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Letter from the Editors

Viewed by many instructors as a valuable reading resource, *Delta Winds* has been used in a range of courses: English 70, English 73, English 79, English 1A, English 1B, English 1D, Reading 92, and high school ESL courses in Marysville, California. The reading level of the magazine – matched with the content – appeals to readers of many backgrounds. To motivate the reader, the reading content should be both challenging and interesting. In this year's volume of *Delta Winds*, the authors have chosen to write in various forms: research-based papers, poetry explication, and rhetorical styles, such as the narrative. Regardless of the structure of the work, the authors, in general, express their views on set beliefs and stereotypes that cause misunderstandings and anxiety. Questioning traditional thoughts on death, gender roles, disabilities, and physical appearance, students voice their opinions and share their experiences. In this volume of *Delta Winds*, aspiring writers once again step forward to put their work out for readers of all levels.

Breaking Stereotypes Through Music

by Brian Newlin

Brian Newlin is a 20-year-old student at Delta College. He will be attending San Francisco State University as a psychology major starting in the fall 2005 semester. After earning a bachelor's degree, he hopes to either attend either law school or continue within the field of psychology and earn a doctorate in Clinical Psychology.

Music has the power to unite people, crossing generation gaps, language barriers, and genres to spread an artist's message. In popular culture today, music has become a billion dollar industry, filled with a wide variety of performers all attempting to spread their message to the masses. Many of these songs deal with life's most important issues: love, family, friendship, and death. Ideas of women's rights have also successfully been integrated into the music world. Artists such as India Arie, Gretchen Wilson, Gloria Gaynor and Christina Aguilera have all produced song lyrics that promote the ideas of self-reliance, individuality, and strength, hoping to empower women everywhere.

Many women who consider themselves feminists argue a woman's right to choose. Most recently that has been a rallying point for abortion rights activists, but it also applies to many other aspects of women's rights. In the modern world, a woman is free to make all her own life decisions. She has the option of marriage, childrearing, and career opportunities. In the area of music, the important message of choice has recently been dramatized by India Arie's song "Video." This song opens with an image most women can relate to, creating a sense of familiarity with the listener. "Sometimes I shave my legs and sometimes I don't/Sometimes I comb my hair and sometimes I won't/Depend on how the wind blows I might even paint my toes/It really just depends on whatever feels good in my soul." India Arie uses a descriptive example to summarize her feelings about independence. Many women go to extreme lengths to reach the unattainable level of beauty society holds them to. "Video" proposes that a woman needn't shave her legs or comb her hair in order to feel beautiful. Outward appearance should not be the ultimate goal in life.

Another recent artist to support a woman's freedom through song is Gretchen Wilson. Her release "Redneck Woman" argues that women don't need to sacrifice their personal desires simply because society ex-

pects them to. She sings, "Well, I aint' never been the Barbie doll type/No, I can't swig that sweet champagne/I'd rather drink beer all night." Her message is clear: there's no reason for any woman to deny herself. Live as you wish, be who you are, regardless of what others may feel. As the song says, "Some people may look down on me, but I don't give a rip." Gretchen Wilson is promoting individuality through her attempt to empower women everywhere.

One of the strongest goals of the feminist movement is to empower women. Many songs speak of surviving hardship through determination and hard work. For example, Gloria Gaynor's hit song "I Will Survive" has become a shining example of overcoming any obstacle. The song states, "I will survive/as long as I know how to love/I know I will stay alive/I've got all my life to live/I've got all my love to give/and I'll survive/I will survive." Although the speaker has suffered loss, her strength and determination pull her through. This song is very empowering and has become very popular within several different communities. Gloria Gaynor's lyrics help remind women that it is possible to survive alone, that tomorrow is always a new day full of new possibilities. She reminds us all that with love, life always continues.

Another song that strengthens women's rights is "Can't Hold Us Down" by Christina Aguilera. She opens her song by challenging current societal expectations, reminding us all that everyone deserves equal respect. "So what am I not supposed to have an opinion/Should I be quiet just because I'm a woman/Call me a bitch because I speak what's on my mind/Guess it's easier for you to swallow if I sat and smiled." These lyrics reinforce the idea of equal rights; no one should be silenced. We all have valid opinions to share. Her song speaks out to women, reminding them that they deserve to be treated fairly.

Music is one way for a voice to be heard. One person can send a mes-

sage to millions of people through this wonderful form of art. The popularity of the industry, especially here in the United States, has created opportunity for underrepresented groups. Women's rights have been hard to come by; even today there is much work to be done.

Song lyrics can help reinforce ideas of empowerment and choice to a large audience. Artists such as India Arie, Gretchen Wilson, Gloria Gaynor, and Christina Aguilera have all produced song lyrics that promote the ideas of independence and strength. As more and more artists choose to voice their opinions through music,

society will likely come closer to true equality. Every voice deserves to be heard; every opinion is valid. We are all equal and deserve to be treated as such.

Her message is clear: there's no reason for any woman to deny herself. Live as you wish, be who you are, regardless of what others may feel.



COLLAR

by Annie Jamagan

Annie Jamagan, at nineteen years old, enjoys laughing, reading, animals, and videogames, though not in that order. She hopes to graduate from U. C. Davis with a degree in molecular biology and a possible minor in Japanese. Her ultimate goal is to become a physician.

I have a ratty, old blue polyester dog collar that I can never bring myself to throw away. Though it may be in a box in my closet, I always notice it at least once a year when I am doing spring-cleaning; his name is still attached. It belonged to my best friend for as long as I knew him, up until the moment he died. He actually was a friend to anyone who would pet him, but he lived with me, so I fancied him as my best friend. My oldest brother felt much the same way about him and sometimes I wonder if my brother and I would have been as close if he had never been there. My eldest brother was a budding guitarist through most of my childhood. Our dog was thankfully tone deaf, so alone I endured the often off-key notes while spending my time with the both of them. One day, my brother actually became good, but I don't think he or the dog ever noticed.

The dog was older than I, and it showed. He always had some white to him, but this was more or less a distinguishing mark than actual "gray hairs." His eyes were old but clear, and though he was a dog, he kept himself clean. It was the way he held himself that I remember. He was too proud to chase after cats when I began to notice his presence, and it took an extra annoyance to get a rise out of him. He was sagacious, sometimes leading me away from a rotten plank of wood when I would have stupidly run over it. He knew that hurting ducks wasn't right, but watching them while overlooking our pond was fine. He also had the good sense in his head not to eat certain cooking whenever it was offered—something I still can't figure out how to avoid.

I was turning ten years old when he began becoming feeble. Blue jays would dive-bomb him from a nearby tree trunk, and he'd yawn instead of taking his usual initiative to shoo them off. He couldn't walk up the stairs anymore either; his legs would wobble beneath him, threatening to crack in two when he attempted the stairs. I think age humiliated him. He never whimpered, but he sagged when he

looked up the stairs towards where his room once was, and though he was always gentle, he forced us away harshly if we tried to help him up there. His eyes pleaded that he could do it, but just maybe tomorrow because he was tired today. It wasn't him, but time that was the enemy.

My family loved him though, at least my eldest brother, my father, and I. We would do what we could to ease the pain for an old man who had always been good to us. These acts were never substantial, but you could see he appreciated them. We moved his favorite pillow downstairs so that he could sleep a little easier at night – he always hated to sleep alone, but we didn't have bedrooms downstairs. I was supposed to go to bed at 9:30, but my parents looked the other way once in a while if I fell asleep next to him in the living room at night because that way he seemed happier in the morning. My brother also would sit outside, even in the cold months, a little longer, so our dog could feel comforted that he wasn't being abandoned. It snowed in Tennessee, and we were all afraid that the bite of winter might be too much for him to endure.

It was the summer after that he died. My mother and I took him to a good doctor to see what could be done. He was suffering from cancer and tumors and atrophied muscles, things that money and surgery could alleviate, but not repair. I wanted him to stay alive. I wanted him to stay. To hell with familiarity, he was my friend and my family member; I loved him.

My brother, who was a man at the time, quieted me down when I called from the doctor's office. Things like this happen, and holding on would be cruel, he said. If I was to learn to become truly human, I needed to know mercy. My love for him should make me want the pain to stop, not just abate.

An hour or two eternities later, my brother joined us, and we three gathered around him. I can't remember now who took off his collar, but I do recall his death. I have heard

Blue jays would dive-bomb him from a nearby tree trunk, and he'd yawn instead of taking his usual initiative to shoo them off.

that the moment you realize how material a thing death is, you are an adult. He was visibly in pain, but his expression was one of happiness because some of his favorite people were around him - I still hope that I can be a good enough person to put aside my suffering when I see those I love when my time comes.

Moments later, he was warm but his eyes were glossed over with death. I have observed death two times since, and there is always a nullifying feeling that spreads the moment it occurs, as if the air itself pauses to say goodbye. It overcame me, and I ran out crying; I didn't stop crying until the next morning.

Legally, a person could say that an animal is your possession; some people really think that the collar I own is the

same as Brewster. I always figured that an animal has just as much a soul as some jerk who'd say that anyway. I don't know many people who have taught me humility, or who made me understand that what makes me feel good inside may not be doing right by someone else. Keeping his collar makes me keep that and keep him.

Sometimes possessions let us have that. Even if I only see him yearly when I am throwing away a few old school papers and magazines, it helps to remember what an old dog has taught me, something I will never lose.



'CUZ MY MOMMY SAID SO

by
Rae Ann Tourville-Nelson

Rae Ann Tourville-Nelson is a full-time student, wife, and mother of three beautiful children. After earning her B. A. and M. A. in history and a teaching credential at CSU Stanislaus, Rae Ann hopes to begin challenging and inspiring students at both the high school and community college level.

You learn very early on as a parent to pick and choose your battles. Some parents may choose free expression over rigid manners. One mother may decide that television is evil and must be destroyed, while another may find that plunking her child in front of the Teletubbies may be her only chance to grab a much needed cup of coffee. Toys and their appropriateness are often at the heart of this battle. For me, the importance of toys isn't about letting Billy play with dolls or chiding Sally for playing with Tonka trucks in the mud. It goes beyond gender and into what morals and lessons we want our children to learn. In [Reading and Writing Short Arguments](#), edited by William Vesterman, there are three short essays making up a section devoted to this very topic: Toys for Tots. The essays involve three parents, like myself, with their own battles to fight and lessons to teach.

