

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 THE DEAD

Ashley Litz recalls the troubling day she learned of mortality.

4 A TRUE STORY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Lorring Scotty Hoag relates his experience with high-tech airport security.

6 LEMONS, LOSS, AND LEMONADE

Becky J. Andazola describes the effects of divorce on an unsuspecting youth.

8 LAST HOUR

Christopher J. Miller reflects on the lessons learned from his grandfather.

11 THE HERO AND THE ANIHERO: THE CLASH BETWEEN DECORUM AND BARBARISM

Nicholas C. Ridino distinguishes linguistic use from iconic figures.

13 THE DESIGNER PLAYER

Rodrigo Villagomez argues that baseball owes a debt of gratitude to steroids users.

16 THE POKER NATION

Rodrigo Villagomez analyzes the causes of the recent popularity of poker.

19 OUR WARDROBES

Jana Glines-Harvey discusses the messages conveyed by clothing.

23 DIVORCE

Jasonya Burke shares difficulties faced, and challenges overcome, by her strength of will.

25 CROSSING THE GULF INTO ADULTHOOD

Dante G. Monty details the urgency caused by a military attack at sea.

29 WHO WAS THAT GUY?

Spencer describes one last narrow escape from combat duty.

31 GARDENIA

Dania Yadira Avelar explains her fondness for a particular fragrance.

33 SYLVIA PLATH

Sara McDougall analyzes the life and work of one of the nation's most acclaimed poets.

A PUBLICATION OF
SAN JOAQUIN
DELTA COLLEGE

<http://www.deltacollege.edu/org/deltawinds>

EDITORS

William Agopsowicz

Robert Bini

DIVISION DEAN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Paul Kuehn

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Patrick Stapelberg

COVER PHOTO

Stan Rapada

<http://community.webshots.com/user/srapada>

Delta Winds is a publication of student essays from courses at San Joaquin Delta College. It is published each year by the English Department of San Joaquin Delta College, 5151 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, California 95207. The authors certify that their writing is their own creation. The views expressed in these essays do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the faculty, the administration, or the trustees of Delta College. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced for profit in any form or by any means without written permission.

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

As with previous volumes of *Delta Winds*, the themes and the developmental patterns of the essays in volume 19 vary widely, making *Delta Winds* useful as a textbook. In this year's publication, themes range from memorable fragrances to national security. The methods of developing the essays include narrative, analysis, and persuasion. Here is just a sampling of the various patterns and modes of writing in this volume: Rodrigo Villagomez uses a cause and effect method of development to explain the popularity of the game of poker in "Poker Nation." Nicholas C. Ridino compares and contrasts in his expository essay "The Hero and the Anti-Hero." Several essays, such as "The Dead," "Who Was that Guy?" and "Crossing the Gulf into Adulthood," rely on the narrative to connect with the reader on a personal level. In "Sylvia Plath," Sara McDougall uses close textual analysis in the manner of a literature major in an upper division course. The modes and patterns of the essays can be as interesting and informative as the ideas expressed. With this much to offer, *Delta Winds* has not surprisingly become a valued supplementary and primary reader in a number of classrooms at Delta College.



Ashley Litz was born in Stockton, CA, yet spent the majority of her childhood in the North Georgia mountains. An avid fan of good stories and comic books, Ashley spends most of her free time writing her own of each, and is very excited to be published in the Delta Winds, her first essay publication.

The DEAD

by Ashley Litz

"I dare you. . . to jump in the snake pit!" proven my bravery in "Truth or Dare."

"Okay!"

The snake pit was actually nothing more than a big hole in the ground, filled with tall tufts of grass, thistles, and overgrown weeds. A rubber tire decorated the center, as well as a couple of old toys and Barbie dolls who "deserved punishment." I positioned myself on top of the steep slope, and hopped in. It actually took me three big bunny hops, from one rock to the next, to reach the bottom. Once there, I looked up at my sisters.

"DO YOU SEE ANY SNAKES YET?" REBEKKA, MY OLDEST SISTER, CALLED DOWN. I LOOKED AROUND.

"Do you see any snakes yet?" Rebekka, my oldest sister, called down. I looked around.

"No. . .," I answered back. Suddenly, Kacy, my second oldest sister, started to shriek.

"There! There! I see one! I see one!" she shouted, pointing to the left.

"Ohh! I see it, too!" Rebekka chimed in, smiling and pointing to the right. They both hopped up and down in their excitement.

"Ashley, get out of there!" Rebekka cried.

"Hurry, hurry!" Kacy shouted.

I scrambled up the dirty, rocky slope, holding onto the clumps of grass and weeds to keep from sliding back into the pit. Finally, I reached the top and, giggling, brushed myself off. I had

"Gosh, Ashley," Rebekka looked at me with fascination, "that snake almost got you!"

"Really?" I looked back over my shoulder, but couldn't see anything dangerous. Rebekka giggled and nudged Kacy.

"Yeah," she said, "you really are brave! Maybe. . . you should. . . be. . . IT!" and with that, Rebekka tagged me so hard I almost stumbled back into the snake pit.

"Hey!" I cried out, but she and Kacy had already grabbed hands and were racing across the backyard, laughing and screaming. I caught onto the game immediately, and chased after them, forgetting all about my almost fatal fall. We ran across the grass, my short, stubby little legs unable to keep up with their longer, leaner, stronger ones.

"Let's go hide in the tall grass- - she'll never find us there!" Rebekka yelled to Kacy.

"Okay!" came the reply, and they headed for the woods. In front of the woods was a stretch of grass that had never been mowed. The patch was like an ocean of green, an ocean that one could swim in. Most of the blades were taller than me; my sisters could hide anywhere in that field and I would never find them.

I closed my eyes and willed my legs to pump faster. On I ran, breathing heavily. When I opened them again, I saw I was magically closer to my sisters! Closer and closer I came, until finally I barreled into them. I realized my sisters had stopped.

Stepping back quickly, I hit Rebekka on the arm.

"Tag! You're it!" I panted.

"Quiet, Ashley," snapped Rebekka. "We're not playing that anymore." She wasn't even looking at me. I was confused.

"What do you think is wrong with it?"

Kacy whispered quietly. I followed her gaze to the ground in front of us; a black cat lay there on its side. It wasn't moving, and the air around it seemed strange--quiet and smelly. I suddenly noticed that everything around me seemed to have grown very quiet.

"Kitty- -wake up!" I said, wanting to break the silence. I reached forward to nudge it a little, but Rebekka slapped my hand.

"Don't, Ashley!" she ordered. "It's dead."

"Dead?" I echoed, looking up at her grim face. She crouched down closer to it.

"It looks like one of the dogs got to it. See? Its head is bleeding." She pointed to the gooey mess beneath its matted, furry ears.

"Stupid dogs," I heard Kacy mutter.

"KITTY- -WAKE UP!" I SAID, WANTING TO BREAK THE SILENCE. I REACHED FORWARD TO NUDGE IT A LITTLE, BUT REBEKKA SLAPPED MY HAND.

"What's 'dead'?" I asked. My sisters did not look at me. Instead, Rebekka reached down with her skinny hands and pulled on the cat's tail. She began to pick it up. Suddenly, the tail snapped off and the body thudded back onto the ground.

"Eww!!" Kacy shrieked. My eyes widened. Rebekka held the tail in her hand. I could see the bone sticking out from the blackened tufts of fur. That terrible stench hit me again, stronger this time. It smelled like something sweet, but rotting. A bitter taste came into my mouth. Rebekka looked sickened as



she dropped the tail back onto the ground.

"Dead means it won't move any more," she said, then turned away and walked back to the house. Kacy had her hands up to her face, and she was shuddering as she followed after our big sister. I watched them go inside. The screen door slammed.

Suddenly, a warm summer wind blew, and it rustled through the sea of grass. I turned and listened to the swishing noise it made, gazing at the tips of the swaying grasses dancing in the sunlight, then followed the blades down with my eyes, back down to the dead cat.

What was. . . "dead"?

I looked around, picked up a nearby stick, and slowly took a deep breath of fresh air. I crouched down by the still and stiffened black form, and poked it.

Nothing happened. I poked it again.

Still nothing. I leaned my head back for another gulp of fresh air, and then, holding it, I pushed the branch beneath the fur and flipped the body over.

Maggots and beetles exploded from the dampened, bloody ground. The cat's black fur was torn out in patches, and I could see its bones, poking through a gash torn in its side. A small white worm wriggled from an empty eye socket, followed by another, and another. Black bugs scattered in all directions, frightened by the sunlight. Centipedes and fat green flies suddenly littered the earth where the cat had been, tasting the blood and decay. A terrible buzzing noise filled my ears. But most horrible of all was the smell.

This was "dead." I dropped the stick immediately, and ran back to the house, screaming.



Scotty Hoag has always believed that comedians and cartoonists have been the greatest social and political commentators. Therefore, he always tries to put a humorous tone on even the most serious of issues. He is not ashamed to say that he considers Gary Trudeau, Aaron McGrudger, and Gary Larson very high on the list of accomplished authors. In addition to his love of comedy and cartoons, he also spends an almost unhealthy number of hours playing video games (another form of entertainment that is also distinguishing itself as a medium for art and political and social commentary) and consumes an unhealthy amount of caffeine. He studies art, writing, computer programming, martial arts, and Asian cultures.

A True Story of

National Security

by Scotty Hoag

My father thought this was a moment worth saving indefinitely on film, so he turned on his camcorder and aimed it straight at me. I'm glad he found me being held at gunpoint amusing.

"Sah, the chief wants to ask you some questions."

The guard pointed to a very serious looking man sitting behind a white desk. On either side of him were other serious looking men wearing serious dark glasses and brandishing serious looking automatic rifles and shotguns.

The situation looked serious.

Shit.

**I FELT A LITTLE
MORE CALM OR,
AT LEAST, AS CALM
AS A TERRORIST
SUSPECT
SURROUNDED
BY ARMED NEW
YORK SWAT TEAM
RECRUITS COULD
POSSIBLY FEEL.**

I hobbled clumsily through the middle of the sterile white security checkpoint while trying to hold all of my personal belongings and refasten my belt to keep my pants from falling down. The closer I got to the desk, the darker the room seemed to appear, like walking towards a storm or into the inner sanctum of a beast or vampire. The officer was busying himself by erasing all of the recently acquired confidential material off of my father's now confiscated digital camcorder. I glanced at the desk and noticed some serious looking papers and documents

underneath a newspaper opened to a very unserious looking comics section. I felt a little more calm or, at least, as calm as a terrorist suspect surrounded by armed New York SWAT team recruits could possibly feel.

"Sah, can you explain this device?" a guard asked me under his heavy accent while motioning me away from the desk. He held in his phonebook-ripping right hand a clear liquid-filled plastic vial attached to a series of electrical wires, transistors, microchips, and ultimately, a big red propeller.

"Uh, sure. It's a fan. My handheld fan. See, you flip this switch here . . ." I said as I reached for the device, then stopped, realizing I probably shouldn't be making any sudden movements that could potentially be interpreted as "Hostile" within proximity of the stoic-faced, assault-rifle-wielding grunts, and recoiled my arm to a safe pointing distance. "You flip that switch and it spins the propeller. Then, you push that button and it sprays the water on your face. . . . You know, to cool you down." I could see one of the other guards near the metal detectors and walk-in bomb-sniffers performing chemical tests on the water from the vial. Another guard was referencing security tapes—watching how I had walked through the metal detectors—and pointing out inconsistencies in my facial expression and walking speed. They both turned and glanced at me at the exact same time with that emotionless, CIA-agent, Hello-my-name-is-Mister-Smith expression.

"Cool you down? Mmm-hmm," the guard hummed through his frozen stare. He was obviously not very happy with my response, judging by how he then brushed aside my scarf, forced open the collar of my Pendleton coat, and counted through the neck opening how many layers of clothing I was currently wearing. I looked at the situation from his point of view and realized that, yes, perhaps I did seem a bit suspicious carrying a battery-operated fan to a city that thought 50 degrees was T-shirt and shorts weather. The fan had been in my travel bag since my trip to humid Japan where the

heat made everyone I was with sweaty and miserable. I had left it in the bag in case I happened to encounter warm weather again.

“Scotty, do you realize how cold it gets back east?” I remember Annie telling me as I was futilely trying to zip up my severely overstuffed suitcase the night before. “Why are you packing this?”

I boasted between grunts that one should always be prepared for all sorts of serious weather conditions while traveling. She rolled her eyes, and agonizingly conceded. “Fine, Mister Boy Scout, you’re the one who’s going to be carrying it.”

What I wanted was a comfortable body temperature. What I got was detention by post nine-eleven security measures.

After another 10 minutes of serious questioning and serious tests, I was finally awarded clearance to speak with the serious head officer.

“Get out,” he commanded before I could verbally defend myself. Two soldiers, whom I mistook for The Hulk and The Jolly Green Giant, firmly handed me my father’s camcorder and my deathly suspicious little red fan. I almost thanked the

head officer, but decided to remain silent fearing that any explicit action could possibly be used against me in a court of law.

