
Grandpa

By Ian Ray

He was a tall man in his sixties. A cigar hung from his mouth every waking hour of the day. The cigar brand was Muriel Coronella, and every day he more resembled the man whose picture was framed in the logo. Silver hair topped his head, but not completely. The sides were full and thick, but the top was vacant. To remedy this problem, he grew one side long and combed it over to hide the shiny bald head that lay beneath. A white beard framed his face from ear to ear, like I imagine Santa Claus's would look in the summer time. His face was kind and strong. Two eyes full of wisdom flanked an overly large “Scottish” nose. Below his nose a mustache gave hints of a younger man with blonde hair still showing through the white. He was a truck driver by trade and always smelled of burned tobacco and motor oil. His hands were enormous, like baseball mitts, and there was always grease under his fingernails. No matter how much of a man I thought I was, when I shook his hand I knew he was more of one. In between his powerful hands was his great belly. It was the kind of belly that only comes with age, and he seemed to accept it. Below that were his shrinking legs that never saw the light of day. At the bottom, his denim enrobed legs were capped off by a pair of pointy-toed cowboy boots. His feet hurt constantly, but he was a proud man, and he wouldn’t dream of stuffing his feet into anything else.
Sun setting over field

By Justin Reed
The Day My Heart Was Shattered

Kaley Riley

It was a normal sunny April day about four years ago; the only difference was that school didn’t start until eleven. Little did I know that my life would be changed that day. Sometimes a day can start just as normal as ever; it only takes one incident to change a person’s life forever. I remember this day as if it were yesterday; the pain, the tears, everything about it.

I was up getting ready to go to school just as I would any other day. I went into the living room where my mom and dad were. She stood there with her hand on her head, and I could tell she really wanted to cry. At this moment I knew that something was terribly wrong.

“What’s wrong?” I asked, knowing that something wasn’t right.

“Your Uncle Mike just got shot,” she told me with that concerned look on her face.

At this point my mind was racing; I was thinking, “Is he going to be ok? How bad is it?”

My uncle, who usually carried my little cousin out to the car, was walking out to start the car that morning at his house. I don’t know where the person was or why he or she would even choose my uncle to do this to. My uncle had no enemies, and he always saw the good in everyone, so who would have wanted to do this? Although I was very devastated about my uncle getting shot, I was very thankful that he was not carrying Trevor.

My mom, my grandma, and my aunt hurried to Sayre where they had taken him to the hospital. A friend of mine and her mom came to pick me up, and we went to have coffee at a local restaurant before going to school. We sat there at the small round table as we gulped down hot coffee, when Sherry got a phone call from her husband, who was my preacher at the time. He asked her to bring me up to the church. We got in the van and went on to the church, my mind still racing. Because of what had happened earlier that morning, I knew that something was terribly wrong.

We pulled into the church parking lot, and I noticed my dad’s white work truck parked there. We went on inside, and I’m sure it was pretty obvious by the look on my face that I knew something was not right. We went into his office and I sat down in a chair across from the desk.

“Do you remember what your mom told you this morning?” my dad asked, looking me in the eyes.

“Yes,” I replied.

“Uncle Mike is no longer with us,” he told me with great emotion as he hugged me. At this point my heart was like a vase that had shattered on the floor. The tears filled my eyes and ran down my face; I couldn’t believe it. The uncle I grew up with was not going to be with me.

(Continued on page 61)
physically anymore. Everyone hugged me and gave their condolences as we were leaving to go home.

My dad took me to get some lunch at Pizza Hut. Although I didn’t feel like eating, I ate a little bit. We went to the house where we waited on my mom to get back from Sayre. I laid down on the couch for a while, still crying.

Finally, when my mom got home, we sat there for a few minutes, and then we went to go pick up my sister from school. My dad told her what had happened on the way out to the car so that my mom would not have to. Being about seven or eight years old, she was full of questions. She was old enough to understand what happened but still very curious about it.

It was Taks test week, so I had to go to school the next day to take my test. My principal had given me permission to go home after I finished my test. I walked in the door and went to sit in the office until the bell rang. All my teachers hugged me and told me how very sorry they were about my uncle; the tears filled my eyes again. When something bad happens, one can really tell who is around and who all cares.