"Sex and the Single Doll," by Yona Zeldis McDonough, examines the responsibility of dolls, specifically Barbie, as role models for children. The author offers that she finds herself in a parental minority within her own Brooklyn community. What is it that separates her from her neighbors? Barbie. She first fell in love with Barbie during her childhood in the 1960s and "never stopped loving her" (McDonough 111). Despite negative comments from other mothers in her community and a variety of arguments against Barbie, McDonough stands firm in Barbie's defense. While critics see Barbie as "a bimbo and an airhead," "an insatiable consumer," or an unrealistic model for the female form, she sees her as something more. McDonough sees playing with Barbie as an opportunity for young girls to understand and act out that which they see as being "womanly."

As evidence for her theory, she cites examples from her own childhood. As a young girl she used her playtime with Barbie to help her quantify what she had learned about menstruation. This playtime also allowed her to safely act out her own childish views of sex and sexuality with Barbie and

her friends (112). McDonough suggests that the overwhelming objection to the marriage of Barbie and the girls who love them is based on a view that "Barbie is a poor role model for little girls" (112). She refutes this claim first by disagreeing that children are "stupid enough to be shaped by a doll" and again looks to her own childhood for additional ammunition. She states that although she was obsessed with and surrounded by Barbie, it was her own artist mother who truly shaped her worldview and her self-image with regards to what it meant to be a woman.

If McDonough wishes to prove that the nurture factor is the essential key to the development of children, she will find little support in author Robert Atwan. In his essay, "A Meditation on Barbie Dolls," Atwan dissects nature vs. nurture and the roles that toys and gender play in that debate. Like McDonough, Robert Atwan is a parent with a Barbie-household of sorts. In "Meditation," he uses his daughter's apparent dislike for Barbie (as evident by the total obliteration of her Barbie collection) as a doorway into the gender and toy debate. According to Atwan, there are two basic views: "boys and girls are inherently different" (nature) and "we shape their development to encourage certain masculine and feminine characteristics" (nurture) (114-115). In the event that either or both are true, he offers that his daughter may be a "complete anomaly" to these theories. His daughter has shown no particular appreciation for, or attachment to, her Barbies and rather enjoyed mutilating them. We would not expect this if girls are, in fact, "gentle, nurturing creatures." Neither would it seem she was "conditioned" to hold a special place in her heart for dolls, specifically Barbie, even though her mother ensured they were "lavished upon her" (115). He offers that neither nature nor nurture is the only factor that affects our development. He states that "we're all counterexamples in one way or another . . . all of the time" (115). He goes on to suggest that our own "uniqueness" plays as large of a role as nature or nurture in who we are and who we are to become.

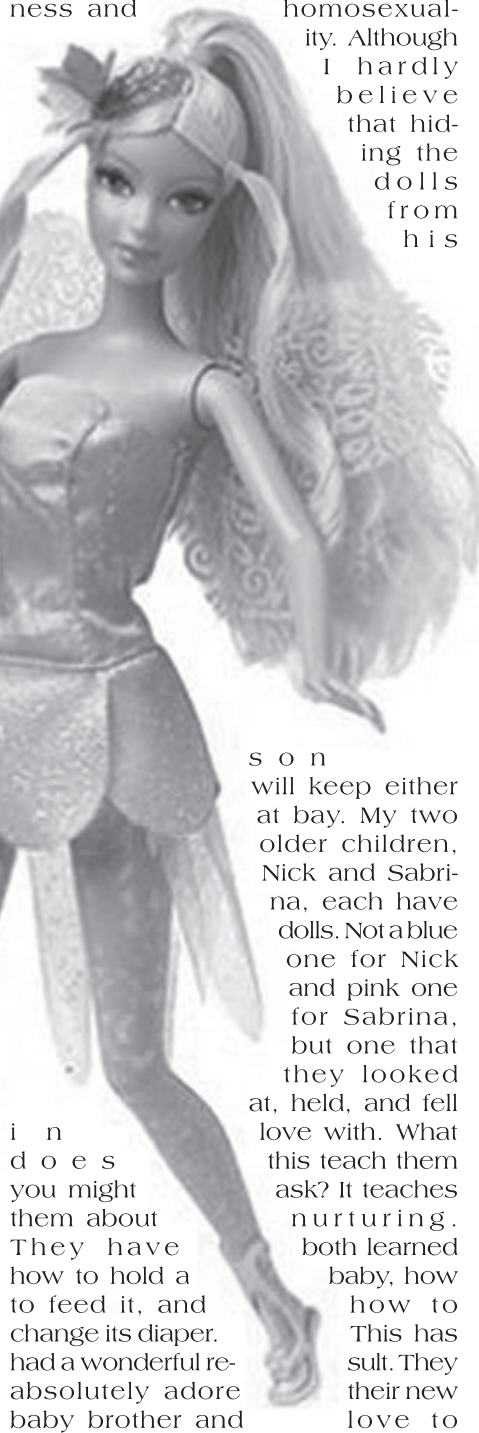
In the third and final essay on toys for children, we find an essay entitled "The 'Q' Gene," written by Sara Bird. Bird uses her own experiences as the mother of a son who, as she puts it, has an "arsenal" of violent toys. In recounting an episode in which her son opens fire on a pod of Nature Company dolphins, she introduces us to another aspect of the issue involving toys and children: violent toys and their appropriateness. Bird offers that although she was an activist against the draft in the sixties and a proponent of a "healthier" society (one without white sugar and commercialism), she found herself in an "intellectual pretzel" when it came to a struggle between her feelings about violence and the feeling of security created by violent toys for her son. Bird suggests that this paradigm shift occurred when she realized how small and defenseless children feel in the large world in which they live. She was willing to accept violent toys that would protect her son from "the bad things that [came] in [his] dreams" (117). In an attempt to make sure we understand

she does not view the world and violence through rose-colored glasses, she shares that she comes from a military family and understands what went on when they were in active service. She jokingly refers to a "Q" gene, named for the "Kyew, kyew" sound made while firing a toy gun, and that it must have been passed along genetically from her "warrior" parents to her son (118).

This weekend my son dazzled a houseful of guests with his fabulous runway display of princess fashions. To see him in a knee-length white satin dress with a crinoline slip might have made another family jump out of its skin, but not mine. I was brought up to believe that toys, sports, and expression are gender free and guaranteed to all. I had trucks and Barbies. I wore lace dresses and tattered jeans. Mine was an

equal opportunity family. By growing up that way, I learned how important it is that everyone have choices and the freedom to live out those choices. That is a key value that I hold and one that I want my children to share.

But aside from larger moral issues, freeing children to play with whatever toys they choose also teaches them important skills for adulthood. I have a friend who is married but does not yet have any children. Her husband has sworn that no son of his will play with dolls. Apparently, the battle he has chosen is a war against girlie-



ness and homosexuality. Although I hardly believe that hiding the dolls from his

This weekend my son dazzled a houseful of guests with his fabulous runway display of princess fashions.

son will keep either at bay. My two older children, Nick and Sabrina, each have dolls. Not a blue one for Nick and pink one for Sabrina, but one that they looked at, held, and fell love with. What this teaches them ask? It teaches nurturing. They have both learned how to hold a baby, how to feed it, and how to change its diaper. This has had a wonderful result. They absolutely adore their new baby brother and love to

in does you might them about They have how to hold a to feed it, and change its diaper. had a wonderful re-absolutely adore baby brother and

His daughter has shown no particular appreciation for, or attachment to, her Barbies and rather enjoyed mutilating them.

help me take care of him. But in an effort to ensure masculinity in boys, this life lesson is all too often taught only to girls. In fact, boys are often chastised for playing with dolls. The message they hear is that they are only for girls and that he is somehow less of a boy if he partakes. What this translates to in adulthood is a generation of men who are afraid to care for their own children and miss out on a plethora of childhood moments because somewhere they hear a voice whispering “babies are for girls.”

The other point brought up by our readings is the appropriateness of certain toys, namely violent ones. The final essay by Sara Bird affected me more than I expected. I have never allowed guns in my home – real or toy. I am the kind of mother she mentions in her essay, complete with bumper stickers on my “soccer-mobile” touting my beliefs. But I have to admit that when she talked about her son’s fear, I felt a twinge of sympathy for her. I too have found myself in that “intellectual pretzel” a time or two. In fact, her essay was so compelling I almost found myself doubting my own toy policy, but she left out something important. By allowing those violent toys and justifying them as “protection,” she is, in fact, reinforcing to her son that violence is an appropriate way to deal with his fears. This is a view that I do not share. My children are no different than her son. They

hear things that go bump in the night. They have monsters under the bed and in the closet. But why no arsenal in their room? Because one of the lessons that I want them to learn is that their voice is the most powerful weapon they have. When monsters keep them awake at night, my daughter calmly explains to them that it is time for bed and they cannot stay. When my son is scared that there are ghosts about, he talks to them and suddenly they aren’t so scary.

What I am hoping is that they will learn that there are many ways to face their fears without violence. And if I succeed, one day when my daughter decides to race dirt bikes and some boy who never played with dolls tells her she can’t, she will raise her voice instead of her fists and explain to him that she can do whatever she wants to do because her mommy said so.

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Dying a “GOOD DEATH”

by Mitzi Genegabuas

My father was an avid smoker ever since he was a teenager. In September of 1993, at the age of 82, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. His doctor said it was inoperable. Eight months later, my father was admitted to St. Joseph's Hospital in March, 1994. During an emotional family meeting, I said I wanted my father released from the life support because I felt that he was suffering from so much pain, not just from the cancer but from all the tubes as well. Sobbing, my aunts did not agree because they thought it was cruel. My uncles understood where I was coming from and respected my decision. My mother, torn in between, finally accepted my will. My father was released from the ICU two months later, in May. Remarkably, my father did better than we expected, so the doctor transferred him to the rehabilitation center located on the fourth floor.

When my father was moved onto the fourth floor, I spent many days after school with him. I would go straight to St. Joseph's and stay there until the evening. It became a daily routine for me. One afternoon in May, I was with my father in his room. I sat at the foot of his hospital bed, doing my homework and watching T.V. My father was lying down. It was very difficult to concentrate. I could hear him moan and groan because the pain was so bad. He and I were on the right side of the room and the T.V. was on the left. He had to lie on his right side, facing the wall because his right lung was so badly damaged from the cancer and it was painful for him to lie any other way. He couldn't even watch T.V. with me. He couldn't see anything but the white walls of the hospital room. It hurt me to realize that I couldn't share that moment with him. After that point, I knew my father would not make it to his 83rd birthday.