We passed by people still gathering their belongings from the metal detectors, bomb-sniffers, and x-ray scanners, and walked out from the police tent into the open air. Some of our travel companions were waiting for us at the base of the enormous “pedestal.” Some had actually gone on ahead and we had to rush up the stairs while tripping over our own feet and pulling our loosely-buckled pants up to get into the same elevator. The tour guide shoved her way into the now uncomfortably crowded lift, commented on how cute my heart-print boxers were as I attempted to buckle my belt again, and began describing in detail how the structure stays together and why it turns green. The doors closed and our claustrophobic stall began traveling higher and higher. In some form or another, we had all finally made it to the symbol of our nation’s freedom and enlightenment, the first thing our ancestors saw after fleeing their home countries decades before to seek protection and start new lives, the Statue of Liberty.

Funny, it looks a lot smaller than it does on TV.



Lemons, Loss, and Lemonade

by Becky Andazola



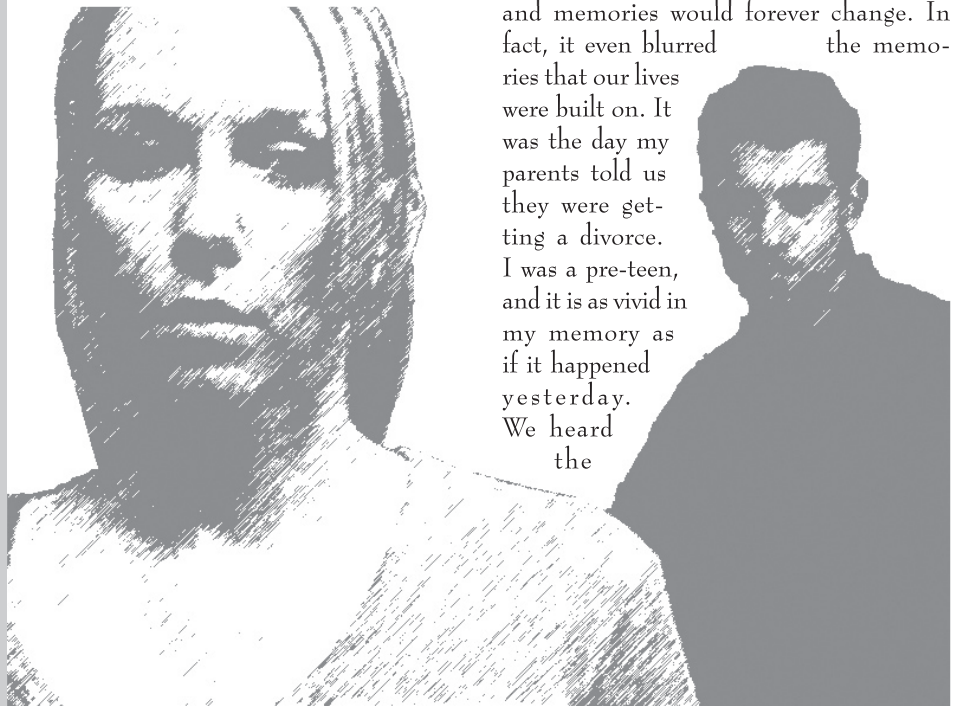
Becky Andazola is a returning student to Delta College, striving for degrees in business and education. She has five wonderful children and three beautiful grandchildren. She is blessed and fortunate to work at New Harvest Christian School where her youngest daughter and grandchildren attend. Becky has the following words of advice: "To the older student; it's never too late to obtain your goals and dreams! With God, all things are possible."

I am a firm believer that changes in a place of childhood memories can create an intense loss in an individual. Our surroundings, life style, experiences, family, and traditions are what make us into who we become as grown-ups. A day doesn't go by that most of us don't relate our present day experiences to our childhood experiences. We see things in our children and we immediately remember being that same age. We remember the familiar feelings, smells, and sights of our childhood. We begin to compare our pasts with their present. We are hoping that we haven't repeated our parents' mistakes and overlooked an insecurity that we may have had at that age. Our memories make us realize why we think and react the way we do. When we see our parents in our parenting, it can be both comforting and disturbing. Those patterns, securities, and stabilities are the foundations of our lives. When and if this way of life is changed, it throws off and disrupts everything we have grown to believe and trust in.

Growing up was full of love and security for me. My dad was in his 30's when he had us, and very ready to be a dad. My mom was fortunate to be able to stay at home, so we kids were never alone. Life was routine and pre-

dictable; it made us feel safe. My dad owned his own business, passed down from his father, which functioned out of the first floor of our house. We got to see him all day, and he taught us all a great work ethic. He loved being a father. My mind floods with memories of walks to the park on summer evenings, weekends ice-skating, or going to Grandpa and Grandma's house. We were very comfortable financially, with all of our needs met. I never heard of the term "pay-day;" whatever we needed was just always there. I still remember the warm feeling of those summer evenings after playing outside all day, taking a bath, putting on one of my dad's t-shirts, and lying in front of the TV, with a big bowl of ice-cream. I never had a care in the world. In my adult years, I still yearn for that carefree feeling. The best days were when we would come home from school and my mom would be making chocolate chip cookies, peach cobbler, or her famous double-decker chocolate cake. We always got three cookies and a glass of milk. That feeling and memory stays with me today, even as I make cookies for my grandchildren.

There was a day, though, that we came home from school to find no cookies, cake, or glass of milk. It was the day that our lives and memories would forever change. In fact, it even blurred the memories that our lives were built on. It was the day my parents told us they were getting a divorce. I was a pre-teen, and it is as vivid in my memory as if it happened yesterday. We heard the



fighting, but we just figured all parents fought. We never imagined it would come to this. The thought of picking which parent to stay with felt so overwhelming; when I realized the choice was made for me and I didn't have a choice, I think I felt worse instead of relieved. Our lives felt marred like the rubble after a war. The unknown was the scariest, and in the days, months, and years to come we found out that our fears were validated.

My dad moved out right away, and since his business had relocated, we didn't see him everyday anymore. That feeling of loss

After the tumultuous teenage years as a broken family, we did see light at the end of the tunnel. When I was married, with children of my own, my parents did get remarried. This was a wonderful day for me. Even though I was an adult, with a family of my own, this reconciliation brought so much lost security back to me. The wounds began to heal, and my memories became bright again. As we all talk about our childhood, we pass over those nine years that our family was broken, but the effects and the repercussions are still very much there, for all of us. I'm so glad my children

THOSE PATTERNS, SECURITIES, AND STABILITIES ARE THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR LIVES. WHEN AND IF THIS WAY OF LIFE IS CHANGED, IT THROWS OFF AND DISRUPTS EVERYTHING WE HAVE GROWN TO BELIEVE AND TRUST IN.

and emptiness changed all of us forever. He expected strength when we did see him, and that is what we showed him. We never cried and told him how devastating this was to us. My mom was an emotional wreck. All the familiar sights and smells of a clean house, baking cookies, and security were gone. She was hurt and bitter, and we all felt the effects of it. Our lives felt empty and insecure now. We still loved our dad very much, and never blamed him; this was unsettling to my mom. Our happy, content home had changed into a madhouse. My mom who had been there all our lives decided to go back to school and get a career. Leaving two teenagers at home alone with all authority figures gone was the worst thing my parents could have done at this phase of our lives. All the responsibilities of the cleaning and cooking were now on me being the girl. I resented this deeply and showed it in my new rebellious attitude. I became hardened and uncaring. I didn't believe in the fairytale of falling in love and living happily ever after anymore. All the luxuries and memories of those carefree days were now gone forever. My youth was stripped from me and the rose-colored glasses of my childhood and family were now gone.

were too young to remember. For them it's just Grandpa and Grandma as normal and commonplace as baseball and apple pie.

Reflecting back on my childhood memories, reliving the good times, and remembering the pain and loss the divorce brought, I can see how these events have contributed to the person I have become—for the good and the bad. Now that I'm a parent, I really count the cost of each decision I make, and how it will impact my children. My choices and the atmosphere I create are molding their childhood memories. I definitely can't stop all loss and calamity in my children's life or in mine. It would be like always having sunshine and never experiencing the effects and benefits of the rain. I do try to be strong and keep things as normal as possible when life events turn our world upside down. This has happened more than once in my children's lives, and my memories helped keep me from falling apart. I always want my children to feel secure and confident that everything will be fine. I have learned to make lemons of loss and bad memories into lemonade!



Christopher Miller has been alive for a little over nineteen years and currently works at the 180 Teen Center in Lodi. He grew up in Galt, California, without any siblings. He is indeed an only child. He hoped someday to become a superhero but unfortunately lacked the occupational skills necessary to leap tall buildings in a single bound and what not. So after considering his rather ordinary physical ability and the simple fact that modern society fails (thankfully) to produce super villains in need of a heroic thrashing, Chris plans to become one or a combination of the following: writer, actor, musician, minister. He wishes you contemplative enjoyment of his piece.

LAST HOUR

by Christopher Miller

The bell rang in a shrill pitch as students spilled from their classrooms. Finally another painful day came to a close. My buddy David and I left the band room on a Monday afternoon as usual, heading towards the parking lot and our respected vehicles. As juniors with sweet rides, we thought nothing could stand in our way. Our thoughts circled around what we had done that weekend and our personal plans for this fine spring afternoon. Turning to me, Dave asked how my sick grandfather was doing. I told him I saw him a couple times that past weekend, and that he seemed to be doing well.

Breaking from my inward focus, I surveyed the black asphalt sea, tossing with teenage movement, and my gaze fell on the unexpected figure of my father. We stopped and waited for him to come to us after he dodged a Pontiac filled to the brim with pubescent passengers. As he walked towards us, I noticed a glint of something in his eyes. It was not of anger, so I was sure I wasn't in trouble. It was not of joy, so I couldn't hope for a new gadget or gizmo to help clutter my already over-packed room. It was not of need, so I could not prepare myself for service. Besides, I'm not sure what help I could have given anyway. It was something else that my mind had very little recollection of.

After swimming through all conscious emotions, I grasped it. The emotion in my father's eyes was sorrow. A few moments passed while I searched for the cause of this emotion as my father waited for the inevitable question. Finally I asked, "What's wrong?" After the words left my mouth, I knew what his response would be and that glint of sorrow began to form in the corners of my eyes as well.

"Grandpa passed away this afternoon," he said. My heart sank and my eyes shifted from my father's face to Dave's. His eyes offered help if I needed it and mine offered thanks. I left with my dad to go to my uncle's where the rest of the family had already congregated to help comfort each other. Unfortunately, we had learned how to comfort each other well, because

this was not our first loss. Two years before we had lost my aunt, and three years before that we had lost my grandmother. This experience, coupled with my current heartbreak, produced a mind that rivaled the confusion of a tornado. In an attempt to grasp what was happening, I began to think back to the day before and the newly labeled "last hour" I had spent with my grandfather. He had moved from his senior apartment to a convalescent home. That week he had fallen down in the middle of the night, unable to get himself back up again. My mother found him the next day around noon freezing with a cut above his elbow. After going to the hospital, he was placed in the care of the Wine Country senior complex on Turner Road, only a few blocks away from the apartment he had.

I felt the name "Wine Country" was a tad ironic, as they never served wine to their residents. Here luxury was not the name of the game. Besides, the alcohol probably would have counteracted the daily allotment of pills for each patient in those little Dixie cups they kept on a rolling tray. Also, set on

**AS I CONTINUED
DOWN THE HALL,
TELEVISION SETS
SCREAMED AT
ME FROM OPEN
DOORWAYS
ENTERTAINING
THEIR HARD-
OF-HEARING
COMPANIONS.**

a long strip of land in the middle of a residential area, it hardly resembled the country. A long driveway divided the property in half, convalescent home on one side, assisted living on the other—neither of which seemed

to offer their residents much self-respect. Every room had a window, but I wouldn't call the neighbors' fence much of a view.

I couldn't imagine the term "assisted living." I was a seventeen year old with a very well taken care of brown 1990 Honda Accord. I didn't want any assistance even though I may have needed it more than some of the World War II vets encased by these walls. I pulled my car into a parking spot not too far from the entrance of my grandfather's room. As I got out, I realized that I wouldn't have my "sweet ride" without him. My car was his at one time. He sold it dirt cheap to my uncle and a few years down the line, my uncle sold it even cheaper to me when I got my license. Without the handed-down generosity, I would not have been able to pay for it by myself. Perhaps I lived slightly more "assisted" than I would have thought.