I took my test and then called my mom to come and get me. We went to my grandma’s house and waited for my sister to get out of school and then went to Pampa to get some clothes to wear to the funeral.

Later that day we went over to Erick to go to the funeral home for the viewing. I didn’t start crying until we got inside, as I walked in just knowing that he wasn’t there brought tears to my eyes. I noticed that my Uncle Mike did not look himself. His face was swollen, and he just wasn’t the uncle I grew up with. As we walked outside my Aunt Nanny hugged me, and made me feel a sense of comfort.

She said to me, “You know as well as I do that He will take care of him.” I knew that my uncle was in a much better place, and I would never have asked him to change that paradise that he has in Heaven, but it still hurt knowing that he wasn’t alive anymore.

The next morning we all got dressed up in our clothes that we bought for the funeral and met at my grandma’s house to go to Erick. We went to the church, and ate the lunch that they had prepared for us. After everyone finished eating, we all gathered together to head into the sanctuary, where the beautiful flowers occupied the stage, for the funeral. The whole church was filled with people which shows how special my uncle was to many people. The flowers were all very pretty. Many of them were made by my Aunt Barbara. My favorite of the arrangements was two hearts that had both of his children’s names across them.

The day that my uncle left us was a day that I will never forget. He will always be here in my heart, and I will cherish the memories I have of him forever. I know that I will see him again someday when I get to Heaven. But for now I have a very special guardian angel looking out for me and my family.
A Broken Promise
by Tim Swann

Seeing on TV the horrible incident in Aurora, Colorado, where a twenty-four-year-old man shot several people at a movie theater, killing dozen or so, brings to mind an incident that happened to me in 1980. I was working at Lone Star Steel Company near Daingerfield, Texas. All employees alternated shifts weekly, one week on days, next week on swing shift, and next on graveyard shift. Before going in for my graveyard shift on Saturday, June 21, 1980, I promised my wife that we would go to church the next morning. Since we were members of the Baptist denomination and new to town, we decided to go to the First Baptist Church of Daingerfield.

After working my shift, I got home at about 7:30 A.M. I never could get used to working all night. My wife reminded me of my promise to take her and our two-year-old son to church. Feeling sleepy, I lay down and told her to wake me up at 10:30 A.M. Falling asleep instantly, I was awakened by my wife at 10:30 A.M. I told her I was just too tired and there was no way I could take them, and I went back to sleep. She woke me up again at about 1:00 P.M. and said there were news helicopters flying all around town. We turned on the TV and saw that a man named Albert Lee King had walked into the First Baptist Church, the one we had planned on attending, and opened fire on the congregation with a machine gun, killing five and injuring a dozen more. One of the victims was a man that I worked with at the steel mill.

I hate to break a promise, but this time I was thankful I did.
Creek Bed
By Lindsay Tackett
Sunflower at Sunset

By Meagan Thompson
got water?

By Ben Tignor

How much water should a person drink a day to stay healthy? Well, water is a very essential part of a person's diet (Clinic). The human body is mostly comprised of water. Water is essential for diet, health, and beauty. You should consume a proper amount of water per day to stay healthy. According to health experts, an average person should consume eight, 8-ounce glasses of water per day (Clinic). Without water, the body gets dehydrated, which means the body is lacking the amount of water it needs to function properly. Finally, water is very beneficial to the body; it's basically the gas that keeps the car moving.

Water is very crucial to a person's diet. According to an online source, 57% of the human body is water (Helberg). Without water, the body wouldn't be able to perform its normal functions, such as cell reproduction. It would also enable a person's organs to function properly. As you can already tell, water is a key point to everyday living.

Without water, the body gets dehydrated. Dehydration can easily turn into a serious medical condition, and people are often hospitalized because of it. Like they always say 8 glasses a day keeps the doctor away. Water is obviously an important chemical in the human body, and should always be paid attention to, or else suffer the consequences of dehydration. Drinking at least eight, 8-ounce glasses of water each day will keep the mind and body sharp.