My father was in so much discomfort that some days he wouldn't say but a few words to me. Other days he was knocked out from all the medication taken to alleviate the pain. I absolutely hated the fact that my father had to suffer—day in and

day out—waiting for death to come.

In Oregon, Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS) has been legal for seven years. Nora M., from Oregon, whose husband Rick had been diagnosed with “inoperable lung cancer in April 1999,” wrote a letter to The Death with Dignity National Center. In the letter, entitled “My Husband Rick,” published on their website, Nora writes, “I always believed that my husband was one in a million. But in 1999, he was one in 27. That year 30,000 people died in Oregon. Of those 30,000 people, twenty-seven—less than one-tenth of one percent—chose a quiet death in the company of their families after taking a legal, lethal dose of drugs permitted by Oregon's Death with Dignity Law” (My Husband).

That summer, Rick underwent Chemotherapy. The medical treatments “left him nauseated and listless.” Finally, in October, “Rick felt he had had enough. He asked his doctor to write the prescription. The doctor agreed, saying that he considered Rick an appropriate candidate for Death with Dignity—not depressed, well supported by his family, with well-managed pain and solid financial resources. And unequivocally terminal” (My Husband). Rick chose the time of his death himself. One evening in November, he died when he was ready, in the presence of his family. Nora states in the letter, “When I knew he was gone, I felt a wash of emotions—love, loss, relief, emptiness. But I also found comfort and even satisfaction in the knowledge that I had helped my husband when he needed it most. I saw our experience as a difficult but loving last gift to each other” (My Husband). Legalizing Physician Assisted Suicide is *respecting autonomy*: “Decisions about time and circumstances (pertaining to) death are very personal. Competent persons should have the right to choose death” (Braddock and Tonelli).

Pro-life advocates attempt to convince people not to support the law by scaring them. They say that in

At twenty-four years of age, Mitzi Genegabuas is a student at San Joaquin Delta College. On December 17, 2004, she obtained her A. A. degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences after completing her general education requirements. She is currently taking a few lower division courses needed to transfer to University of the Pacific, where she will be majoring in Business Administration, with a double concentration in Accounting and Finance. She was born and raised in Stockton, California, and wishes to continue her education close to home. She has been working in Lodi as a cashier for five years. The hours are great and flexible, which has been a great advantage to her as a college student. Her interests include Oakland A's baseball, dancing, photography, and outdoor activities, such as camping and hiking.



legalizing PAS, disabled people, “the poor, undereducated, uninsured, racial minorities and other marginalized people will be encouraged to use the law” (Fact and Fiction, par. 5). In Oregon, where PAS is legal, the Death with Dignity National Center rebut by saying “no one is encouraged to use the law. The law is in place for terminally ill people whose suffering is intolerable and who wish a humane and dignified death. The law is rarely used in Oregon but it does supply real comfort to many people who see it as an option—if they need it.” In addition, “Oregon’s experience indicates that the people who chose to use the law are well educated, have had excellent health care, good insurance, access to hospice and were well supported financially, emotionally and physically” (Fact and Fiction, par. 5). Nobody wants to die. If a person is diagnosed with a fatal illness, it is frightening and devastating to say the least. Primarily, the patient would want to make the most of the time remaining to him or her. If given extended recovery, patients would take advantage of it. The law would be a last resort to those in extreme situations, in which recovery is no longer possible.

Issues recognized in supporting PAS are the pain and the suffering an ill patient must endure. Those in opposition of PAS say, “proper pain management can alleviate a patient’s desire for a hastened death” (Fact and Fiction, par. 3). The Death with Dignity National Center argue that “the truth is *even* the most ardent opponents of Oregon’s law admit that for 5% of terminally ill people *the best pain care* will not alleviate their suffering” (Fact and Fiction, par. 3). Suffering is not limited to pain. In actuality, pain is only one aspect of this complex problem. There are psychological burdens as well. Suffering yields agony, misery, and hopelessness. “For many terminally ill people, it is the loss of dignity and autonomy—the suffering beyond pain—that becomes intolerable” (Fact and Fiction, par. 3). “It is not always possible to relieve suffering,” says Braddock and Tonelli, “Thus PAS may be a compassionate response to unbearable suffering” (par. 7).

I remember that warm, summer afternoon, when my father passed away. It was June 3, 1994. He was surrounded by my mother and me, along with my aunts and uncles. His eyes were still closed and it looked like he hadn’t moved an inch in hours. I could never

forget the way he was breathing, with his breaths less than a minute apart. We heard him take one quick, audible breath, a quick inhale and exhale. There was no way to ignore it. His inhales broke the silence and the exhales resumed the silence again. The whole experience saddened me because I would await his next breath, and it seemed as though the breaks between each of them were getting longer and longer. I bent over, with my lips almost touching his right ear. I said loudly, “I love you, Daddy!” I started to cry. I backed away a little and watched him. His eyes were still closed and his mouth didn’t move, not even a twitch. All of a sudden, I saw one single tear roll out of the corner of his right eye and down towards his ear. I knew he heard me. Minutes later, he stopped breathing and he passed away.

My father, my family, and I were all very fortunate to be there with him in his last moments. Others are not so fortunate. Often, one may pass alone with no loved one nearby. Alzheimer’s patients slowly lose recognition of their family and eventually die a death that is emotionally painful to those who survive them—leaving their families feeling empty.

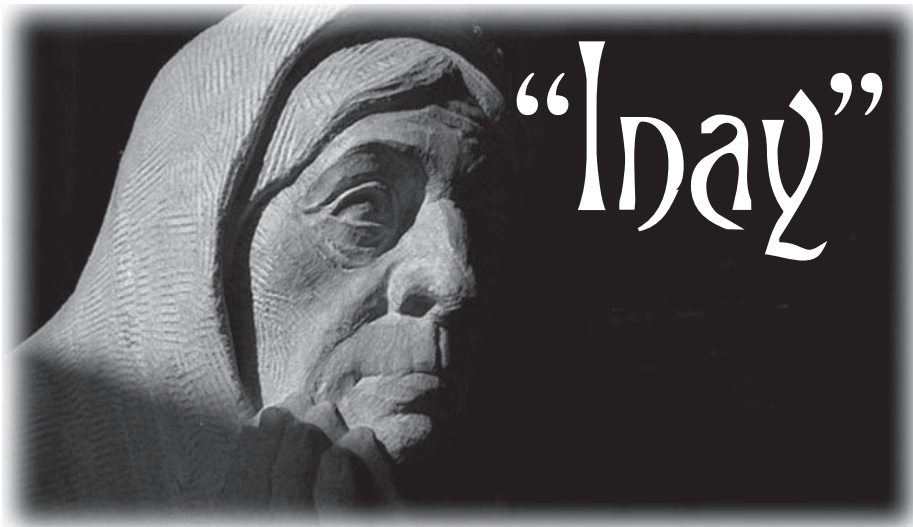
The most important thing is to give the patient the choice. In legalizing Physician Assisted Suicide, patients will not be forced to use the law. However, the option would be open for those who choose to. Nora from Oregon says, “Once you accept the fact of death, you can move on to address the quality of that death. It can be hard or easy, good or bad. For some, it makes all the difference to have the choice” (My Husband). It is important for PAS to be legalized so others may also have that choice.

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**Her face was wrinkled and old,
but her warm eyes were the
windows to her youth – pools
of dark brown chocolate.**

by Rachele Valenzuela

She is nothing but a memory now – a thing of the past. Sometimes my mind coerces me to believe she never existed, but pictures I see of her contradict that thought and those pictures trigger memories I had never thought I'd remember. I can recall the smell of her clothing – baby powder, roses, and an old perfume that I was always able to distinguish. Her face was wrinkled and old, but her warm eyes were the windows to her youth – pools of dark brown chocolate. Gray hair shadowed the black, frizzy curls atop her head. She was small, no taller than five feet, but she always stood with her head high, displaying her confidence. Her passion was among the roses and various plants in her prized garden. During the first ten years of my life, she taught me what she knew of raindrops and roses, hatred and love, God and faith, and whatever else she stored in her bookcases of knowledge. She was my teacher, my best friend, and the guiding light of my childhood, but most of all, she was my grandmother.

As a child, I would hear my mother call my grandmother "Inay" which means "mother" in Tagalog. This expression was stamped into my memory, and I grew referring to her as Inay. It wasn't as obvious to me as it is now, but Inay was my second mother, so the label suited her well.

Opening the door as I came home from school everyday, I could hear the murmurs of the television and know immediately "Days Of Our Lives" – my grandmother's favorite soap opera – was on. The ruffled noise of friction could be heard as I tossed my

maroon Jansport backpack against the closest wall and plopped myself next to Inay. We would then begin our daily afternoon routine – playing a couple games of solitaire, watching a couple more of her favorite soap operas, watering the rainbow of roses in the backyard, preparing a traditional Filipino dinner for the family, and reciting the Filipino alphabet and a prayer before bed. Those were the days.

As I look back at those days, it occurs to me how much those little moments and memories impact my life now. Decisions are becoming more critical, good friends are becoming scarce, time is beginning to fall short, and life in general is becoming more challenging – but thanks to the upbringing of my grandmother, I'm prepared. I'm prepared to watch my brother grow from an immature brat into a talented, intelligent, rational young man. I'm prepared to teach my sister how to drive and how to choose which boy to go out with. I'm prepared to handle the tasks my parents assign me – whether it is to run to S-Mart Foods to buy milk or to hold the fort while they enjoy a hiatus in Vegas. I'm prepared to graduate from Bear Creek High School and be accepted to the University of the Pacific. I'm prepared to be a pharmacist. I'm prepared to treat life like a roller coaster and hang on for the ride – and I'm prepared for anything life has to throw at me, even if it hurls tomatoes. My grandmother was, and still is, the greatest influence on my personality, mentality, and morality – without the memories of her tired, chocolate eyes and baby powder aroma, where would I be?