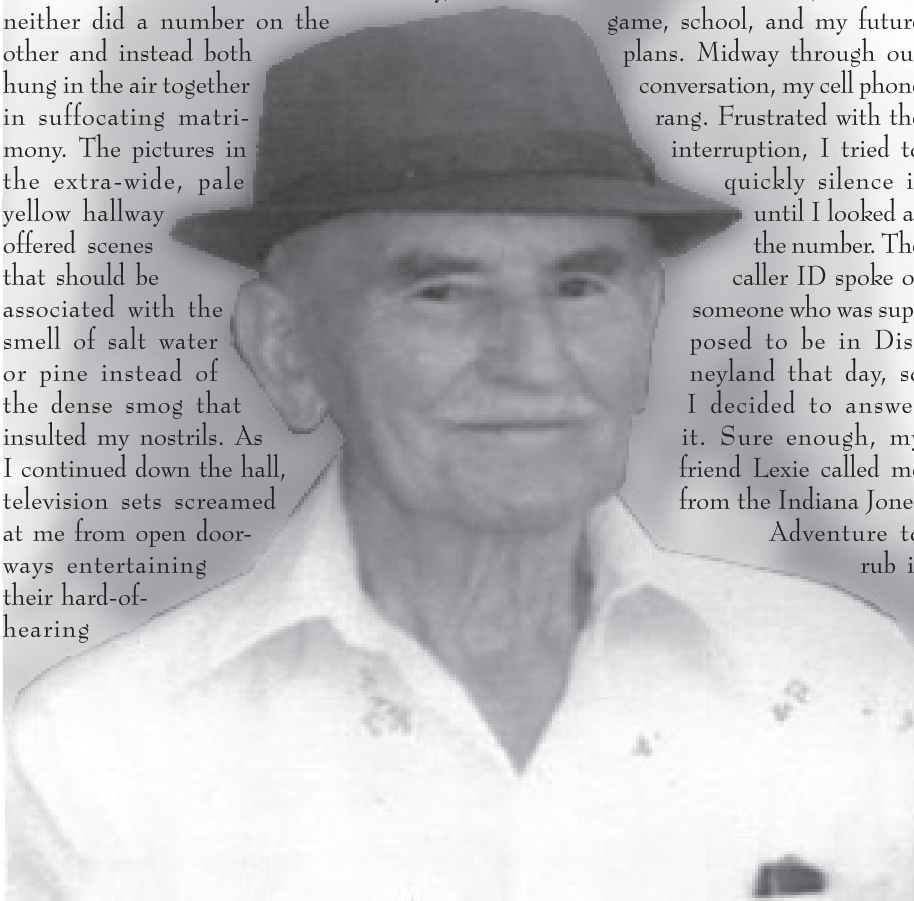
From my car, I walked down the walkway and up the steps onto the deck that surrounded the convalescent home to the back door. Stepping through the threshold from outside to in, I noticed the atmosphere had drastically changed. The air seemed tangible, weighted by various odors. Apparently, the workers tried to choke out the fervent human smell of waste and perfume with that of chemical bliss. Unfortunately, neither did a number on the other and instead both hung in the air together in suffocating matrimony. The pictures in the extra-wide, pale yellow hallway offered scenes that should be associated with the smell of salt water or pine instead of the dense smog that insulted my nostrils. As I continued down the hall, television sets screamed at me from open doorways entertaining their hard-of-hearing

companions. One room seemed completely dark except for the flashing screen of the TV. I began to wonder if I would find my grandpa in the same lonely state.

Finally, I reached Grandpa's room. I knocked and then entered to find him encircled with sunlight that streamed from the open curtains of the sliding glass door that stood across from the doorway. He sat at the edge of his bed fiddling with the TV, the remote nestled in his vein-riddled hands. Slightly hunched over, his eyes constantly tracing a line between the remote and the TV, he looked extra small. He had always been a short man, but it seemed like that day his size seemed to add to the look of his frail frame. His skin looked weathered, and wrinkles plotted their twisting course down his soft cheeks. His bristle-textured moustache matched the blended light and dark gray hair that encircled his mostly bare head. Just a few thin silky hairs and retro hair care products covered the top, releasing a sheen that could reflect sunlight.

We greeted each other with a hug, and I proceeded to help him with the television set. After finding the baseball game, I leaned against the counter next to his bed in the moderately sized room so we could talk.

We discussed the weather, the ballgame, school, and my future plans. Midway through our conversation, my cell phone rang. Frustrated with the interruption, I tried to quickly silence it until I looked at the number. The caller ID spoke of someone who was supposed to be in Disneyland that day, so I decided to answer it. Sure enough, my friend Lexie called me from the Indiana Jones Adventure to rub it



I THOUGHT ABOUT THAT DAY AND THAT HOUR AND HOW THE TIME ALMOST REPAID HIM FOR ONE OF THE DAYS THAT HE HAD SPENT WITH ME. I DECIDED THAT FROM THEN ON I WOULD STOP AND SEE HIM EVERY CHANCE I GOT IN AN ATTEMPT TO REPAY HIM.

in. After I talked to her for a few moments, I hung up and explained to my grandfather what my phone call had consisted of. He said that he thought it was neat that a friend would care about me enough to take the time to call me while enjoying the Magic Kingdom.

From there the conversation began to shift. He began to talk about how proud he was of me and of the person I had become. We reminisced about the times when I was very young, when he would come and entertain me for an hour in the morning while my mother got ready. I thanked him for the time spent, and I thought about how much that really meant to me. He proceeded to talk about how he felt proud of how the family as a whole turned out, how his kids supported each other and how we grandchildren did the same. I didn't notice it then, but looking back on it, Grandpa said it with resolution and finality, something that meant a great deal the next day.

We talked a little longer, said our final good byes, and then I left unknowing of the events to follow. As I drove home, I began to think about our talk and about the time he had spent with me when I was small. I thought about that day and that hour and how the time almost repaid him for one

of the days that he had spent with me. I decided that from then on I would stop and see him every chance I got in an attempt to repay him. He told my parents that night that he was so glad that I had stopped, and that further solidified my resolution. Needless to say, I never got another chance.

At my grandfather's funeral, I mustered up the courage to read chapter thirteen of First Corinthians, the chapter on love. Speaking to a packed room that already knew the great nature of my grandfather, I attempted to explain why I thought of him when I read the passage about how love is not self-seeking. The chapter also talks about how everything else is useless without love. At the end of his life, my grandpa invested in love, because he invested in his family. He told me with resolution that he was proud of me and of the rest of his family. I thought I could repay him. I thought I could clear my debt, but in reality, there was no way. He along with the rest of my family has put an investment of love in me, not so I could someday pay it back, but so I could pay it forward so the next generation has the love I had.

We all have investments. At that age, I invested in myself. I learned that life is more than me. The question we need to keep asking ourselves is "what are we investing in?"

HE ALONG WITH THE REST OF MY FAMILY HAS PUT AN INVESTMENT OF LOVE IN ME, NOT SO I COULD SOMEDAY PAY IT BACK, BUT SO I COULD PAY IT FORWARD SO THE NEXT GENERATION HAS THE LOVE I HAD.

THE HERO and the Antihero: *The Clash Between Decorum and Barbarism*

by Nicholas C. Ridino

Recently I was privy to a telephone conversation during which I heard a mother use the term “antisocial” to describe certain activities undertaken by her son, who at the point of my eavesdropping was the topic of discussion. The activities in question concerned the son painting his nails black and detonating firecrackers in a parking lot. If not illegal, which it might very well have been, this latter activity was unquestionably within the realm of foolishness, given the proximity to vehicles and people, as well as the potential for vehicular damage and bodily injury. But painting one’s nails black—is that indicative of pathology, an association upon which antisocialism depends?

Before proceeding further, I would first like to clear up a misconception about the term “antisocial,” for it is a common misconception and applied too loosely in society. Technically, antisocialism is a personality disorder, as classified by psychiatric diagnostic criterion. Psychopathy, sociopathy and dissocial personality disorder all refer to antisocialism (Carr 145). Those diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder exhibit “a pervasive disregard for the rights of others and consistently violate these rights. Aggressive, destructive and deceitful, [they] engage in theft and lying” (145).

One can, therefore, see why the mother’s incorrectly attributing the term “antisocial” to her son’s behavior was sufficient to give me pause. Although she clearly did not realize it, she was literally calling her son a sociopath. The painting of the nails black may be viewed as a gothic statement and the detonating of firecrackers blamed on sheer irresponsibility. To be sure, these acts were not inspired by violence. Perhaps what most people mean when referring to antisocial behavior is a form of social ineptitude.

From antisocial behavior we proceed to the antihero. Nearly everyone has his own notion of what constitutes the antihero, which is where the problem lies. For just as the mother who professed knowledge of antisocialism, there are as many laypeople who in-

correctly profess knowledge of the antihero.

In literary terms, an antihero is a protagonist lacking the qualities constituting the hero. These qualities vary, and may include bravery, decorum and strength. According to poet and journalist X. J. Kennedy, the antihero is considered a relatively “modern characterization, a satiric commentary on traditional portrayals of idealized heroes or heroines” (G2).

I submit that the traditional hero of past generations has been displaced by the antihero—a displacement so marked that I quite unreservedly declare it tragic. There seems a shortage of iconic figures today exuding virtuous qualities and an alternative surfeit of others idolized for qualities deemed reprehensible to a civilized people. The modern antihero does society a grave disservice; the mixed signals he emits are too easily misinterpreted, which results in a false conception of morality.

The word “hero” conjures up a panoply of images. A hero describes an individual spurred to do good by purely altruistic motives. Unlike the hero, epitomized by such figures as Superman, Beowulf and, more recently, Harry Potter, the antihero is distinctly flawed, and always has highly observable shortcomings. Anti-heroes are as prevalent as they are common. Many are celebrated for their flaws to the same degree heroes are for their virtues. Anti-heroes range from older depictions, such as Satan in *Paradise Lost*, to more recent ones, such as the Marvel Comics character The Punisher, the shooter from the sci-fi horror game *Doom*, and Hannibal Lecter.

The distinction between the hero and the antihero often confuses people. This is due to the fact that the latter has the capacity to act virtuously. However, one can act virtuously and still commit immoral and illegal acts; we see this in many of the motives of antiheroes. Once an individual neglects the principles of conduct strictly adhered to by the hero, that individual



Nicholas C. Ridino is an English major whose primary interests lie in late 19th- and early 20th-Century English and American literatures, respectively. He enjoys listening to classical and opera music as well as watching outdated films. Success, he believes, is arrived at solely through the timeless repetition of ingrained behavior: Nicholas can be described similarly to how the late German author Thomas Mann once described himself: “a chronicler and analyst of decadence, a lover of the pathological...an aesthete with a proclivity toward the abyss.” Once obtaining his degree, Nicholas intends to transfer to a separate institution and devote his studies to a narrower literary discipline.

IN LITERARY TERMS, AN ANTIHERO IS A PROTAGONIST LACKING THE QUALITIES CONSTITUTING THE HERO.

is flawed. He is an antihero because he is against self. A hero is a force opposed only to that which opposes principle.

The components of immaturity, ignorance and cultural influence contribute to dangerous societal trends. Individuals, particularly teenagers, often model their behaviors after the antiheroes in books, films, video games and music. The mass media has contributed largely to the transposition of moral with immoral behavior; thus, our collective notion of propriety has eroded, not sharpened, over time. Moreover, how does one account for the abovementioned transposition? An answer may be found in examining the antiheroes emulated in today's society.

Adolph Hitler, Friedrich Nietzsche and the German techno group Kein Mehrheit für die Mitleid ("no pity for the majority") are three antiheroic figures after which Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the architects of the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, modeled their behaviors. Despite the philosophies for which these figures are condemned, they yet retain a certain allure, particularly to the existentially-disposed Harris and Klebold, whose respective pathologies included suicidality and psychopathy (Cullen par. 7).

It is necessary to make distinctions in life, as evident in the case of the mother who misspoke in labeling her son antisocial. While not an egregious error, it contributes to a broader misunderstanding; and in our age of information, where credibility is so often compromised by ignorance, linguistic uniformity serves a valuable purpose. An increased and more comprehensive erudition is the first, and obvious, purpose. A profounder understanding of language, added to a finer appreciation for its correct usage, can only help a society that has become estranged from factual connotation. In other words, Harris and Klebold are examples of an antisocial personality; the mother's son in the preceding example is not.

Unfortunately, our society glorifies the qualities characteristic of the antihero. We witness this glorification everyday. Instead of being vilified for his incorrigible acts, the

antihero is instead worshiped and given unmerited reverence. To the eyes of the astute observer, this is a contradiction bordering on absurdity. Yet, this absurdity is rendered sensible in light of the aestheticization of violence, a philosophical concept seeking to "mak[e] the act and the product of violence appear attractive" ("Aestheticization" par. 1).

To some people, the novel, fundamental and moral qualities of the hero are more representative of art; Harris and Klebold, for instance, discerned art more keenly through the immoral and transgressive qualities of the antiheroes they idolized.

How do we increase awareness of this moral decline, and from there attempt to obviate the problem? Linguistic uniformity is the first step. The second step involves interpretation, that is, recognizing the arbitrary, analogous and exact connections between the signifier and the signified ("First" par. 2). In order to bring clarity to our unfocused visions, we need to assume dual roles. In our signifier role, we need to ascertain linguistic patterns; in our signified role, we need to ascertain the concept being signified. After all, one cannot appreciate a concept without understanding the connotation under which it is being used. Otherwise, we will end up confusing decorum with barbarism as easily as we confuse hero with antihero, and social with antisocial.