Finally, water can also be very beneficial to the body. Stated previously, water is an essential chemical to the human body. Water can help a person look younger and a lot healthier. For example, water has zero calories, which means it promotes weight loss. In today’s society, weight loss seems to be the number one topic. Water will help suppress a person’s appetite too. Believe it or not, water also helps reduce the risk of cancer. Cancer is rapidly growing cells, and water is the chemical that helps monitor the speed of growth.

At last, water is especially valuable to the body. Without water, the human body will slowly die and begin to look downtrodden. Water will keep anybody going, and will keep them looking healthy. In conclusion, we should all knock back as much water per day as we can.

Works Cited


OKLAHOMA PROUD

BY CHRIS TRENT
SUNSET OVER LAKE

BY CHRIS TREN'T
RANGE ROVER

BY ELIZABETH WALKER
The Oklahoma Wind

The Oklahoma Wind whispers in my ear
“Try not to fear”
For I am only lingering near.
Many days and nights I will blow.
For so many know,
How soft and gentle or hard and abrupt,
My blows can certainly disrupt
The pace of everyday life
When I can cut like a knife.
My strength can certainly make
A tornado appear, and a life it may take.
I really don’t mean you any harm,
But I know I most often alarm.
Please remember though, when you see the trees sway,
I am trying to push air toxins away
To help keep my Okie folks okay

By Elizabeth Walker
By Elizabeth Walker
My Boyfriend's Car

By Melanie Warnke
By Melanie Warnke
Life Changing Experience

By Jonathan Whitton

On November 1, 2010, at 11:13 A.M. is when it all changed. As I heard this unfamiliar cry in the hospital room, I could feel my heart sink, and feelings of being completely and totally in love overcame me. Then I held her, making it all so real. I think it’s safe to say that we all go through life-changing experiences. Mine, without question, was the birth of my beautiful little girl, Haylee Kaye Whitton. Haylee changed my life in so many ways and continues to change my life every day. One change was my going back to school to pursue a master’s degree in psychology. Realizing my drinking prior to her birth was out-of-control, I knew I had issues with alcohol. The biggest change of all was learning how to truly love someone selflessly. Now it was no longer just about me.

Before the birth of my daughter, things were different. I only had to worry about myself and didn’t have the responsibility of taking care of another life. I wouldn’t go back to that place for the world. Haylee taught me that I had to grow up. That all the drinking I did before her was reckless, and that there was no place in my life for that type of behavior if I was going to give her the love that she needed from a father. It was a pretty hard road realizing I was an alcoholic. It was even harder checking myself into rehab because I had allowed alcohol to control my entire life. There was no way for me to continue in my alcoholic ways and provide the emotional, financial, and realistic needs that my daughter was bound to have. My daughter didn’t need a father that came home every day from work only to get drunk. She needed a father that would play with her and love her unconditionally and show her how she needed to be treated by her future husband, through the actions of her own dad. In my journey I educated myself about my alcoholism that had consumed my life. I learned a great deal about myself and that it was okay to love, that it was okay to hurt, and that there was nothing I could do about the past. Only the future was in my control, I had to go forward.

When you have a child, you all of a sudden start to evaluate your life, job, home, and goals. Well when evaluating mine, it brought me to a place where I decided that I needed to go back to school. After going through rehab, I realized I actually had a talent for communicating
well with others. With that talent I also found success in taking back control of my life from alcohol. So I started giving back. I got a great amount of joy out of helping other people suffering from addiction. See sometimes it’s not always about money; sometimes just doing good things to help other people make you richer than any amount of money in the world. So I decided to pursue a master’s degree in psychology and go back to school in hopes that one day I could get my LPC and be a full-blown counselor for drug addiction and alcohol.

I never really had to learn how to love my daughter unconditionally, but there definitely was some new emotion that I was feeling that I’d never felt before. In my past life I was selfish; it was all about Jon. Haylee changed that very quietly. I learned that loving her was so much a part of me. She taught me that life is nothing worthwhile without loving someone to the degree that I loved her. See life was going to throw things at me that would hurt, but I was able to rise above that because it was no longer just about me. There were days that love scared me to death because in a second it could rip my heart out. My beautiful little sunshine changed my thoughts about love. She showed me that to love was to live and that it didn’t always have to hurt. Funny how a new born baby could show a grown man how to love for the first time at the age of 28.