Rachele Valenzuela is a sixteen-year-old Filipino-American student, turning seventeen in April. She is a junior at Bear Creek High School and a part time student at Delta College. She is employed at Round Table Pizza and at Students in Prevention – a drug prevention service of the county. Rachele is actively involved in the community and her church. She enjoys singing, ballroom dancing, and volleyball. She has an infatuation with the Spanish language (She's in her third year of Spanish) and loves horses and blowing bubbles. She has a younger brother of thirteen, a younger sister of eleven, and a supportive mother and father. When she graduates next year, she plans to attend the University of the Pacific where she hopes to major in pharmacy and minor in chemistry.

“Little Sister Born in This Land”

by Debbie Diaz



Debbie Diaz is a reentry student in her last semester at Delta before transferring to the University of the Pacific as a business major. Married for almost twenty-five years, she is mother to two daughters and grandmother to two little girls and two little boys. Her favorite times away from school are spent with family, in her garden, or bird watching.

Childhood is a uniquely rich time, full of exploration and discovery, imagination and creativity. And it is made richer by sharing because that sharing creates a bond, a common thread. In Elías Miguel Muñoz's poem "Little Sister Born In This Land," the speaker appears to be a much older brother who laments the lack of this common thread with his little sister. For you see, siblings who grow up in the same locale and under basically the same conditions will share many experiences even if they are years apart in age. But when siblings grow up in drastically different conditions and places, very little of their childhood will be common to both and the bond, the thread, just isn't as strong or may not even exist. This is the source of the older brother's sorrow in this poem, because his sister was born and raised in a different country and speaking a different language than what he has grown up with. His sister has also grown up with many things to fill her days while he had little but his imagination and curiosity to fill his days.

But his days are not days to be regretted or feel cheated by. To the contrary, they were exciting days when he would venture out on foot, thrilling at the sights and the sensory experiences, like "that warm and always open earth" (67-68). He enjoyed discovery, like "the mystery in the ravines" (29-30) and finding nesting hens and perhaps new life if the hens had chicks. And he is saddened that his sister may never know those same feelings of excitement as shown in his question "Is there anywhere in your childhood a similar feeling?" (22-23). He gives us the impression that her life has become a bit stagnant from being indoors in front of the TV, watching cartoons, instead of being outdoors discovering life for herself. He shares that he feels this will make her, and every other child like her, "a little clown, plastic and ridiculous" (48-49). For plastic does not think, it does not feel, it has no mind of its own. Instead, it is molded into whatever form it is poured into. She will be-

come whatever she allows herself to be poured into, even if it is a clown to be laughed at, someone following the crowd instead of leading the way. He remembers days spent pretending to be a "brave corsair" (32) fighting off "evil pirates" (31) and of being a hero, if only to himself. It hurts him to think that she has "only the joy of Disney heroes" (41-42) that come from someone else's imagination and not her own. How can she ever become self-confident if she never faces and vanquishes a foe, even if only in her own mind? How can she break out of the generic mold and become all that she, as an individual, could be except by reaching deep within to find that particular spark that makes her unique.

The brother is dismayed that things fill her life, keeping her from herself, and that twist of tradition that has allowed this to happen. He feels her childhood has "suffered the mockery of expensive toys that the deceptive ghost of December brings to you" (58-62). The toys are a mockery because they are costly yet of little benefit to the child. Some may improve hand/eye coordination or thinking skills but do little for the rest of the child, leaving the child soft and weak instead of toned and fit, and some do no good at all. Calling Santa the deceptive ghost of December, the brother seems to indicate that he feels the true meaning of Christmas and the faith it represents has been lost. That instead of focusing on the greatest gift ever given to man, people now focus on self and the desire for things, which are soon tired of and tossed away when it is discovered that they are deceiving and don't bring real happiness after all.

His childhood days and toys were simpler and his wants were much fewer. He obviously had a few purchased toys as shown by his description of "toys made of tin" (28), but he also made some of his own, "taking lessons for carving men out of stone" (33-35). And I'm sure that at some point, a stick became a sword and a towel or piece of cloth became a cape as he battled the evil pirates.



These were joyful times for him and he wishes that it could be the same for his sister, but he is powerless, he “cannot invent another childhood for you, cannot offer you mine” (52-54). So she will continue to grow, just as she has, in tune with a world so very different from his. Three times in the poem he states that she is slipping away, “slowly and lovingly,” indicating that despite a loving relationship, they are growing farther and farther apart. She moves forward in a world of things and technology, space flights and expensive toys: the world of her childhood. He, on the other hand, is standing still in the world of his childhood. This standing still causes frustration as he longs “to hold you and explain a thousand things” (4-5). Perhaps he has not embraced technology and the ever-changing world, has not tapped into the wealth of the Internet. Perhaps he clings to the simple. Or maybe it is a language difference, hinted at here with “Each time you intrigue me with your riddles, with your words, that will always be foreign to our experience” (12-16). She has grown up speaking a different language than he so there may be a wall of words in the way, words that don’t translate well back and forth. Maybe they can’t speak their hearts.

Regardless of where the blame, the heart of the problem lies, with him or her, both or neither, he says “it isn’t a reproach sister, little sister born in this land.” Maybe this is solely to reassure her that he does not disapprove of her, that he does not blame her for the ever increasing chasm between them, but rather that this land is at fault. Maybe it is also an expression of resignation to the idea that they were born worlds apart and that their paths were not meant to cross as he desires and that life was forever meant to be without the common threads of a shared childhood.

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For plastic does not think, it does not feel, it has no mind of its own. Instead, it is molded into whatever form it is poured into. She will become whatever she allows herself to be poured into, even if it is a clown to be laughed at, someone following the crowd instead of leading the way.

Loneliness

by Sophana Uy

Sophana Uy is an international student from Cambodia. He wrote the following essay in his second semester at Delta College. The essay was carefully written based on his own personal experience—living alone in the United States. Now, he is majoring in international business and will transfer to Sacramento State University to pursue a B. A. degree. His biggest goal is to create as many jobs as he can in Cambodia.

While I was growing up and living with my extended family in my homeland, Cambodia, I knew nothing about being lonesome. As a teenager, I had many companions to hang around with and I never felt forlorn at all. My life was happiness as usual. Sadness took place following the happiness, yet fortunately I had family and friends to share this with and to help all the time. Happiness never lasted long enough. Then, an unexpected thing occurred in my delightful life. A couple of years ago, after I graduated from high school, my parents decided to send me to study abroad. It was the moment that I first found my life of loneliness.

One can tell the feeling of being away from homeland, family and friends if he or she is used to that experience. It is like a soldier who has been commanded to complete a commission away from his country. Staying alone in this country, America, which has completely different customs from my own, I find myself in culture shock and consumed by loneliness. I am not used to it, and it does not identify me. It is such a huge change, a change never experienced in my life, that I nearly cannot accept it. Since American lifestyle tends towards individualism, it is difficult for me to communicate with the people who live in the neighborhood and even the students who study in the same class with me. The environment of the residential areas is hushed; I rarely see the people in my neighborhood talking to one another. It seems to me that Americans like securing themselves by staying in the house, while Cambodian people are friendly and accommodating; everybody in the community and village knows each other. For two semesters, I have studied in a community college in the United States; I have found that the class is so aloof that most of the students do not even know each other in the course group. Conversely, the students in my country agreeably work together; they cooperate as groups in which they are able to assist

one another in their related majors.

For over six months living in this modern industrial country, I have not known anybody in my neighborhood or at school except a cashier at an Asian food store whom I consider probably shares the same heritage as me. It is certainly true that ones who are from the same country are able to recognize each other. One day on the weekend, while I was in line and ready to pay for foods in a grocery store, the cashier asked me in my native language, "Are you Cambodian?" I amazingly answered to her, "Yes, I have just come from Khmer," another name for Cambodia. "Good! You are lucky boy," she added. It is actually a fantastic chance for me to have a better education in this powerful country, yet the problem is I find myself quite lonely because of being away from homeland, family and friends. I occasionally try to make friends with the Native American students and international students from other countries as well, but it is awkward for me to communicate with them due to the fact that I do not speak English much. Language causes me various difficulties either in schoolwork or daily living in America. Because of the awful sorrow, I sometimes burble to myself: "America is killing me with the loneliness."

The time of happiness is quick, while the moment of grief is long. Actually, time is slow for those who wait. Six months, to me, feels like six years. I have been in America waiting for a special occasion to come. In fact, I am impatiently waiting for the day that I graduate from the school in the United States and return to assist my country and enjoy my life with family and friends again. I am waiting for the day as if nature were waiting for the rain to come and shift the season. It is the way life naturally goes; we have all kinds of experiences that basically play the important role as the teacher to enrich our life with understanding. With hope and faith, I am here to do



the right things for the sake of my family and homeland.

We human beings generally have bad moments in our lifetimes. No one can avoid them for the rest of his or her life. Some people live in the loneliness because they lack love. Some learn it when they isolate from family or friends. It is a terrible emotional sickness which has no certain scientific cure. It is, in my opinion, a nightmare which lasts so long, and grants me an awful outlook towards my own world. It is finally a dreadful illness which causes fear, anxiety and boredom that shortens my life.

Since American lifestyle tends towards individualism, it is difficult for me to communicate with the people who live in the neighborhood and even the students who study in the same class with me.



Macho Man-

An In-depth Analysis of the Prejudices of Disability.

by Bryan Tortolani



Bryan Tortolani is a happily married 36-year-old cancer survivor. Bryan's unique life experiences have taught him that education leads to empowerment. Despite entering Delta College with little more than an eighth-grade education, a GED, and a powerful motivation to succeed, Bryan will graduate in the spring and transfer to Stanislaus State in the fall. Bryan ultimately plans to earn a doctorate in history. His career goals include teaching history at the college level and freelance writing.

Because I am large and healthy-looking, people think that I am weak, lazy or outright faking my disabilities. In reality, I am a strong, highly motivated man with many health conditions that are not always readily apparent to those around me. People do not see the scars of the nearly twenty surgeries on my body, or the degenerative bone decay that is slowly eating away at my knees, hips, and shoulders, or the hepatitis that is turning my liver into a ball of scar tissue while spewing toxins throughout my system.

Most people have a preconceived notion of how a disabled person should look, and anyone who does not fit into that category often faces a wide range of prejudices throughout the day. For example, people are often outraged when they see me parking in a handicapped parking spot or speeding past them in a four-wheeled electric cart because my appearance does not coincide with their perception of a disability. Similarly, when I use my Medicare at the doctor's office, cash my Social Security check at the bank, ride on the elevator, or simply pull my noisy backpack on wheels across campus, I am often perceived as a fat, lazy freeloader taking advantage of the services reserved for the "truly" disabled. This is because many people associate disabled people with outwardly noticeable disfigurements, with easily observable debilitating diseases, or with the elderly. Anyone who does not fit into their image of "disabled" is often perceived as perfectly healthy.