WORKS CITED

"Aestheticization of Violence." Wikipedia. 1 Dec. 2005. 6 Dec. 2005. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aestheticization_of_violence>.

Carr, Alan. *Abnormal Psychology*. Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 2001.

Cullen, Dave. "The Depressive and the Psychopath." *Slate*. 20 Apr 2004. 25 July 2005. <<http://www.slate.com/id/2099203/>>.

"First Step Towards an Answer." Wikipedia. 1 Dec. 2005. 6 Dec. 2005. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aestheticization_of_violence>.

Kennedy, X.J, and Dana Gioia. *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry and Drama*. 8th ed. New York: Longman, 2002.

The Designer Player

by Rodrigo Villagomez

Baseball is a multi-billion dollar entertainment industry. The modern age of American sports has seen to it that we no longer look at baseball as just "America's pastime." We must now see it as another corporation striving to produce a product that will be consumed by the populous. It is a corporation that produces the reluctant hero, a man who begrudgingly accepts the title "role model." These players are under intense pressure to continually be on top of their game. They are driven by relentless fans to achieve greater levels of strength and prowess. Consequentially, because of this pressure more professional baseball players are turning to performance-enhancing drugs, more specifically steroids, to aid them in their quest for greatness. Many believe that these drugs decrease the integrity of the players and ultimately the game itself. My opinion is that if it were not for the small percentage of players who have recently been found to use steroids, baseball would not be enjoying the success it does today. So really baseball should be thanking these players for actually keeping the game popular.

Before this argument begins, let's first look at the clinical definition of a steroid. A steroid is "any group of organic compounds belonging to the general class of biochemicals called lipids, which are easily soluble in organic solvents and slightly soluble in water" (Dempsey). Now let's put it in terms that you and I can understand with the help of author Dayn Perry. "Testosterone has an androgenic, or masculizing, function and

an anabolic, or tissue-building, function. It is the second set of effects that attracts athletes who take testosterone to increase their muscle mass and strength and decrease their body fat" (Perry). Perry goes on to explain that the physical conditioning the players already maintain combined with the introduction of the hormone accelerates this process. Basically what this all boils down to is the fact that steroids do in fact accelerate muscle mass. There are a million other supplements out there designed to do the same thing; so why the big fuss over steroids? Most people have a problem with them because of the speed with which users obtain their results. If you're a professional athlete making millions of dollars a year, don't you want to be the best as soon as you can? Actually, by using steroids, a batter is hurting his swing. Being big and bulky and able to hit the ball out of the park is great, but not being able to move those humongous arms around quickly in order to hit a 90 mph fastball is counterproductive. It is not the drug alone that is causing the enhanced play. The drugs, combined with an already over-the-top work out schedule, make the player better. If it were possible to become the world's greatest baseball player by simply using steroids and doing nothing else, don't you think that everyone would be doing so?

The main opponents against the use of steroids are those who say that using is an attack on baseball's integrity. Every player who takes the drug damages the credibility of the sport, and this is unfair to those who



Rodrigo Villagomez was born and raised in Stockton and graduated from Lincoln High in 1994. After graduation he served for the next ten years in the United States Army as a musician. Among the many places he served were Korea and Afghanistan, along with several stateside locations. With the changing times and uncertain nature of the Army Bandfield, Rodrigo decided to take his chances on the outside and pursue a career in sports broadcasting. Rodrigo plans to transfer to San Francisco State after Delta.

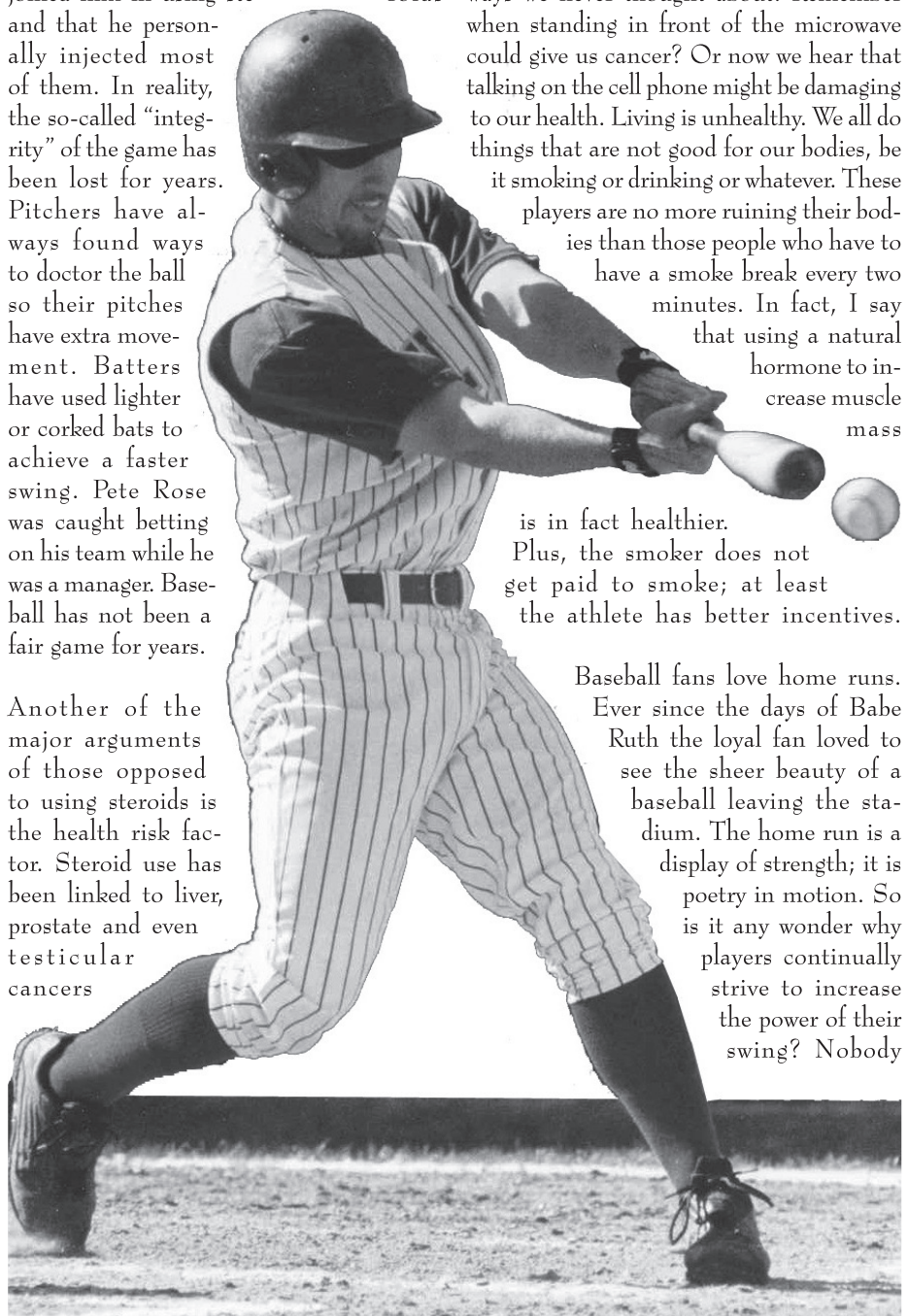
MY OPINION IS THAT IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE SMALL PERCENTAGE OF PLAYERS WHO HAVE RECENTLY BEEN FOUND TO USE STEROIDS, BASEBALL WOULD NOT BE ENJOYING THE SUCCESS IT DOES TODAY.

choose not to partake. My answer is simply to wake up. Long before the media brought the issue of steroids to the forefront, they were being injected, rubbed or swallowed in locker rooms dating back many years. In 1996, Ken Caminiti, a retired third baseman and National League MVP, said in a Sports Illustrated interview, "It's no secret what's going on in baseball. At least half the guys are using. They talk about it. They joke about it with each other" (Perry). If this is true then maybe we should take a second look at how much stock we have put into the sanctity of the game. Jose Canseco recently released a tell-all book, entitled Juiced, on his usage of the drug. Canseco claimed many of his fellow teammates joined him in using steroids and that he personally injected most of them. In reality, the so-called "integrity" of the game has been lost for years. Pitchers have always found ways to doctor the ball so their pitches have extra movement. Batters have used lighter or corked bats to achieve a faster swing. Pete Rose was caught betting on his team while he was a manager. Baseball has not been a fair game for years.

Another of the major arguments of those opposed to using steroids is the health risk factor. Steroid use has been linked to liver, prostate and even testicular cancers

as well as heart disease. According to epidemiologist Charles Yesalis, "We know steroids can be used with a reasonable measure of safety. We know this because they're used in medicine all the time, just not to enhance body image or improve athletic performance" (Perry). Steroids are also used in the treatment of breast cancer. In response to the fear of long term effects from the continued use of steroids, Yesalis has this to say: "We've had thousands upon thousands [of long term studies] done on tobacco, cocaine, you name it, but for as much as you see and hear about anabolic steroids, they haven't taken that step" (Perry). The truth of the matter is we hear all the time from modern medicine that we can get cancer in ways we never thought about. Remember when standing in front of the microwave could give us cancer? Or now we hear that talking on the cell phone might be damaging to our health. Living is unhealthy. We all do things that are not good for our bodies, be it smoking or drinking or whatever. These players are no more ruining their bodies than those people who have to have a smoke break every two minutes. In fact, I say that using a natural hormone to increase muscle mass is in fact healthier. Plus, the smoker does not get paid to smoke; at least the athlete has better incentives.

Baseball fans love home runs. Ever since the days of Babe Ruth the loyal fan loved to see the sheer beauty of a baseball leaving the stadium. The home run is a display of strength; it is poetry in motion. So is it any wonder why players continually strive to increase the power of their swing? Nobody



JUST LOOK AT STEROIDS AS A BASEBALL PLAYER'S ATTEMPT AT TRYING TO MOVE THE WALL IN JUST A LITTLE CLOSER.

wants to be known as the one who could consistently get on base, or the one with the stellar batting average. They want to be the ones who get noticed by both the press and the fans. Barry Bonds, Mark McGwire, Jose Canseco, Rafael Palmeiro. These names should sound familiar, but can you tell me who has the highest batting average in Major League Baseball history? Without the ever-present chance that when these men step up to the plate they can take it deep, the game might get a little boring. In fact baseball itself has been making changes in the game to help encourage home run production. Many ballparks have changed the dimensions of their outfields, moving the fences in to make it easier to hit it out. Just look at steroids as a baseball player's attempt at trying to move the wall in just a little closer.

This recent batch of steroid allegations is not the first case of performance-enhancing drugs being used in baseball. During the 1998 season Mark McGwire broke Roger Maris's long-standing record of 61 home runs in a single season. This new record could not have come at a better time for baseball as most fans still held on to their disappointing memories of the 1994 players strike when the season was cut short. McGwire's assault on the record revitalized the game and gave people a reason to watch again. That joy was carried into the very next season when both McGwire and Sammy Sosa embarked on a head to head battle to break McGwire's record. After all of the excitement died down, the controversy ignited when accusations were made that McGwire was taking androstenedione, another supplement equal to an over the counter supplement hydroxycut. This just proves that we as fans love to see exciting plays and players who are larger than life. We watch first and ask questions later. I believe that at the time we as fans did not care whether Mark McGwire was hitting his home runs with help or not. But with the vilification of the supplement he used, we were forced to feel guilty for enjoying a game. The same can be said today with the recent steroid allegations made on some of the game's biggest names.

Above all we must remember baseball is a sport. It is intended for the entertainment of the crowd that attends and those who watch it on television. There of course are fanatics (like myself) who hang on every swing or every throw, but most are casual fans, the ones who watch their favorite team when possible. Arguing over the integrity of a product that is meant for entertainment is futile. The average fan didn't even question whether or not Barry Bonds used steroids to break Mark McGwire's home run record. They just enjoyed the excitement of it all. There are many other and probably better places to find role models in one's life. We as a society should not look to baseball to produce our perfect example of humanity. These people put themselves on stage every night in order to show us things we are not capable of, things that we want to do but can't. For three hours or so we get to escape into a world that is filled with strength and agility. Does it matter the method in which our modern day gladiators achieve their greatness? I certainly think not. Fans should not be let down because their favorite player used steroids to make them watch. They should thank them. Without those players, they might not even have a game to watch.

WORKS CITED

Dempsey, Mary E. "Steroid." in *AccessScience@McGrawHill*, DOI 10.1036/1097-8542.655700 10 October 2005 <http://www.accessscience.com>.

Perry, Dayn. "The Problem of Steroid Use in Major League Baseball Is Exaggerated." *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center*. Thomson Gale. 2005 San Joaquin Delta College Library, Stockton, CA. 10 October 2005 <http://galenet.galegroup.com>.



Rodrigo Villagomez was born and raised in Stockton and graduated from Lincoln High in 1994. After graduation he served for the next ten years in the United States Army as a musician. Among the many places he served were Korea and Afghanistan, along with several stateside locations. With the changing times and uncertain nature of the Army Bandfield, Rodrigo decided to take his chances on the outside and pursue a career in sports broadcasting. Rodrigo plans to transfer to San Francisco State after Delta.