Children can be a reason for anyone to change in his life, but as for me, Haylee has given my life a reason to change. If it were not for her, I might be drunk at this very moment instead of writing this paper, or tomorrow I could be going about my old selfish habits instead of going to school to help others. Whatever way you look at it, my life is so much different because of her, and honestly there are thousands of ways she changed it all. My daughter wasn’t planned by any means, but I thank God every day that you she is here now. Because of her I found a reason to be the best man and father I can, and that is the most life-changing experience I’ve ever had.
Haven't we all watched a piece of art being preformed or read a book and come across a part where we thought to ourselves, “Isn’t it funny how that happened?” I know we have even come to point where we've said, “Oh, I would have never seen that coming!” Those are some examples of reactions we might have to irony. In the play *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde, we are presented and entertained with dramatic irony. Dramatic irony is created when the audience knows something that the characters on stage haven’t yet discovered. Many times dramatic irony was used in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and comedy ensues as the characters were always left oblivious; however, the audience was fully aware of the pun. That is what played a major role in the humor of this well known piece of literature, and the movie version, starring Reese Witherspoon and Colin Firth, keeps in tune by adding two scenes of dramatic irony that do not occur in the original play.

With that in mind, one of the more humorous times when dramatic irony was used in the movie was when Gwendolen gets the name “Earnest” tattooed on her rear end. It is very ironic for two reasons. The first being that Earnest is not even the real name of her “true love.” Gwendolen is unaware that his name is, in fact, Jack. Then every other character is left very unaware that she even got the tattoo in the first place, but not the audience. The second way that scene was so ironic is because she is in the family of Lady Bracknell. Lady Bracknell herself is a very good example of the strict expectations held up for people at that time in Victorian society. She is a very prim and proper woman whose goal it is to uphold the social status of her family. It’s very comical how Gwendolen goes way beyond the boundary line of her expected class to get a tattoo in a seedy Asian shop for a man she barely knows, yet swears to love. In the time that *The Importance of Being Earnest* is taking place, it was forbidden for a young lady of a higher social class to get a tattoo.

Another way that dramatic irony is shown so well in the movie version of this play is when Lady Bracknell is shown to have been a saloon dancer in her earlier years before marrying into a high society family to avoid a scandalous pregnancy. She is extremely strict with Gwendolen and very disapproving of her reckless love interest with Jack, or “Earnest,” as they all think him to be. She wants nothing to do with him as soon as she finds out he has no family history because he was found in a hand bag. She is a very upright Victorian who believes all young ladies should remain pure and proper until a respectable gentleman comes along to asked for their hand, so comedy ensues as poor Jack is subjected to her scrutiny and everyone tries to measure up to her standards.
Jack meets Gwendolen through his friend and Lady Bracknell’s nephew, Algy. He proposes after just minutes in her presence. Lady Bracknell refuses to take any seriousness in the proposal and forbids Gwendolen from pursuing it. We see a flashback in her memory as Lady Bracknell danced scandalously in front of several men in her much earlier years before being married into a family of higher social class. Dramatic irony is demonstrated in this certain incident of how highly she holds herself while the innuendo is she came from a much lower class.

The greatest way that dramatic irony is shown is at the end when everything came together and Earnest admitted that his name was, in fact, Jack. He admits to everyone that he is an only child and Algy is nothing more than his ornery friend and not actually his brother. The lies startle everyone and throws them all into a huge argument about the marriages and honesty and the social status of Jack. It is at that time that Lady Bracknell gets word of the presence of Mrs. Prism. She knows of her from years prior. She goes to find her, followed by the rest of the group. When she finds her, she asks what had become of the baby she was said to have many years back. Mrs. Prism, under the eyes and pressure of Lady Bracknell and the others, confesses to leaving a baby boy many years back at a train station in a handbag. It all of a sudden comes to a conclusion in Jack’s head, and he races off to find the handbag he was left in. He returns with it, only for it to be confirmed in fact as the handbag Mrs. Prism had left. He says to have “always wanted a brother,” so, as it turns out, Algy was in fact his true brother after all. It is extremely ironic in the way that they have been pretending to be brothers in order for Algy to pursue his love for Cecily and Jack to pursue his bunburying. After they are confirmed to be brothers, Jack looks up the name of his father in an old war book, for he had been a soldier. In the play, the audience assumes he really is named Earnest, because the audience can’t see inside the book. But in the movie version, we see inside the book as he finds his father under the name of “John,” which is Jack’s given name; but that is another one of the ways this movie proves to be so ironic and comical. The audience is fully aware that the name given in the book is actually John, but Jack lies and tells everyone that his and Algy’s father’s name is “Earnest” after all. He keeps the name Earnest and replaced the book before anyone is to question it, and answers Lady Bracknell’s question as to his showing signs of triviality with the money line, “On the contrary, my Dear Aunt Augusta. I am only just now realizing the vital importance of being earnest.” Everyone is happy with the end results and connections, and the audience is aware that he never will be earnest in anything!