I have been living with such stereotypes since shortly after my nineteenth birthday, at which time I was diagnosed with late stage Hodgkin's Disease. From the beginning, I did not fit the stereotype of a disabled person and therefore was often misjudged. Even after I lost my hair from chemotherapy treatments and a bone marrow transplant, I was still not perceived as "disabled" by many strangers who associated my baldness with

the skinhead neo-Nazi gangs that were popular in the Seattle area during that time. I was often verbally assaulted with a barrage of accusations ranging from a deranged narrow-minded sociopath to a cowardly, parasitic racist bully. Although I can sympathize with the anger many people hold toward racist bigots, I strongly resent being associated with such evil merely on the basis of my appearance. More recently, I have experienced less dramatic prejudices; however, the end result is equally degrading and hurtful.

On a typical day I experience a dozen or more incidences of prejudice. For example, just last week I faced a crowd of extremely disturbed students after parking my car in the handicapped parking spot at the community college I attend. Every day is the same in that many students race around and around the parking lot in the hopes of finding the perfect spot. Last week as I defensively maneuvered my automobile, I noticed two anxious drivers who at the same time spotted a man backing out of his parking place. I sat back and watched this old Western-style showdown unfold. There was a brief pause as they made eye contact while revving up their engines. I could almost feel the intensity and determination from each driver's eyes as they locked for a moment in a penetrating stare. Their eyes darted back and forth between the newly available parking place and one another before the man in the large red truck made his move. The smaller sporty silver Honda quickly followed suit, and in a flash the two crazed drivers accelerated their two-ton automobiles in a mad dash for the spot. Once there, however, they soon realized that the space was reserved for the handicapped.

As the two drivers grieved for a moment at their misfortune, I effortlessly guided my car into "their" parking place. I went about the task of retrieving my handicapped placard from the glove box and hanging it from

my rearview mirror, oblivious to the resentment that was building within my fellow students. It was not until I exited the car that I realized that the two drivers had not moved. As they sat in their automobiles, blocking traffic and wearing angry expressions on their young faces, a small crowd of students gathered on the sidewalk. I noticed some wore equally contemptuous expressions. I did my best to ignore them as I made my way toward my first class. Ignoring them became increasingly difficult as I drew closer. At first, the comments, although for my benefit, did not directly confront me.

"Can you believe the nerve of that guy, using handicapped parking when he's obviously not disabled?" shouted an indignant student from the crowd of student bystanders.

Then, the man from the red truck yelled, "Who do you think you're fooling -- you ain't disabled. What kind of man takes his grandma's parking placard, anyway, just so he don't have to walk a few feet?"

The other students grew angry, watching what they perceived to be a perfectly healthy student take the best parking spot in the school.

Looking at the situation from their perspective, I could somewhat understand their confusion. I am six feet two inches tall, weigh over two hundred twenty-five pounds, look fairly young and healthy. Yet I was using a handicapped-parking placard. I did not even have my cane with me because the rubber stoppers had been worn down. It was not because the cane did not work properly. Rather, I preferred the physical pain resonating from my knees to the psychological pain that accompanied the unwanted attention I received. This was because once the rubber stoppers wore down, the four metal prongs were exposed, making a loud "Ching, ching, ching" with every step. The sound would echo all across the campus as I hobbled through the crowded quad. It was then that I was subject to spiteful remarks and resentful looks from many of my fellow students.

This may seem like a trivial matter. But appearing different is difficult, especially when it is not consistent. My particular health condition fluctuates regularly; some days I look and feel a lot better than others. People are more comfortable with the familiar. It

is easier to classify someone who is always a certain way because most people do not trust change and unpredictability. For example, if I were always seen riding in a wheelchair, people would eventually accept or reject me. Either way people would feel more comfortable with whatever label they had given me. But when dealing with inconsistencies, people's prejudices come into question.

An individual may classify people according to certain beliefs: "Men are strong, disabled people are always incapacitated, fat people are lazy, and skinny people are weak and nervous." When those perceptions are proven inaccurate, the individual tends to become uncomfortable. When facing the unfamiliar and uncomfortable, people often turn to further prejudicial classifications in order to maintain their familiar, safe, and structured worldview.

It takes great courage, intelligence, open-mindedness, and integrity to resist the temptations of prejudice, big and small. Although society has advanced in the fight against prejudice, it still has a very long way to go. Some prejudices are socially unacceptable, and others are not. Many people, while exhibiting guarded behavior in some circumstances, will openly participate in prejudicial behaviors toward those individuals who fall under the radar of political correctness. It is important for society to recognize this situation. Empathy for all groups of individuals who are different or unfamiliar should be the moral compass we follow.



Then, the man from the red truck yelled, "Who do you think you're fooling -- you ain't disabled. What kind of man takes his grandma's parking placard, anyway, just so he don't have to walk a few feet?"



Bryan Tortolani is a happily married 36-year-old cancer survivor. Bryan's unique life experiences have taught him that education leads to empowerment. Despite entering Delta College with little more than an eighth-grade education, a GED, and a powerful motivation to succeed, Bryan will graduate in the spring and transfer to Stanislaus State in the fall. Bryan ultimately plans to earn a doctorate in history. His career goals include teaching history at the college level and freelance writing.

My Most Prized Possession:

AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF MATERIALISM

by Bryan Tortolani

Possessions may come and go, but often the emotional attachment associated with them remains eternal. I have a disturbingly long history of losing my possessions. Given my history, I rarely allow myself to form an emotional attachment to my possessions. Nevertheless, there have been a few possessions that have provoked within me a deep psychological connection that continues to stir my emotions even today, even though I no longer possess them. A passport, photo album, and a stuffed animal were among my most treasured lost possessions. These lost possessions fill me with a feeling of profound grief and anxiety, which is accompanied by a warm nostalgic feeling of times long past. Three years ago I was psychologically reunited with one of my most prized possessions.

On my thirty-fourth birthday a huge package was delivered to my door. I was surprised to discover that it was sent by my mother. I could not begin to guess what the package might contain because my mother's standard gifts were always the same. My mother always sent me a check accompanied by a very impersonal card, which she rarely bothered to sign. I suppose she felt the signature on the check was enough, so she regularly adhered to her efficient nature by leaving the card unsigned, avoiding redundancy. My mother's aloofness has often bothered me, so it was not unusual for me to be excited at the sight of something that was potentially more personal and meaningful than her usual gifts.

Exhilarated, I quickly tore open the package as if I were a ten-year-old boy on Christmas morning. With stray pieces of cardboard littering the floor and lime-green Styrofoam scattered in every direction, I held up my new treasure, an exact replica of the stuffed animal I had lost years earlier. The original monkey had been given to me by my mother while I was undergoing

a bone-marrow transplant. My mother and I had been estranged prior to my illness; we had always had a detached and remote relationship. The monkey symbolized a level of closeness that had been foreign to our relationship.

I could not control my tears as I inspected the dark-brown and incredibly soft stuffed monkey. His glass eyes had a humanlike characteristic of warmth and affection. His cute, happy expression, round soft stomach, and clumsy body were evocative of my unique characteristics as a child. As I squeezed him affectionately, out of the corner of my eye I noticed something else buried under the remaining packing material. I reached down and pulled out a second, much smaller monkey. With closer examination I discovered that it was a baby monkey with clenched forefingers and extended thumbs that fit in the monkey's open mouth. I took the little arm and placed the extended thumb in the cute little monkey's mouth. Spent with emotion, I drifted off into a daydream.

Suddenly, I was transported back to the lonely, cold hospital room where I had received the bone-marrow transplant. Most of my friends were unable to deal with watching me shrivel up and possibly die. Fortunately, I had a dedicated girlfriend and my mother as regular visitors. In fact, my girlfriend was allowed to sleep over as long as she underwent a rigorous disinfecting process. She also had to sport an entire surgical outfit with sanitary slippers, hat, and facemask. My father, on the other hand, was unable to accept my condition and chose instead to retreat into the safety of denial. Unfortunately for me, and the two women in my life, this meant that I had only two regular visitors. They both tried to make up for the others' weaknesses by dedicating an enormous amount of their time to visiting with me.

I will never forget the moment my

mother brought me the stuffed monkey. I remember the smell of the disinfectant and the way the sun's rays swept past my window reflecting off the stainless steel bedrails as a dark reminder of the world outside moving along without me. The television was off and I was concentrating on the sound of the birds singing outside my window over the continuous beeping and pumping of the many machines needed to keep me alive. The contrast between machinery and nature was so great that I longed for some semblance of the natural world. My girlfriend's mother had sent me many crystals, which I surrounded myself with, and my aunt had sent me a tropical fish mobile from Hawaii. I valued these treasures greatly and lacked the words to fully express their significance and meaning. Each gift represented thoughtful devotion, love and the natural world, which was everything that my inert machine bound existence denied me. Yet I had nothing of equal meaning from my immediate family.