The POKER NATION

by Rodrigo Villagomez

If you own a television or a radio, chances are you have seen, or heard, a commercial starring some average looking guy telling you how he won millions of dollars playing poker. Now think back to the year 2002. Back then poker was a game that could only be found in Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and a few back rooms in smoky bars where one needed a password to get in. The sports reputation was tied to the images we see in the old westerns, of men sitting in a dark smoke-filled room around a table littered with alcoholic beverages, cards and money. Enter ESPN and the 2003 World Series of Poker, the event that took the game out

offer around the clock games, both ring games (open tables where players come and go as they please) and tournaments. Home games have also been established, helping to take away the old back room stereotype.

One way to gauge the popularity of a phenomenon is to take a look at the amount of literature produced on it. "A search on Amazon.com reveals that at least 61 titles related to the game have been or are being published in 2005, up from 46 in 2004, 37 in 2003 and 16 in 2002" (Peters). These books range from your typical how-to manuals to the more sophisticated strategies of the game written by professional players. The most popular of these books is Doyle Brunson's Super System: A Course in Power Poker. Doyle still plays today and has had to change his strategy to keep ahead of the competition, most of whom grew up learning to play by reading his book. Steve Lipscomb, the creator of the World Poker Tour, "estimates the poker-playing public has grown from around 50 million five years ago to more than 80 million in the United States today—with no end in sight" (Streisand).

ANOTHER WAY TELEVISION HAS MADE THE GAME MORE APPEALING IS THE WAY IT SHOWS THE AUDIENCE WHAT CARDS EACH PLAYER HAS.

of the back rooms and into mainstream America. A slightly overweight accountant from Tennessee named Chris Moneymaker won 2.5 million dollars after winning a forty-dollar satellite tournament to qualify for the event. The prize was the biggest ever awarded at the time, and it grabbed the attention of every average hoping-to-get-rich-quick Tom, Dick, and Harry. Since that event, the popularity of poker, more specifically the version known as Texas Hold'em, has skyrocketed. Several television stations have begun to air their own versions of the popular tournament style of play. Dozens of online gambling sites

I was first introduced to the game much like the rest of America, and like the rest of America I too jumped on the bandwagon. I too dream of sitting at the final table of the World Series of Poker with all of my chips in the pot ready to win \$7.5 million. But it was on a vacation to Las Vegas that the real popularity of poker hit me. In the poker room of the Excalibur Hotel and Casino there were over twenty tables, each full with ten players and a waiting list over an hour long for the next opening. As we traveled from casino to casino the situation never changed. Each casino we entered had full tables with long waiting lists. If you add up the total number of players from that night, the number would have been somewhere in the thousands. That was just for one night. These tables

stay full day or night every day of the week.

Why the sudden explosion you ask? Perhaps the biggest draw to the game is the sheer fact that anyone can play. Unlike a majority of the biggest sports in the world, poker requires no physical exertion. Basically if you can breathe and sit for a long time in one place you can play. There is no need to be strong or fast. Poker does not discriminate. Many women and minority players are among the highest caliber players in the world. In fact one of the events in the World Series of Poker features a table of all women players and it is just as exciting as the tables of all men. "Women make great players; they're intuitive and not tempted by the testosterone-fueled raising duels that have prematurely catapulted many a male player out of a game" (Koumpilova). Game Show Network went one farther and pitted the women against the men in a tournament setting. It was in fact a woman, Kathy Liebert, who took home the \$130,000 grand prize from that game. So the women have proven not only that they can play alongside the men, but that they can beat them as well. In poker, unlike many professional sports today, an amateur can play at the very same table as the pros, and can have a legitimate shot at beating them. Nowhere else in sports is an average person in the same league as the best in the business. This has given popularity to the game by evening the playing field. Both the professional poker player and John Smith from Anytown, U.S.A., have a chance to play against Johnny Chan or Doyle Brunson and win millions of dollars.

Another reason for the explosion in popularity is the Internet. One can do just about anything from the comfort of one's own home; poker is no different. Thanks to the numerous web-based gaming sites a person can play poker online, thus negating the need to travel to Las Vegas or Atlantic City to be involved in the action. Games for real and play money alike can be found only a few clicks away. If a person wants to get in on a real money game, all that is required is a credit card or direct access to a checking account. Internet sites have been known to get players to "ante up

as much as \$100 million collectively each night, according to PokerPulse, which tracks online statistics (major sites like PartyPoker.com often host 40,000 players a night)" (Streisand). What online poker also provides is an anonymous platform. Online a player is unseen and therefore cannot give anything away by appearance, making it easier for a player to win by bluffing.

In every state but Nevada gambling is still illegal, but many Indian casinos have opened poker rooms due to the recent surge in demand, making it all but unnecessary to travel to Vegas. If there is an Indian Casino in your area with poker tables, the need for a long road trip is no more. Despite the fact that these casinos do not offer the same level of extravagance as their Nevadan rivals, all a poker player really needs is chips, cards and a place to play.

ESPN, the Travel Channel, Game Show Network, Bravo, NBC. These and many other television stations are jumping on the poker bandwagon. Each of these stations offers some form of the game played by everyone from nobodies to prominent celebrities. No one can deny the power of television in today's society. People mimic just about everything they see, such as how to dress, what to drink, where to eat, so it is natural that the games they play are also heavily influenced by what is on television. "ESPN's coverage of the World Series of Poker—which includes more than 40 poker tournaments leading up to the main event—draws ratings comparable to Major League Baseball and the NBA" (Condotta). Once upon a time kids would go outside to play catch with each oth-



YOU MAY NOT THINK OF POKER AS AN EXCITING GAME, BUT SAY THAT WHEN YOU ARE TRYING TO BLUFF AT A POT WITH A 5-2 OFFSUIT WHEN THE BOARD SHOWS A-K-9-3-7.

er. Now they are in their garages playing poker. Another way television has made the game more appealing is the way it shows the audience what cards each player has. This has taken away the guesswork and confusion of watching a game and spiced things up more for the viewing public. Condensing the action has also helped ratings. "The hour you see is probably 10 hours of poker" (Condotta). With the game made shorter and easier than it really is, a whole generation accustomed to instant gratification can get a quick fix.

While the money and the fame of becoming a world-class poker player may be a nice thought, to most it is not reality. For most low-stakes players the game is more about the adrenaline rush that is associated with the thrill of competition. The heavy breathing, the accelerated heartbeat, the sweat, all of this comes with the game of poker. You may not think of poker as an exciting game, but say that when you are trying to bluff at a pot with a 5-2 offsuit when the board shows A-K-9-3-7. What that means is that you have no chance of winning on the strength of your own hand and you are hoping that the other player gives up his hand based on the size of your bet. To put it more simply, you are lying and hoping that you do not get caught. Now think of how you feel when you are getting ready to lie, amplify that by a thousand percent, and that is exactly what it feels like to be in that situation. On the flip side, let's say you have the same 5-2 offsuit, but this time the board shows 5-2-10-5-K. Now your heart is beating fast because you have the best possible hand; you know you cannot be beat. In this situation you want the other person to bet with you so you can take as much of his money as you can. While it is proper to maintain a poker face at all times, it is hard to deny the thrill a poker player experiences throughout the course of a game. It is easily comparable to the sensations one gets from any physical contact sport, without the pain.

Money is the root of all evil they say. One could argue that greed is a major cause in the recent rise of poker's popularity. As the prizes become larger and larger, the number of interested players grows in proportion. While it is true there are many greedy people in this world, a vast majority of the poker population will never see a million dollar payoff. In fact there are a larger number of players who are losing money than players who can live comfortably from their winnings.

We can thank poker's simplicity, its equality, the emotional thrills, and the massive television explosion for the nation's sudden move to the tables. Poker offers a person a chance (although slim) at finally realizing the riches that only a rare percentage of the population enjoys. Poker also shows us that sometimes we really don't need to work hard for our dream; all we need is a little luck and enough money to cover the blinds. As an avid poker player myself, I know that I for one am not willing to give up my seat anytime soon, and I know millions of Americans share my opinion.

WORKS CITED

Clark, Kim. "I fold. Mom Says I Gotta Come Home." *U.S. News & World Report* 138 (2005): 50. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Gale Group. San Joaquin Delta College Library, Stockton, CA. 7 November 2005 <http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>.

Condotta, Bob. "Texas Hold'em is the hottest game around." *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center*. Gale Group. 2005. San Joaquin Delta College Library, Stockton, CA. 9 November 2005 <http://galenet.galegroup.com>.

Finan, Kristin. "When To Fold'Em." *Houston Chronicle Edition* 3 20 May 2005. *NewsBank Newsfile*. San Joaquin Delta College Library, Stockton, CA. 16 November 2005 <http://inforweb.newsbank.com>.

Koumpilova, Mila. "Going all in." *Forum* 10 April 2005. *Newsbank Newsfile*. San Joaquin Delta College Library, Stockton, CA. 16 November 2005 <http://inforweb.newsbank.com>.

Peters, Timothy B. "Publishers are betting on poker." *Publishers Weekly* 252 (2005): 20+. *Extended Academic ASAP*. Gale Group. San Joaquin Delta College Library, Stockton, CA. 7 November 2005 <http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>.

Our WARDROBES

by Jana Glines-Harvey

Our wardrobes are important assets, possibly more than we realize. A wardrobe protects us from the elements, keeps us from exposing ourselves in the presence of others, and plays a vital role in influencing our behavior. Besides doing this, and often without us knowing, a wardrobe greatly affects how others perceive us. The clothing we wear, whether lounging around the house or on a trip around the world, influences our behavior and the perception of us by others.

As members of the human race we are required by society to clothe ourselves. Johnson said, "Naked people have little or no influence in society" (58). He also said, "The clothes make the man" (58). If this be true, how exactly do the clothes make him?

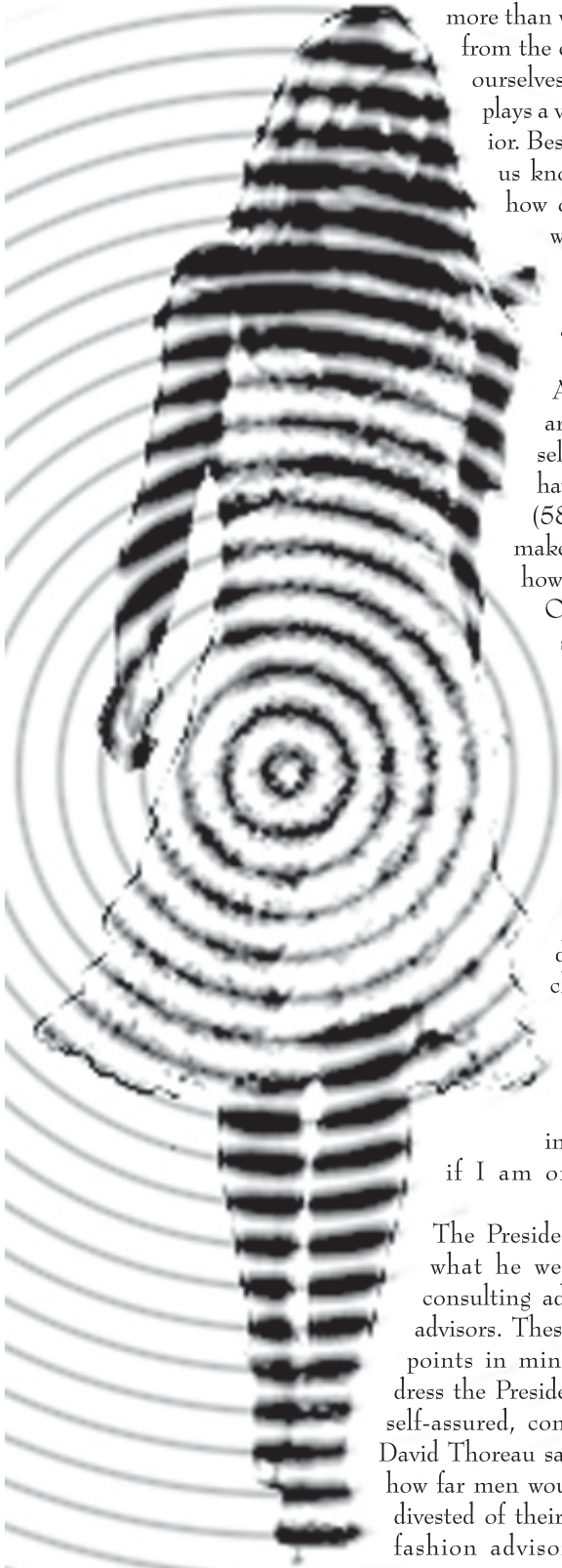
One way is to make the man feel a specific way and that feeling may provide adequate confidence for presenting himself accordingly.