Dramatic irony is used to perfection in The Importance of Being Earnest--most of it in humor, but it can be used in many different ways. The characters were also usually left unaware and oblivious to it. That’s just part of the ironic humor being played so naively. Dramatic irony fits this play very well for the fact of how it flows and allows events to occur that make this play appealing to an audience of today.
Ever since I was little, I have always wanted to change the way I look whether it was by playing dress up in princess clothes, wearing my mom’s heels to make me a couple inches taller, or playing in her makeup. I was always concerned with the way I looked, just because I’ve grown up in a generation where people focus more on appearances rather than who a person is. It’s all about what kind of clothes I buy, the way I fix my hair, how many hours I spend in front of a mirror, and the recent trend I see in a magazine.

When I turned sixteen, I was told I had to get a job. After being handed everything I could ever want, I finally had to work for the things I wanted. I decided to get a job in retail, and applied for a sales associate position at Maurice’s. I never thought working in a clothing store would cause me to become such a shopper. Soon enough, I found myself spending my entire paycheck on clothes I’ve only worn once. Before working there, I never spent any of my own money. I was always used to taking my sister’s clothes or getting money from my parents. After working there for a year, I soon realized I couldn’t spend as much money on my appearance as I thought I needed to. I only spend a little bit now that I know what I can afford and what I can’t in order to get by for the month. I’ve always cared about my clothes, but my hair is what really matters to me.

I was a natural blonde up until I was a freshman in high school. When freshman year rolled around, I wanted to do something different and rebel against my parents. They always told me to leave my hair color blonde because people paid to have my color of hair. But, that wasn’t ever good enough for me. I always thought that I would look even better with dark hair. Now, being a senior in high school, I spend almost a hundred dollars every four to six weeks paying someone to color my hair for me. I never stopped at coloring it either. I wanted to cut it and get my eye brows waxed. Whatever I thought would make my appearance better, I’d try it out. Some days I wish I only had to cut my hair instead of coloring it all the time, yet once you
start coloring you can't stop. Nowadays I find myself in front of the mirror trying to make sure my outfit and hair are just right before I leave my house.

If I could I would sit in front of the mirror all day. I can always find something wrong with my appearance if I sit there long enough from one strand of hair not being straight to a little blemish on my face. Today's society has taught me that I can't leave my house until my appearance is perfect. The night of prom, when it should have taken me only a couple hours to get ready, it took me nearly all day. I never knew how much I cared about my appearance until I sat down in front of my mirror and realized I had sat there for hours. Even when I was little, I thought every time I walked past a mirror I had to stop and look at myself. When in reality, I don't. I should feel comfortable with my appearance just the way I am, but the magazines I read always tell me something new.

I always find myself reading the tabloids just to see what new trend a celebrity is setting. When I'm checking out at the grocery store is the time I read them the most. Although after I read them, I always try to find something similar to wear. I almost have it in my head that I have to have an appearance just like a celebrity. But growing up, I'm learning I can set my own trends and feel just as good, if not better about my appearance. I know now my clothes don't have to be brand name or my hair perfect just because I saw something in a magazine.

Society has always made me think I had to look like a princess to attract a prince. Now that I'm older, I know I learned to care about my appearance from the best. I've also found that many people are unhappy with the constant pressure of trying to impress the world with their appearances.
By Meagan Thompson
The End

By Alicia Crum
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