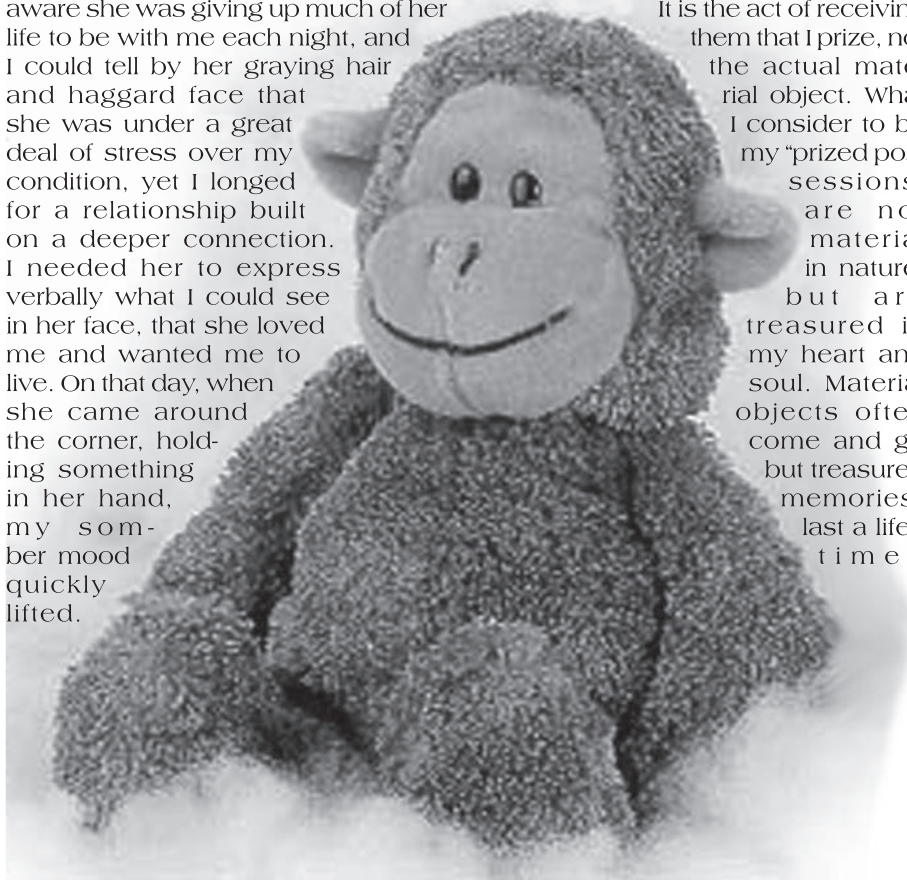
While lying in my hospital bed, I could hear the steady pattern of my mother's footsteps approaching my door. I felt relief to have a break in the monotony, but was not particularly excited because an emotional barrier remained between my mother and me. I was aware she was giving up much of her life to be with me each night, and I could tell by her graying hair and haggard face that she was under a great deal of stress over my condition, yet I longed for a relationship built on a deeper connection. I needed her to express verbally what I could see in her face, that she loved me and wanted me to live. On that day, when she came around the corner, holding something in her hand, my somber mood quickly lifted.

She was smiling as usual, but this time it didn't appear strained or artificial. I watched her go through the routine of disinfecting herself. Even after she washed up and tied on her surgical mask, I could still feel her smiling. She then walked over to her usual seat by the window and handed me the monkey. No words were needed. I realized that given her distant nature she was unable to express her feelings to me verbally and gifting the monkey to me was her way of showing me affection. The monkey represented the words she was unable to express. When she had brought me the tropical fish mobile from my aunt and I had told her how much it meant to me, her face turned white and she stammered for a few minutes before making a quick retreat. I felt that she wanted to tell me the things I need to hear, but she was unable to do so.

The feeling of my wife's arms tenderly wrapping around my waist snapped me out of my daydream. As I stood holding my two new possessions, I thought of the big monkey as representing my mother and the infant representing me. Although I no longer need the stuffed animals, the fact that my mother remembered after over ten years is what touched me so deeply. I keep the animals in plastic on top of a bookcase and rarely think of them.

It is the act of receiving them that I prize, not the actual material object. What I consider to be my "prized possessions" are not material in nature, but are treasured in my heart and soul. Material objects often come and go but treasured memories last a lifetime.

My mother and I had been estranged prior to my illness; we had always had a detached and remote relationship. The monkey symbolized a level of closeness that had been foreign to our relationship.



The Opportunities to Learn

by Hannah Abramson

Hannah Abramson was born in Los Angeles, raised in Israel, and now lives in Stockton. She was home-schooled until the age of fourteen, when she began attending Delta College, taking any and all classes that sparked her interest. Now that she is seventeen and has taken every creative writing class Delta has to offer, she is finally working towards her A. A. degree. Though Hannah has yet to decide what she wants to do with the rest of her life, she knows that she wants to leave Delta and get out of Stockton. In the meantime, however, she is majoring in English and working as a tutor in the Shima Writing Lab.

Perhaps the reason today's students know so little is that people want to teach them too much; forcing information down students' throats isn't going to make them learn.

From the fourth grade up until I started attending Delta, I was home schooled. My mother was my teacher, and I believe she did an excellent job with her role, though some people with more conventional ideas of education might disagree. She let my siblings and me study whatever we wanted, and she rarely pulled out a textbook. She taught us the basics of English, math, and history, but always let us focus on what interested us the most. My older sister was interested in animals, so she studied their habits and lifestyles and did projects on their different habitats; my brother loved video games, so he studied computers and science; I had a passion for making up stories, so my mother let me focus on writing and reading everything I could get my hands on.

After spending time with people my own age, people who went to "real" school, I have come to believe that my mother's method of teaching is the reason I know things like what a negligee is and what happened at Hiroshima and Auschwitz. Other seventeen-year-olds went to high school, where they had history and English and geography forced upon them every day, and now they don't know these things. On campus, I work as an English tutor in the Shima Writing Lab, and sometimes I am amazed and horrified by what people—people whose first language is English, people who did go to high school—don't know. It is appalling to think that some students don't know where Russia is or how to spell the word "collapse." But, while I am shocked that they don't know, I still must ask myself, should they know?

It is important for people to leave high school and go into the real world knowing certain things. English and math, for example, are subjects that will benefit students nearly every day of their lives. When will they ever need to know that Jordan is a country beside Israel, though, and not a city within it? Perhaps the only

reason I know this is because I lived in Israel, and I am proud to know it, but I cannot think of a single instance when I needed to know it. On one hand, I do think that it is a sad time when high school graduates don't know the cities of Iraq or where California and Ohio are, but on the other hand I think that students should be taught what they are interested in.

Apparently, many people believe that students should be force-fed this kind of information, and I don't believe that this is the right way to teach. I know who Robert Frost is, but if I'd had to learn his work in a high school literature class, I would probably try my hardest to block him out of my memory. Perhaps the reason today's students know so little is that people want to teach them too much; forcing information down students' throats isn't going to make them learn. I can read, write, and get to the top of my class because English is something I was interested in, and I was given the chance to study it at my own pace, never having anything forced upon me. My brother, who never cared for writing but would rather play video games, was allowed to study computer sciences, and now he excels in science and computer animation, and because of all the strategy guides and technical manuals he's read, he can read and write as well.

Students might know less than they used to, and, in some cases, less than they should. However, if students are taught the basics, they can then focus on the subjects they feel passionate about. Given the opportunity to study what they find interesting, students will want to know and learn more. Give students a chance: don't force-feed them, and they will excel.

But, while I am shocked that they don't know, I still must ask myself, should they know?

The Story of the Mug

by Gary Dean Wood

It was just before Veterans' Day, 2004, when I got a call from my mother. She had found some of my things that I had left at her house, and she asked

The story of the mug starts in 1965; a young man had just gotten his draft notice in the mail. It was a low number, meaning that he would have

to report for duty in the Army soon. The young man spoke to his father about his fears of going to Vietnam and dying there. His father told him about doing his duty for his country and for his family's honor. The son started having dreams of his death in Vietnam; his return in these dreams was in a coffin. His father listened to his son's concerns and his son's dreams of impending death. His father told him every soldier who went into combat had the same feelings and not to worry; it would be all right. "Just go out and do your duty and come home when you are through." The son got his notice in the mail to report for duty from the Army. After boot camp, the son got orders to go to Vietnam; just like in his



me to come and get them. I had been a long-haul truck driver, and there was no telling what she had found since I had bought many things during those fifteen years. My driving ended when my back was about gone, and I was told I would be lucky if I were to walk in five years. So, I went back to school to become a counselor. I was facing a term paper in history on the Sixties, 1960s that is, and did not have a clue as to what I was going to write about. That is when "The Mug" reentered my life. As a truck driver, I had looked out for that something special that caught my eye, and I could not live without. I met the dealer who sold me the mug in Quartzsite, Arizona, for just five dollars. This is how I ended up with the mug and the story behind it.

dream, his fears had come true. The son came home from boot camp on leave. Again, he told his father that he was still having dreams of his impending death in Vietnam. His father again said not to worry, he would do fine.

As a jest, the father went to a store and bought two large beer mugs. These beer mugs are quite common. You can still buy them to this day. The father wanted the mugs to be special, so he had the words "Draft beer, not me" put on the two mugs. The father showed them to his son and told him upon his return that he and his father would have their drafts in their mugs. The son reported to Vietnam and performed well. He was promoted to squad leader. The son earned the Purple Heart. In do-

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The young man spoke to his father about his fears of going to Vietnam and dying there. His father told him about doing his duty for his country and for his family's honor.

The mugs sat in the place of honor for over thirty years until the day that the father was moving one of them. He dropped it, and it shattered on the floor.

ing so, though, the son had paid the highest price; the fears of his death had come true. He was killed in Vietnam, saving the lives of the members in his squad during an ambush.

The father got the news of his son's death and put the two mugs in a place of honor in his son's memory. The two mugs were never filled with the draft beer that the father had promised his son. The father could not do it since his son would not be with him to drink from the other mug. The mugs sat in the place of honor for over thirty years until the day that the father was moving one of them. He dropped it, and it shattered on the floor.

Earlier I mentioned that I bought the mug from a dealer, but what I did not say was that the father had just sold it to the dealer, and he was still there at the stand. That's how I came by the story behind the mug. As the father and I talked about his son, tears came to the father's eyes. I asked the father if I could do one thing: I had friends who went to Vietnam and I never heard from them again. I was too young to go by six months. My question to the father was could I have one draft beer in the mug, one beer to honor those who never came home, and those like his son who gave their all for our country. The father told me I could do whatever I wanted with the mug; it was mine now. I told him I couldn't do it without his consent. The man told me he would be proud if I would honor his son and the others who never came home. One strange thing I thought, though, at the time was that the man would not tell me his name. He asked that I make my toast to all of America's fallen soldiers in Vietnam.

I walked into the bar that I used to go to and had the bartender fill up the mug. I raised it into the air and said, "For you who gave it your all. Your honor and your lives are not forgotten." I drank the beer, had the mug

washed, took it home, and found it a place of honor in my house.

I was in Quartzsite a week later, and I went looking for the father. I met his wife instead, told her who I was, and said I wanted to speak to her husband to let him know that I had paid my tribute to the fallen soldiers in Vietnam. The man's wife told me that her husband had told her about our meeting and our talk about their son and the mug. She said she had not seen him as happy as he was for a number of years since the death of their son. The night that I bought the mug, the father went to bed and never woke up; he passed away in his sleep. I like to think that the father and son are having that draft beer together some place.