There are those who hold the idea that being dressed in a particular style will not change a person into a whole new being. I am only a small person with a small set of manners to draw from. However, a significant change happens when I dress in leather and fur. I find myself making every effort to stand tall, walk gracefully and present myself as a lady. My clothing makes me feel valuable, even if I am only covered in dead animals.

The President of the United States knows what he wears is important. Along with consulting advisors, he also consults fashion advisors. These consultants must keep two key points in mind. They must consider how to dress the President so he will appear trustworthy self-assured, comfortable and confident. Henry David Thoreau said, "It is an interesting question how far men would retain their rank if they were divested of their clothes" (102). The President's fashion advisors know what Thoreau knew.



Jana Glines-Harvey has lived in the Sierra foothills with her family for the past ten years and enjoys the sunny outdoors with her Golden Retriever and Yorkshire Terrier. Her favorite memory is the time when she flew thousands of feet above Greenland while reading God's Word and enjoying the Northern Lights. Though her major is undeclared, her love for Jesus and adventure keeps her hopeful about the future.



OUR OWN PERSONAL STYLE AND DRESS ARE IMPORTANT AND, WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, THEY PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN THE WAY WE PERCEIVE OURSELVES AND IN THE WAY OTHERS PERCEIVE US.

Many politicians have long recognized the importance of clothing. When Lamar Alexander ran for governor of Tennessee in 1978, "conducting a grass-roots campaign, he walked across the state wearing a work man's attire--a red and black plaid Levi's shirt" (Rubinstein 4), he won the election which encouraged him to run for the Republican presidential candidate in 1996 and again in 1999. Alexander wore the same shirt which led many to believe he was using style instead of facts to win the nomination. He in fact lost (4).

Fashions vary greatly. If frilly undergarments don't do it for you, sweat pants and hoodies may. Once considered the attire of locker rooms and gym class, they are now commonly worn to the mall, out to dinner, and even to church. My sister is seventeen and to this day, when I picture her, she is wearing sweats. My sister, Laura, has spent every possible moment of her life in sweats.

Sweat pants may be a prerequisite for an ideal day in my sister's life but the same cannot be said of my mother. She avoids sweat pants at all costs. The lazy feeling they provide is not conducive to my mother's lifestyle. Wearing garments which cause her to feel awake, alert and energized are essential to her productivity. Both work and casual clothing provide positive results.

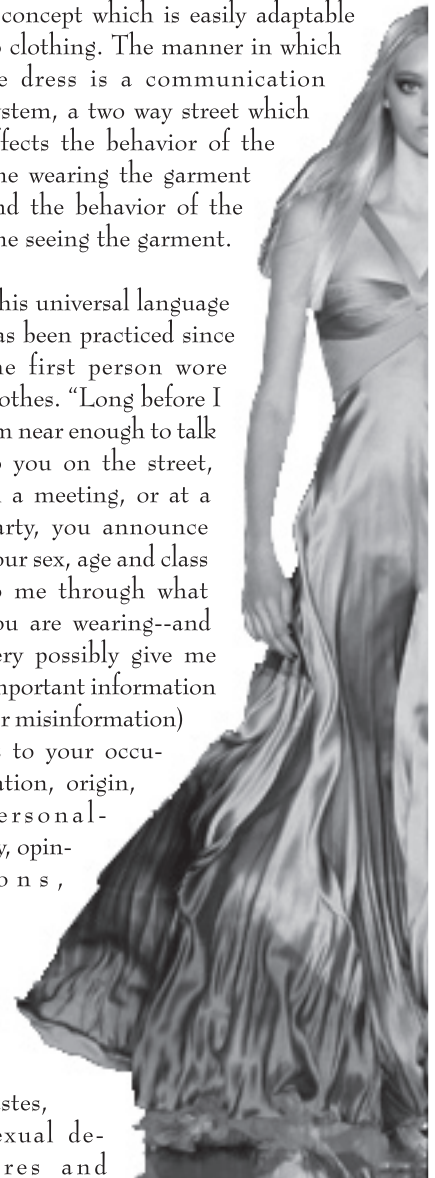
While clothing can afford us positive results, my mother relayed a story to me of how one's clothing can have a negative impact. The parents of a teenage boy recently shared with her their parenting techniques. Their son Damien had acquired a habit of wearing his pants low around his waist and decorating them with chains from side to side. He also began arranging studs in various places on his clothing. Damien's parents began to notice that when he wore those items he became rebellious. When not wearing the decorations he returned to his normal self. They quickly put a stop to his

dressing style by threat of punishment, and instantly, their son was back to his old self. Damien's bad behavior had been the result of the way his clothing influenced him.

We are not the only ones affected by our clothes; others are also influenced. Social scientists generally "take it for granted that an individual's clothing expresses meaning" (Rubinstein 3). "A picture is worth a thousand words" recognizes a concept which is easily adaptable to clothing. The manner in which we dress is a communication system, a two way street which affects the behavior of the one wearing the garment and the behavior of the one seeing the garment.

This universal language has been practiced since the first person wore clothes. "Long before I am near enough to talk to you on the street, in a meeting, or at a party, you announce your sex, age and class to me through what you are wearing--and very possibly give me important information (or misinformation) as to your occupation, origin, personal-ity, opin-ions ,

tastes, sexual de-sires and



current mood” (Lurie 3). I may not consciously register all this information, but I will recognize it just as you will. When the time comes for us to speak actual words, we will have already spoken in one of the oldest and most universal forms of communication (3).

We are each impressionable characters and there is no one immune from prejudging, though we may try not to. A close friend once told me she considered one’s appearance on the outside as crucial as one’s personality and abilities on the inside. This philosophy resulted in her getting a job, in spite of intense competition for the position. Eileen attended a job interview where she impressed her interviewers with both her dress and abilities. Her rival, though more qualified for the job than Eileen, was not as well groomed in dress and appearance. Even though my friend had ample skills for the job she was hired more for her impeccable wardrobe than her abilities. We as humans often pass judgments based upon appearances.

When a person’s station in life, role or attitude changes, it can often be reflected in the adoption of a different style of dress. In the 1980’s many women who held jobs outside of their homes sought to prove this did not equate to being a feminist. They created a unique clothing style to prove their point, one which is no longer popular. They wore dark colored formal wear from the hips up accompanied by threatening purses. This was countered by an entirely different style from the hips below where mini skirts, sheer tights, and the highest heels around were sported. The idea was, when she sat behind her desk and dealt with the public she appeared sturdy and stout. However, when she arose from her desk, such as in the presence of her boss and coworkers, she assumed an entirely different look--one that said she was playful and girlie (Lurie xi).

The longing for self-transformation has been a part of the American people since the earliest days of our democratic beginnings (Elliott 485). Not surprisingly, this includes our own unique styles and the way we choose to dress. Especially in today’s times, we are required to build our own images--our individual identity--based upon our appearance. Our images are seen as “an object of individual control” (486). Interestingly, if we are well dressed in front of others who are not, we feel good about ourselves and sometimes even feel powerful. In the pres-

ence of those who surpass us in style and dress, we often feel negative feelings towards ourselves and may even feel humiliated! In diverse circumstances this personal style can cause us to feel either elevated or inferior. Our own personal style and dress are important and, whether we like it or not, they play a vital role in the way we perceive ourselves and in the way others perceive us.

WORKS CITED

Aesop. “Fashion.” *Phillips’ Great Thoughts and Funny Sayings*. Ed. Bob Phillips. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1993. 125.

Elliot, Carl. “Putting Your Best Face Forward.” *Elements of Argument*. Ed. Annette T. Rottenberg and Donna Haisty Winchell. Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s. 2000. 484-486.

Fussell, Paul. *Uniforms: Why We Are What We Wear*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. 2002.

Johnson. “Clothes.” *The All-American Quote Book*. Ed. Michael Ragan and Bob Phillips. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1995. 58.

Kula, Marisa. “Victoria’s Not-So-Secret Strategy.” *The Bedford Guide for College Writers*. Ed. X. J. Kennedy, Dorothy M. Kennedy and Sylvia A. Holladay. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2002. 510-513.

Lurie, Alison. *The Language of Clothes*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1981.

Pope, Alexander. “Fashion.” *Phillips’ Great Thoughts and Funny Sayings*. Ed. Bob Phillips. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1993. 125.

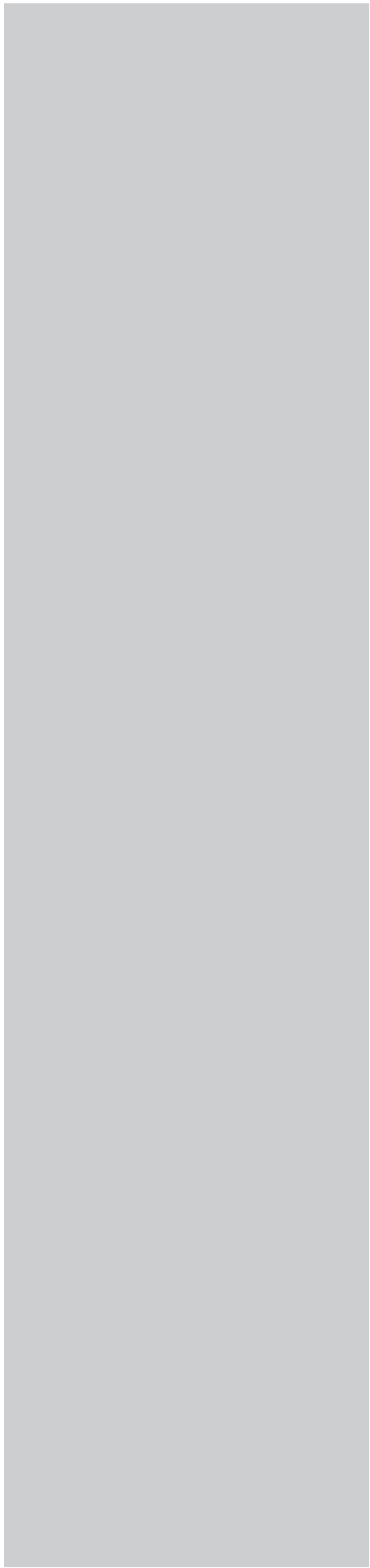
Robin, Jennifer. *Clothe Your Spirit*. San Francisco: Spirit Press. 1987.

Rubinstein, Ruth. *Dress Codes*. Boulder: West View Press. 2001.

Spiker, Ted. “How Men Really Feel About Their Bodies.” *Elements of Argument*. Ed. Annette T. Rottenberg and Donna Haisty Winchell. Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s. 2000. 499-503.

Thoreau, Henry David. “Clothes.” *Phillips’ Book of Great Thoughts and Funny Sayings*. Ed. Bob Phillips. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1993. 102.

Unknown. “Clothes.” *Phillips’ Book of Great Thoughts and Funny Sayings*. Ed. Bob Phillips. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1993. 70.



DIVORCE

by Jasonya Burke

Divorce is the separation of two people bound by marriage. This is an experience that even the most positive minded individual would not like to endure. There are many scenarios that can cause a divorce to occur. I cannot begin to list the number of situations that contribute to divorce in today's society. I can only offer an explanation based on my own experience. I pursued a divorce after living with my ex-husband for ten years. The cause of my divorce was primarily due to his physical and verbal abuse on a wide scale. His temper, alcohol, and marijuana use were strong contributors. My final decision to divorce my husband stemmed from his last threat to kill me and my son.

For a long period of time I was completely blind to the abuse and hate that he projected towards me. Then one cold winter night, my ex-husband began drinking. He drank so much that he could not clearly pronounce his words. Shortly after, he approached me and asked me to make him dinner. I was busy doing other things and took longer than he expected me to. This threw him into a violent temper tantrum that escalated to the point where he punched me in the face with such force that it almost broke my jaw. Minutes later he was holding me by the neck, glaring at me with eyes that seemed to burn with fire, and said, "First I am going to kill you, and then I am going to kill him!" (Him, meaning my son of five years.) I was terrified and had no way of escaping that night. I realized that I needed to take some serious steps to protect me and my son. Divorce was the only answer. Two and a half years later, I am just barely recovering from everything that has happened. Now that I am divorced, these five areas of my life have been affected. My son was affected the most, then my serenity, my financial situation, my social life, and my place of residence.

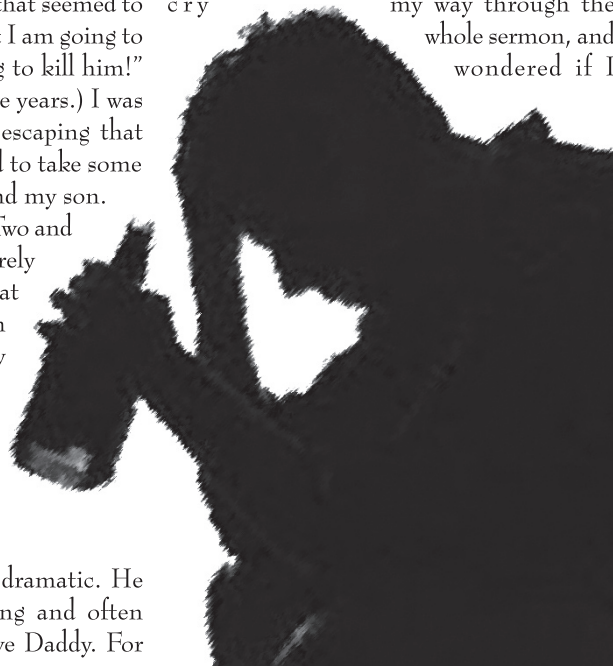
The effects on my son were dramatic. He struggled to keep from crying and often asked my why we had to leave Daddy. For

a child of just five years I can only imagine how difficult that would be. Not only did he miss his father, he missed his friends at his school. I had to transfer him to another school to ensure that he would be safe while I followed through with the divorce. His grades plummeted, he had temper tantrums all of the time, and he did not want to complete any of his assigned chores. I believe that he was severely depressed. I was often too busy or distracted with other things to patiently cater to his every whim, as he was used to before the divorce began. Adjustment was a whole new concept for both of us.

My serenity was deeply affected as I struggled to keep my composure between court dates, taking time off of work, and curious co-workers. I was a wreck but I hid it well. My son often asked me why he could not see Daddy and I had to take time out of my busy schedule to set him on my lap and explain to him how important it was that we were safe. I will admit that there were days all I did was cry. I attended church religiously to gain strength and give my son something to keep himself occupied. The church had a children's activity while the adults were attending the service. I remember some Sundays at church, all I could do was cry my way through the whole sermon, and wondered if I



Jasonya Burke was born in Burlington, Washington, and spent a number of her childhood years traveling on the road, while being home-schooled. Eventually, her family settled in the San Diego area. She attended Oceanside High School but received her G.E.D. after moving to Spokane, Washington, in 1992. She married, then divorced, and moved to the Central Valley in 2003. She is currently pursuing her A.A. at Delta College and plans to transfer to a local university where she hopes to complete a bachelor's in the field of forensics and criminal law. She enjoys camping, water sports, and parasailing with her son, significant other and close friends.



**MINUTES
LATER HE WAS
HOLDING ME
BY THE NECK,
GLARING AT ME
WITH EYES THAT
SEEMED TO BURN
WITH FIRE, AND
SAID, "FIRST I
AM GOING TO
KILL YOU, AND
THEN I AM GOING
TO KILL HIM!"**

be able to stop. At one point, I even strategically placed Bible verses around my apartment to remind myself that we would be okay.

Months passed and my divorce slowly crept along. My financial situation deteriorated as my savings dwindled from divorce fees. Then my car broke down, which cost me another five hundred dollars that I did not have. The saying holds true that when it rains, it pours. I remember looking in the refrigerator one morning and all that was left were a couple of eggs and a quarter of a gallon of milk. The freezer was bare with only a few old Otter Pops. The refrigerator was almost always empty, until one day I counted my change and went shopping for food. I could afford to spend only about thirty dollars. As I strolled through the store, I put what I needed in the basket and forgot to keep counting the cost. When I arrived at the check out, I placed everything on the conveyor belt and smiled at the clerk. She then asked me, "Did you find everything that you needed?" and I happily replied that I did indeed find everything that I wanted. After the clerk finished scanning every item, she totaled it up and said with a witty tone, "That will be one hundred and sixty nine dollars ma'am." I was shocked out of my silent daze and wrote her a check, all the while wondering how I would be able to cover it. I realized that this was an extremely irresponsible thing to do, but it was sure good to see food in my refrigerator and a smile on my son's face as he munched on a bowl of crispy Lucky Charms cereal. I cried the whole next day in fear that my checking account would be depleted and I would not be able to pay the rent on time. As it turned out, I was lucky. I received a check from my work as an employee bonus.

Another part of my life that was affected by my divorce was my social life; you can imagine how many friends and family members you accumulate in a ten-year period of time. To my dismay, even my closest friends no longer called me. These were long-term friends that I had shared many personal thoughts with. These were the friends that I thought I would have for a lifetime. I was wrong and I learned fast how something simple like a difference in opinion could force even the best of friends apart. This experience was depressing and discouraging. It was difficult to see all of my close friends fade away. The phone calls stopped, we no longer had dinner meetings or barbecues, and even the relatives on my

ex-husband's side of the family never called to ask if I was okay. I was alone, completely alone with a little boy to take care of.

Several months passed, and I decided to move to Southern California. This was a good decision since I had friends there, and I could pursue a new life. This meant that my whole life would change dramatically. I realized that I would be leaving a place that I had known well for ten years to live in an area that I was not familiar with. I was also sacrificing a secure job in the medical field, and I understood that I would have to move my son, once again, to a new school. Finding an apartment on the little credit that I had would prove to be difficult, and I was not sure how easy it would be to find a job that would support us. This was a huge decision and I was both excited and scared out of my wits. I decided that I would follow through with it since two of my good friends opened their doors to me and my son until I was stable. I humbly accepted their offer and they happily celebrated my arrival.

Divorce has taught me many things. It has taught me to be strong even when everything looks hopeless. It has taught me to be patient. I have grown tremendously through all of this and have become a stronger and more mentally stable person. My son is doing well in school and has many new friends. He has learned to respect me more now that he has positive influences in his life. I am now attending a local college pursuing my career. I am independent and have much more confidence in myself. I can truly say through all of the pain and tears that it has been worth it. I feel that I have lived a lifetime in the past two and a half years.

Divorce is an ugly force that can bring people together or tear them apart. It can heal broken hearts or maim them for life. Divorce has a tremendous effect on each one of us involved. Children are torn between mother and father, finances are argued over as if they are the only things that are important, and hearts are scarred for a lifetime. Careers are damaged and friendships are severed forever. Unfortunately this sometimes must occur in order to protect our children and sometimes ourselves against people who only wish to hurt us. Our strength is challenged and, at best, we have a rare moment where we see our children's true resilience shine through and recognize our own ability to fight the good fight.

CROSSING THE GULF INTO ADULTHOOD

by Dante Monty



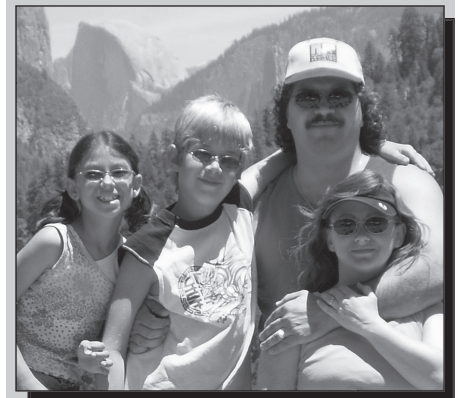
Whenever American sailors sail into the Persian Gulf, they always end up here. It is 1987 in the only American bar in this tiny country of Bahrain. It's just like any other bar; watered-down drinks are being served, music is playing, and multiple conversations are happening. There's a pool table in the middle of the bar and that's where you'll find me. I like playing pool and meeting new friends. Today, my new friends are from our sister ship. Over a game and drinks we start comparing our ships.

Shipboard life in a war zone is not a relaxing experience. My ship is always in Condition 3, known as wartime steaming. That means that we are standing eight-hour watches with 16 hours off duty and then back on eight hours. Over and over we stand our watches, and to add insult to misery, all of the big hatches are down, leaving only the small, two-foot diameter scuttles open. On a Navy ship, you have big hatches that allow you to walk up and down the stairs like you would in any building. You also have little scuttles that are shown in any submarine movie ever produced. The little scuttles make it very difficult to go from

one level of the ship to another. I know that this is so we can be better prepared in case of an attack, but it's still a hassle.

Well, you can imagine my surprise when these guys, back at the bar, tell me that they aren't doing all this. They're in Condition 4, which is peacetime steaming, none of the long shifts or extra watches that come with Condition 3. They don't have to squeeze through the small hole of a scuttle or expend all of the extra energy that goes into preparing for an attack that will almost never happen. Oh well, I am not on "USS Their Ship;" I am on "USS My Ship" and we're ready. Besides, all of my drinks are free tonight, thanks to their bad pool playing.

Two weeks pass and I find myself on the 1600-2400 hour watch. That's 4 p.m. until midnight for civilians. I'm manning the air search radar, and my job is to find anything that looks like an airplane. While searching, I'm listening to my lookouts with one ear and monitoring a radio channel with the other. Around 2030 hours (8:30 p.m.) local time, the Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) airplane reports an in-



Dante Monty is married to Regina and has two kids, Anthony and Tosha. After serving in the US Navy as a Sonar Technician for ten years, he worked with Intel Corporation and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He is planning on transferring to CSU Stanislaus to pursue a BA in Computer Information System.

THEN I HEAR THAT THE U.S.S. STARK HAS BEEN HIT! WHAT IS GOING ON?

**THE NEWS
REPORTS SAID,
“A US NAVY
FRIGATE IN THE
PERSIAN GULF,”
BUT THEY NEVER
STATED THE NAME
OF THE SHIP THAT
WAS HIT.**

bound aircraft approaching one of our ships. They continue to report the position of this inbound aircraft every few minutes. The ships in the area send out air warnings to the offending plane. The warnings tell the plane to change course. The AWACS then make a frightening report. They say, “Inbound aircraft, Iraqi F-1, flying an attack ship formation. CPA (closest point of approach) to the Stark, 10 miles.” Even though we are friends with Iraq, no aircraft flying an attack ship formation would or should ever get that close to an American ship.

Then I hear that the U.S.S. Stark has been hit! What is going on? We’re not at war with Iraq; Iran is. It’s their war, and we’re just here to protect our interest in the region. Listening to the drama unfold many miles away from us, I’m scared to death. I’m afraid for them and afraid for us.

Talk about stressed! First of all, I have my own duties to perform to protect the lives of everyone aboard my ship. Normally, I talk to my lookouts and try to keep the mood light, but not now. I tell all of my lookouts basically what has happened because they can’t hear the reports that I’m privy to. They don’t need to hear all the details right now, and I’m still piecing it together. Then, I tell them I expect total professionalism on the radio circuit, and that I will need confirmation of any and all possible contacts. We do not need any enemy forces sneaking up on us. Of course they don’t need me to tell them this, but I feel like I’m assuring them that we won’t suffer the same fate as our sister ship. While I’m conducting my duties, the captain receives permission to rendezvous with the Stark. We’re told to proceed at max operational speed. I cannot divulge what speed that is, but I can say that I have never gone that fast on a naval vessel before or since.

When I am finally relieved of duty, our orders are to go to sleep. The captain says we don’t know what lies ahead of us, and we need all the rest we can get. I lie down in my bunk thinking about life. I’m 19 and newly married. My wife is still in Canada, where I met her. I haven’t had a chance to move her and her son to the base in California. Before I left, I had given her one half of a Mizpah medallion. (A Mizpah medallion is a medallion that is broken in two. You keep one half and give the other half to a loved one.) I have the other around my neck. I say my prayers

and put the medal in my hand. I clutch it so tight that it hurts, but I can’t stop. The pain reminds me I’m alive. I drift off to sleep, thinking of my own fragile mortality.

Something wakes me from my sleep. It’s not my alarm clock; I didn’t set one. I suddenly realize that I was not awakened by noise but by the lack of it. The rumbling of the ship’s engines during the high-speed transit is gone. The ship is quiet, eerily quiet for a warship. I realize that my knuckles are white from the grip that I had on the Mizpah medallion all night. I get out of bed and dress quickly. We must be on the scene.

I run as quickly as I can up two flights of stairs to the main deck of the ship. I step outside and stop cold. The sky is blue and the sun is rising over the horizon. The ocean is as calm as a swimming pool. Under other circumstances, it would be a beautiful day. But today is not a beautiful day, because of the site before me. It is an eerily familiar ship in an unfamiliar circumstance. It is big and gray with the number 31 on the bow. It looks completely normal...except for the smoke rising from it and the way it is twisted in the middle. The port, or left, side of the ship is tilted toward the water. All I can think about is the loss of life and the possibility of the USS Stark sinking beneath this beautiful ocean.

There’s no way that we are going to let our sister ship slide under the waves. We’re going to do everything that we can to save her. There are already two other ships assisting her but they are not the USS Reid. The other ships could have saved the Stark by themselves but the Reid is the same class of ship as the Stark, and we have practiced for this very scenario aboard our own vessel many times. We know the routine. We know that ship like the back of our hands.



We send in our best firefighting teams and engineering teams to relieve the other crew. The first things that need to be done are to get the fires under control and dewater the ship. Dewatering is a process that gets the firefighting water out of the ship. The ship is listing heavily to port (the left side of the ship) and we've got to keep it from getting worse.

I volunteer to fight the fires, but since I'm newly married they tell me they'll let me know if they need me. I just want to do something, anything, to help instead of standing around watching and waiting. Many sailors lend their assistance to the rescue efforts, and none come back the same. The big burly guys, and the even bigger talkers went into the fires bravely but they came back changed forever. I can see it in their faces. They don't want to reveal the things that they saw over there. They had to call back to us on the Reid to send over a cutting torch so they could cut open the hatches that were welded shut from the heat of fires on board the Stark. It was a horrendous scene that they will never forget. Many, many stories could be told about the deaths of 37 sailors, some still in their beds, and those who barely survived. The date was May 17, 1987, a day that lingers in my mind. It was a sad day in the history of the US Navy, the lives of the sailors and their families, and the news of the day's events was being spread all around the world.