I think that the father and his son would want people to know their story. The mug is in good shape for being forty years old, no cracks or chips in the glass, but the lettering has faded and shows some age. It now sits in my history professor's office, the office of Professor Joseph Bisson at San Joaquin Delta College. His office is on the fourth floor of Holt. If you go there, you can see the mug, waiting for the day someone asks about it so the Story of the Mug can be told again.



Take Off the Distorted Lenses:

A Discovery of Stereotyping the Wealthy Businessmen in China

by Bixian Liao

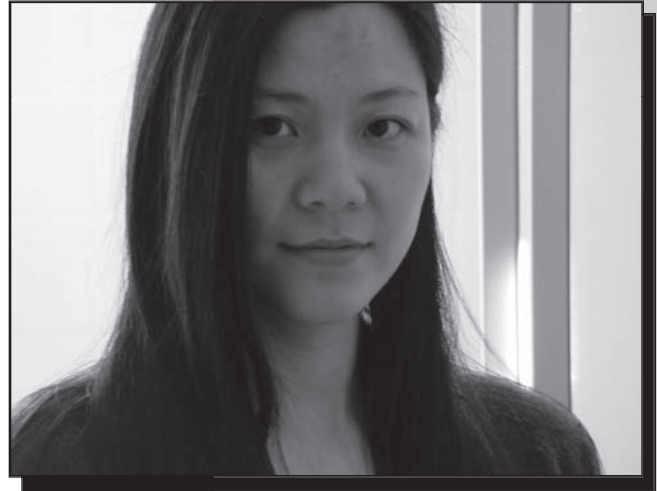
For a long time, I intentionally distanced myself from the wealthy businessmen in China. In the early 1980s, private business ownership became permitted. The population of wealthy businessmen grew dramatically. They showed off their newfound wealth by wildly driving their expensive BMWs on the street and constructing palatial houses in good neighborhoods. Most of these newly emerged wealthy business owners were married, but in public, they behaved as if they were not married. Whenever I saw a BMW dashing down the street, I would imagine the driver was a wealthy businessman. Like his colleagues, the driver feverishly lived a licentious life. He would flirt with young girls in restaurants and nightclubs, deceive his wife with no scruples, and even discard his family for good. Once he was free from the so-called distasteful marriage and expensive obligations of childrearing, he would indulge himself in a luxurious life with younger, prettier women and leave his poor aging wife and children in misery. With this imaginary wealthy businessman fixed in my mind, I concluded, "Wealthy businessmen are immoral and deceitful. Keep away from them." I thought holding this prejudice could protect me from despair, so I never felt the need to discover where it came from and whether or not it was justified, until I read Dr. Ruggiero's book.

Not until reading Vincent R. Ruggiero's Beyond Feelings: A Guide to Critical Thinking did I recognize that this image of wealthy businessmen in China had been carved into my mind for years. Like glasses with "serious distorted lenses" (94) obstructing me from seeing the world accurately, the stereotype hindered me from thinking critically and thus attaining the utmost self-improvement that "can affect every area of [my] life so positively" (151).

Dr. Ruggiero correctly points out that family members, especially parents, more or less influence our present views (5). Another psychologist, Gordon W. Allport, concludes, "In every society on earth the child is regarded as a member of his par-

ents group . . . The child is ordinarily expected to acquire his parents' loyalties and prejudices" (35). My mother dislikes dishonest men because she firmly believes that they are creatures submitted to evil desires. She says they will never be caring husbands or responsible fathers. As soon as I was considered mature enough to know about dating, my mother explained her expectations of my future husband. First, he should not be too wealthy because possessing too much money would provide him power and access to other women. Second, he should make his family top priority and be faithful to his wife. By using her own experience with my irresponsible father as an example, my mother cautioned me to stay away from men who even slightly exhibited characteristics of irresponsibility or dishonesty; otherwise, I would get hurt and live a miserable life. From then on, I stayed aware and carefully examined the men I met, trying to avoid getting involved with a negligent and or corrupt man.

Nevertheless, reality is not always predictable. I once fell in love with a small business owner in China. When our relationship began, he was working full-time as a statistician in the same company with me while working part-time on his small business. Six months later, he quit his full-time job and concentrated his energy solely on his business. His company grew dramatically while our love went in the opposite direction. He was able to employ seven people and purchase a car and a minivan, which many wage-earning people could not afford at that time. When, coincidentally, I found out he was dating another girl, I was heartbroken. I decided to break up with him. Three months later he married a girl who he had impregnated. Despite this change in events, he still



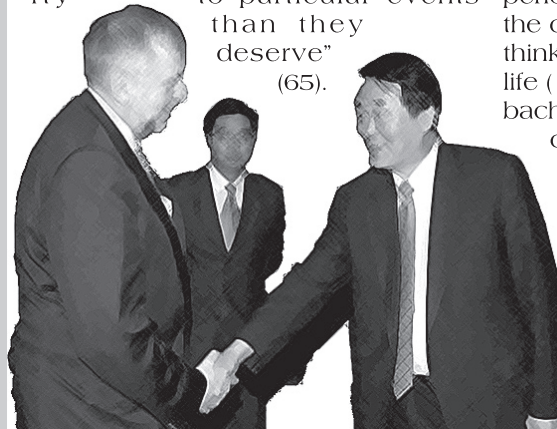
Bixian Liao plans to transfer to U.C. Berkeley in the fall of 2004 to major in business. Her career goal is to become a certified public accountant within five years.

After I worked for a prosperous and well-educated boss who deceived his wife with a young girl, I further adhered to the perception of all wealthy businessmen as adulterous.

My behavior of perceiving all wealthy businessmen as disloyal to their wives fit the definition of stereotype for two reasons.

came to my house, saying something that he should not have said to me but to his wife the night before his wedding. Ever since I broke up with him, no other wealthy businessmen could gain my trust. I believed they were all the same as him: adulterous.

After I worked for a prosperous and well-educated boss who deceived his wife with a young girl, I further adhered to the perception of all wealthy businessmen as adulterous. According to Dr. Ruggiero, overgeneralization is "to ascribe to all the members of a group what fits only some member A stereotype is an overgeneralization that is especially resistant to change" (109). My behavior of perceiving all wealthy businessmen as disloyal to their wives fit the definition of stereotype for two reasons. First, I had not considered changing my view for twelve years. Second, it was based on just a few examples, which were mostly drawn from my limited personal experience. Dr. Ruggiero points out that our confidence about our personal experience "can cause us to attach greater significance and universality to particular events than they deserve" (65).



Obviously, to use critical thinking effectively is a formidable challenge.

I personally know fewer than a dozen wealthy men, and there are thousands of wealthy businessmen in China. Are they all adulterous? Can I conclude they are all adulterous based on a few examples? Ruggiero's answer is no: "it takes more than one or a few examples to support a generalization; for sweeping generalization, even a dozen may not be enough" (65).

However, I found it difficult to ignore my personal experiences. A year ago, I had an unpleasant conversation with my boyfriend about his plans for a career in business. When he asked me about business as a major for him, I refused to allow it. I told him that if he became rich, he would dump me. He argued how could I be a businesswoman yet he could not become a

businessman. When he persisted, I threatened to break off the relationship.

Dr. Ruggiero states that both "overgeneralizations and stereotypes hinder critical thinking because they prevent us from seeing the differences among people within groups" (110). From what he says, I did not think critically and see the difference between my boyfriend and my wanton image of businessmen. It led to my irrational behavior toward him and resulted in the unnecessary quarrel. Ruggiero suggests that critical thinkers should base "judgments on evidence rather than personal preferences, (defer) judgment whenever evidence is insufficient (and) revise judgments when new evidence reveals error" (19). To become a critical thinker, I should base my judgment toward the wealthy businessmen on sufficient evidence and stop stereotyping them, especially after my stereotyping was revealed as an error of thinking.

Obviously, to use critical thinking effectively is a formidable challenge. It will take continuing effort over a long period of time, as Ruggiero says, but the challenge is worthwhile because thinking is so important in everyday life (151). I am currently pursuing my bachelor's degree, and almost every course I have taken has required critical thinking skills. According to Dr. Ruggiero, "[Business] and professional leaders stress that proficiency in thinking is necessary to solve problems and make decisions on the job" (151). I plan to enter the business field in the United States after graduation, and I want to be prepared for the job. Critical thinking skills are essential in handling the challenges I will encounter in the competitive business world. In addition, many psychologists consider thinking skills crucial in our personal lives (Ruggiero 151), and the quarrel between my boyfriend and me proves they are correct. In order to be a critical thinker, I am ready to correct the distorted image I used to have of wealthy businessmen in China. I can't wait to apologize to my boyfriend, and I envision his understanding smile and loving hug.

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THE TATTOO AND PIERCING FESTIVAL, or Making New Friends

by Amy Powell

Let me begin by saying that my idea of an evening well spent usually starts with dinner al fresco with good conversation and good friends and ends with a glass of hearty red wine. I enjoy literature, Orange Pekoe tea and Spanish soap operas. I am not the sort of woman who likes to live her life "on the edge." I cook, I garden, I take my vitamins and I try to workout everyday. I will never ride a Harley Davidson motorcycle, drink beer like a sorority girl or get a tattoo. However, (and there are always "however's" with these sorts of stories aren't there?) at one point during my early 20's I was very interested in shucking my dowdy image and trying new things, such as drinking beer like a sorority girl, riding on the back of a Harley Davidson and going so far as to attend a tattoo and piercing festival where I spent the greater portion of the evening recoiling in shock and horror at the obscene things that people were giddily, if albeit drunkenly, doing to themselves.

Why, one may ponder, knowing all my domestic instincts, would I attend a party where all of the "best" (and trust me I use the term lightly) in the field of body adornment had gathered to show off their skills? Simple. I was desperate to fit in. I was living in Boise, Idaho, at the time—a mistake I will never make again—and had recently been hired to work for a computer-chip manufacturing company where I met a group of people who underneath their electrically-grounded lab coats and shoe booties sported a wide variety of studs, earplugs, rings and tattoos. Now normally I have very little in common with people who put holes in their bodies for fun. I am not a knowingly prejudiced person; it's just that it is very unlikely that I would be able to carry on a coherent conversation with them without staring at the rings in their eyebrows. But the truth is I was lonely; I had not lived in the area for long and thought, "Hey, if this is what it takes to not have to spend every night talking to my 70-year-old alcoholic neighbor—sign me up!" So when I was invited to go with the

group to the tattoo festival at the Hyatt Regency I was pleased to have been included. A guy named Mike from my floor offered to pick me up as I had no clue where the Hyatt was. I agreed to go with him thinking all the while that it might be dangerous to get into a car with a guy I'd only known for a month. I needn't have worried. As I strapped Mike's spare motorcycle helmet on over my hair and straddled the back of his Harley, I thought for the thousandth time "What am I doing?"

Looking back now, I realize that I should have enjoyed the ride to the hotel more, as it was the highlight of my evening. We got to the hotel and I managed to pry my cold, numb fingers loose from around my ride's waist. We proceeded into the convention hall where the scene that met my eyes was evocative of a Hieronymus Bosch altarpiece. Instead of turning on my heel and walking with all haste back out the door, I accepted the beer that another of my work associates thrust in my hand and proceeded to follow the group deeper into the convention hall, past the "band" who were screaming obscenities while purple strobe lights flashed across their faces. It is at this juncture that I must confess words fail me. What I witnessed was nothing short of nightmarish. It will have to suffice when I say that the human brain is an extremely creative instrument, and considering the body parts that were being pierced in that convention center that night, it was a wonder that there were no emergency medical services on standby in case an "expert" hit a main artery.

A maniacal carnivalesque atmosphere pervaded the room. Men and women were running around the convention center yelling at booth attendants about the "work" they wanted to have done, and all of them exhibited a marked preference in their wardrobes for chains, beards, and horrifyingly revealing leather ensembles. Special chairs had been brought inside the booths so that body parts would be more easily accessible to the "artists"

Amy Powell is in her last semester at Delta College. As she says, "I have had the best time here! I am one of those late-in-life bloomers who decided to go back to school at the decrepit age of 28." She considers herself a local girl though she spent the greater portion of her childhood on a small farm in Oregon. She graduated high school in Lodi "a million years ago and promptly moved to Boise, Idaho, much to my everlasting regret. I spent a lot of time there trying out a variety of nowhere jobs and eventually knew that I wanted to come home, to the Central Valley and get an education." She is currently working on getting her lower division courses finished so that she can transfer to a four-year university in California and pursue a degree in journalism. "I live on a vineyard outside of Lodi and work at a small Italian restaurant to pay the bills where I am constantly amazed by people who throw money at me just for bringing them spaghetti!"

Now normally I have very little in common with people who put holes in their bodies for fun.



We proceeded into the convention hall where the scene that met my eyes was evocative of a Hieronymus Bosch altarpiece.

and scores of drunken denuded people were climbing eagerly into them. I stumbled along behind the group trying desperately to avoid glimpsing body parts that I would not normally have seen unless I had known these people a good deal better.

I was so engrossed in this endeavor that I bumped into Mike who had stopped before a particularly vile looking booth whose table sported a wide variety of piercing instruments. He had expressed a wish to "have something done" and, like the ghouls they were, my co-workers had naturally stopped to watch. As Mike stripped off his shirt and sat down in front of his chosen artist, I made my way towards the back of our assembly, all the while trying to keep my eyes carefully averted from the event. As I was studiously looking anywhere but at my co-worker, a bald, be-ringed person noticed my unfocused gaze falling on her booth and mistaking it for genuine interest, thrust a small photo album at me, encouraging me to "have a look!" She was a large menacing looking woman and I thought it wiser to comply with her demands

than upset her. I dutifully opened the album and at first glance my eyes refused to make sense of the photos. Gradually, however, my brain and eyes began to function in unison, and I realized that what I was looking at was a gallery of photos that displayed this person's facility with ink, needle and piercing instrument on areas of the human body that are quite known for being *extraordinarily* sensitive.

To say at this juncture that I was horrified would be a bit of an understatement. I felt ill. I snapped her little book of horrors shut and pasted a sickened smile on my face, nodded in what I hoped was an appreciative manner, and turned my attention back to Mike who had just finished paying for his new hole. He was regaling his experience to the group in minute details, like a soldier will a war story, and when he asked me what I thought, I replied, "It's very . . . uh . . . nice." Thinking that I ought to at least display a modicum of interest in the proceedings, I asked if the piercing instruments had to be disinfected before being used on another victim. For some reason, that to this day still escapes me, my co-workers found this innocent question uproariously funny. I was proffered another beer, which I declined.

I managed to stay for the minimum amount of time that would be deemed courteous (about 43 minutes) and then quietly called a cab from the main lobby. As I rode home in the back of the cab, I clearly remember thinking "Now how could I have avoided this? . . . And why does this car smell like a can of Raid?" It didn't take me too long to realize that I had allowed desperation for social interaction to cloud my judgment. I was so desperate to fit in with the work crowd that I quieted my natural intuition and had a miserable evening. I spent the entire next day penitently sitting in an oversized chair at Barnes and Noble trying to cleanse my "chi." Eventually I did find a few friends who had my same interests in Boise, and I spent fewer nights alone with my neighbor, but I have always remembered that episode, and to this day when someone proposes an outing that sounds less than fascinating to me, flashes of that evening come back to me and I am able to decline with a courteous, but nonetheless succinct "You've got to be joking."

The TWIN TOWERS

by Nick Zeiher

Tall, sleek, soaring. To some they were beautiful and to others they were ugly. They reflected the rays of the sunshine on one side and cast a shadow of darkness on the other. They were viewed as an engineering and architectural marvel and an oversized hunk of glass, steel and cement. They operated as their own city, with their own zip code, and they transcended and engulfed everything around them.

I will never forget the first time I went to New York City; I found it a wonderful city filled with magnificent buildings, new and old. But, the buildings I found the most incredible were the Twin Towers. I lay flat on my back, on the cold cement, right in front of them to see all the way to their very tops. They were the tallest, biggest, most beautiful buildings I had ever seen. Some New Yorkers loved them for their immense size; still others hated them for the exact same reason. The center where they stood was named to represent a world united in commerce: "The World Trade Center." However, those who named the center had no idea how one day it would unite the world – not in the glorious celebration that opened them, but in a tragedy that would forever mark their place in history.

The Twin Towers soared 1,350 feet into the air. They looked as if they touched the base of heaven. They were the tallest buildings in New York. Their enormous windows were made to reflect the beautiful rays of the sun on one side, but due to the immense size of the buildings themselves, they blocked these same rays of sunshine on the other side, casting a long dark shadow every day. Those who lived on the east side, facing away from the towers, enjoyed the sunshine; those who lived on the west side, facing away from the towers, were able to

see the sunsets. But those who faced the towers seldom, if ever, enjoyed any sunshine or sunsets. Their windows and rooms grew dark and their views became obstructed by the gigantic glass, cement, and steel of the Twin Towers that not only touched the sky, but for many blocked it from view. These people could not see the beauty of the towers, their light, their glory; they could only see the shadows and darkness now cast upon them.

Some viewed the sleek, smooth architecture of the buildings as beautiful, modern, clean and crisp, creating a skyline that was overwhelming. Yet, others felt they were nothing more than giant, square, glass and steel box-like structures with no real shape, beauty or form about them. I was able to have several conversations with people who worked in the Twin Towers when I visited them. The people who worked in the restaurants on the top floors talked about the weather. They told how when they came to work it was calm, dry, and warm at the entrance, yet when they reached the top and looked out the "Windows of the World" it would be windy, misty, and cold.

Some people thought the Twin Towers were nothing more than two ugly buildings, built to unnecessary heights, just to symbolize the dominance of one nation in the world. This view seemed to be the same view that was taken by those who brought them down on September 11, 2001. However, I believe those from abroad who brought down these incredible buildings missed what they were built to represent, just as those in New York who hated them had.

For beyond the reflective glass, the sleek exterior of steel and cement were people – people from different

Nick Zeiher, originally from San Jose, later moved to Santa Rosa, and then spent some time in the South Pacific with his parents before moving here to Stockton. He enjoys spending time with his family, loves to snow ski and is an avid San Francisco Giants fan. Go Barry!!! He plans to complete his general education here at Delta Junior College, and then move on to a State University to obtain a degree in education. His goal is to teach grammar school students with learning disabilities. As he says, "Being a student with numerous learning disabilities, I believe it is important for me to go into education to help students with learning disabilities understand they can make it and to always believe in themselves and reach for their dreams."

Some people thought the Twin Towers were nothing more than two ugly buildings, built to unnecessary heights, just to symbolize the dominance of one nation in the world.

However, even they looked like something ripped from the pages of my history book -- a bombed out building from WW II, not a skyscraper in the middle of Manhattan.

countries all over the world, with different religions, cultures, backgrounds, all working in peace to try to create a better world for all to live. There were people who represented oil firms and people who represented charities. Perhaps some of these people hated each other (the darkness, the shadows), some loved each other (the light, the sunshine) or some simply over time found a middle ground of acceptance through understanding (a little of both). These buildings were not built to represent dominance over anything or anyone, but to represent the hope, peace, and acceptance of a "world" that had joined together, in commerce, to try to improve life for everyone, everywhere.

I will never forget the last time I saw the Twin Towers: They were not beautiful; they were nothing more than a pile of nondescript rubble. Twisted beams of steel darkened and black from the fires, chunks of cement shattered into meaningless forms, less window frames, and torn, bits of papers; pieces of lives, scattered about everywhere. Huge cranes able to pick up twenty or thirty tons looked like little Tonka toys in the fifty-foot deep pit among the piles of rubble. The fifty-foot deep pit was the area where the underground mall and subway

station had been. Seeing this left me saddened. My beautiful buildings that had once reached the heavens were no more. The pile of rubble seemed small in comparison to the buildings that had once been. All that could be recognized were a few larger pieces of the outer walls still partially standing. However, even they looked like something ripped from the pages of my history book – a bombed out building from WW II, not a skyscraper in the middle of Manhattan.

The terrorists may have brought down these two controversial buildings that some loved and others hated, but in the end no one was happy they were gone. The terrorists had not separated the world by destroying the towers; in fact, the terrorists achieved just the opposite. For a time, the loss of the towers united the world. As for the individuals within the towers, many left this earth on September 11, 2001, and went to the heavens that the towers seemed to touch, but these people will never be forgotten. And neither will the Twin Towers. They will always stand as a uniting force around the world to those who lived both to the east and the west of them. The Twin Towers and all they stood for will always live in the sunshine of humanity.