Every story you read in the newspapers comes from the same sources. We could see the message traffic as reporters were filing their stories. Let me tell you this: just because you see something in black and white doesn't mean that it's true. The reports we were hearing scared us and we were there. All of a sudden I thought of my wife. What was she hearing? What was she being told? I could not get word to her. We were not allowed to communicate with anyone back home.

For three days, we were not allowed to transmit any telegrams. I later learned that during the communication blackout, my mother-in-law saw the report on television and called my wife, who quickly turned on the news. The only thing my wife saw was a ship that looked like mine with a big number "3" on the side. The second digit of the ship's number was covered with smoke. My ship's number was 30 and the Stark was number 31. The news reports said, "A US Navy Frigate in the Persian

Gulf," but they never stated the name of the ship that was hit. She was in a panic. Finally, on the fourth day, I managed to send a brief message, "Honey, I am ok."

My wife received a phone call from Mayport, Florida, passing on my telegraph message. The lady who received my message had a son-in-law who was onboard the Stark. She called my wife from home to personally give her my message. She said that it would be nice to hear from her son-in-law, but there was no word from him yet. When we finally reached port, I called my wife and talked to her for three hours. It was the best \$300 phone call that I had ever made!

Weeks after the attack, I heard a story about the guy who was the Stark's forward lookout during the attack. He said that he saw a flash in the sky and reported it to the Officer of the Deck (OOD). The OOD said that it was probably a flare. Suddenly, the deck of the ship rocked. Sirens went off and people were screaming. Then he saw another flash. He dutifully reported it to the OOD. The OOD's reply to the forward lookout of "Jump!" was probably the last word that that officer ever spoke. The lookout was stationed on the O3 level, 3 levels above the main deck. The water about 30 feet below him looked like it offered a much better chance of survival than where he stood, so he jumped. Several hours later, a Navy destroyer on its way to help the now stricken USS Stark fished him out of the gulf.

My experience with the deaths of fellow sailors onboard the USS Stark changed my perspective on my own mortality. As a sailor from the USS Reid wrote in a poem, "Little did we know, but accustomed we'd grown to the price that we were willing to pay." I could never explain to you how I felt that day. It was an overwhelming sense of fear, hatred and hopelessness. I hope that reading this real life experience will allow you to appreciate all of our men and women in the Armed Services.



**THERE'S NO WAY
THAT WE ARE
GOING TO LET
OUR SISTER SHIP
SLIDE UNDER THE
WAVES.**



WHO WAS THAT GUY?

the author chooses to remain anonymous

Last year I spent 421 days, 300 Raids, and 81 Sniper combat missions in Iraq fighting for my life. My last six months in the country were spent in the ancient city of Mosul located in the northern half of Iraq next to the Tigris River. During my time there I experienced true life changing horrors, but nothing could have prepared me for my last day in Iraq.

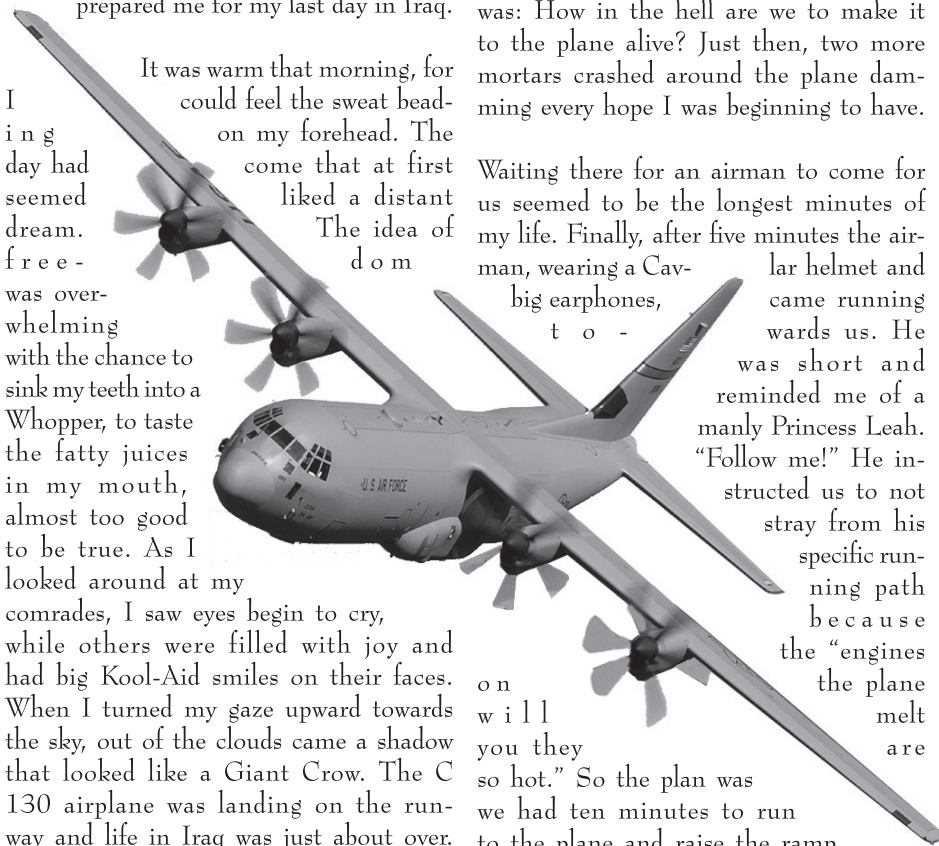
It was warm that morning, for I could feel the sweat beading on my forehead. The day had come that at first seemed like a distant dream. The idea of freedom was overwhelming with the chance to sink my teeth into a Whopper, to taste the fatty juices in my mouth, almost too good to be true. As I looked around at my comrades, I saw eyes begin to cry, while others were filled with joy and had big Kool-Aid smiles on their faces. When I turned my gaze upward towards the sky, out of the clouds came a shadow that looked like a Giant Crow. The C-130 airplane was landing on the runway and life in Iraq was just about over.

Boom! The sound of thunder crashed down to my left. We were in the middle of a mortar attack. The explosion caused the concrete ground around us to fly up as rocks and white powder shot out and stung my face. My lungs and eyes began to burn as the dust swirled around and formed a black cloud of smoke. This smoke surrounded me, making it impossible to see further than an arm's length away. Boom! An explosion to my right. This explosion was so close it vibrated my feet up off the ground. I looked around and out of the smoke there was a little concrete, shack-like building. Without hesitation, I ran to the shack as fast as my

legs could, carrying 130 pounds of gear. When I finally made it inside I saw all sixty other grunts heading for my tiny safe haven. Somehow, by dog piling and squeezing together, and having my foot stuck in someone's face, all sixty of us packed into the shack like sardines. The only thought running through my mind at this time was: How in the hell are we to make it to the plane alive? Just then, two more mortars crashed around the plane damping every hope I was beginning to have.

Waiting there for an airman to come for us seemed to be the longest minutes of my life. Finally, after five minutes the airman, wearing a Cavalry helmet and big earphones, came running towards us. He was short and reminded me of a manly Princess Leah. "Follow me!" He instructed us to not stray from his specific running path because the "engines on the plane will melt you they are so hot." So the plan was we had ten minutes to run to the plane and raise the ramp, all the while hoping that the enemy did not have the plane zeroed in on their mortar sights. In one rush we all ran in a straight line across the airfield and onto the plane. As I squeezed in, I noticed that there was only one round window the size of a standard school clock, and as we gathered speed, I watched the runway disappear through that window. All of a sudden the plane made a grinding sound as if the gears were working double time, and we took a sharp right with the wing only a few feet from the ground. Quiet confusion tidal waved through the plane. What was going on? Quickly another gear grinding sound vibrated the plane and we shot straight up

THE ONLY THOUGHT RUNNING THROUGH MY MIND AT THIS TIME WAS: HOW IN THE HELL ARE WE TO MAKE IT TO THE PLANE ALIVE?



THIS SMOKE SURROUNDED ME, MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO SEE FURTHER THAN AN ARM'S LENGTH AWAY. BOOM! AN EXPLOSION TO MY RIGHT.

at an eighty-five degree angle. In the back of the C 130 airplanes there are no seat belts, only cold metal benches to grab onto. So soldiers were flying all over the plane while the rest of us held white-knuckled onto the benches. The cabin pressure changed so fast and we sped upwards so quickly that men around me began to vomit everywhere and on everyone. Finally, after two life-threatening maneuvers, the plane straightened out and we were safely on our way back home.

When we arrived home, the report came out that a young man used a satellite phone to call his wife. He told her when he was leaving as well as the location. This information

was not to be told. Everybody at our base knew that terrorists could, and would, tap into our phone calls. The terrorists were able to tap into that specific phone call the guy made to his wife. They were able to find out when we were leaving for the States and where from. This resulted in the terrorists attacking our location with mortars and launching two anti-surface-to-air missiles at our plane. One man's carelessness almost got us killed. So after the stress of such a day a bunch of us headed out to a bar. We raised our glasses to being home and to better times. As we drank we sat and wondered to ourselves: Who was that guy?



Gardenia

by Dania Yadira Avelar

In my family, Christmas is a remarkable time to reinforce the family union. On one particular occasion, we celebrated the holiday at my grandmother's house. As I entered grandma's front door, traditional carols lifted my spirits, enticing aromas excited my taste buds, and the deafening squeals of stampeding children echoed throughout the living room. I made my way to the kitchen and stepped back for a moment to observe the way my family was enjoying each other's company. As soon as everybody had eaten, my family gathered in a circle to exchange gifts. I anxiously waited to discover who my secret Santa was. When it was my father's turn to give away his present, he clutched a present from under the tree and placed it gently in my hands. I opened the emerald covered box with the scarlet ribbon on top, hoping to get the cellular phone I had been yearning for. To my surprise, it was not a phone at all. It was a perfume that my mother and grandmother always wore, Gardenia. I was not amused with the gift. Little did I know, however, that throughout the years Gardenia would etch precious memories in my life such as my first date, my grandmother's stories, and my mother's obliging attentiveness.

My ears perked up at the sound of the doorbell. I drenched perfume all over my favorite crimson shirt, dashed out of the lavatory and slammed the door behind me. From the look on David's face, I thought I left him waiting too long, but I soon realized that my father was standing right behind me. Since this was my initial date, my father felt eager to be acquainted with the pubescent boy who was taking me to the movie. After eyeing David up and down, Dad gave us a long sermon about not talking to strangers and not arriving late. Soon, David and I were off to see the motion picture. Within a couple of minutes in the car, I sensed that my boyfriend was stridently inhaling oxygen through his mouth. I wondered what was wrong with him. Then, I understood

that my perfume was the cause of all of this. Apparently, my cologne's scent was so intense that you would not notice a skunk if it waddled right in front of you. I rolled down the squeaky window as fast as I could. Finally, we arrived at our destination and enjoyed the movie. On our way back home I wondered if David had adapted to my acute aroma, and I wished I had simply applied deodorant. Afterwards, he walked me to the door and when I least expected it I felt David plant a sweet, soft kiss on my plump cheeks. As he walked away, he suddenly swirled back and said that he would not wash his shirt because my fragrance reminded him of our first date. I could not help but smile.

Not only does this perfume remind me of my first date, it also brings to mind my

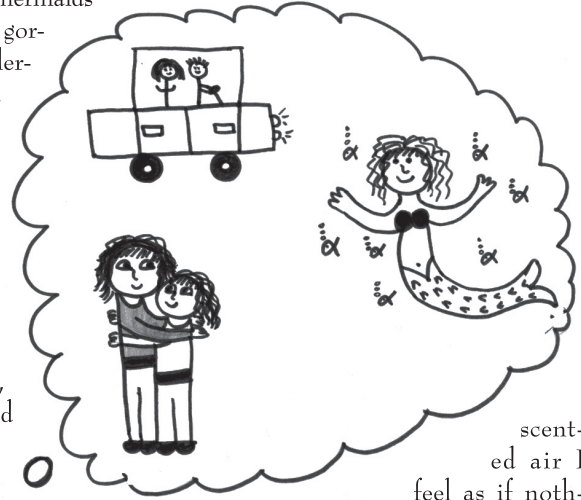
**APPARENTLY,
MY COLOGNE'S
SCENT WAS SO
INTENSE THAT
YOU WOULD NOT
NOTICE A SKUNK
IF IT WADDLED
RIGHT IN FRONT
OF YOU.**

grandmother's stories. I remember as a youngster that my grandma filled the room with the scent of fresh picked gardenias. Hunting my grandma down was by no means a problem for me because all I had to do was elevate my nose, catch hold of the perfume, and follow it. My grandmother always had electrifying stories to enlighten me whenever my parents were out of town or dining with close friends. Her anecdotes usually consisted of fascinating fairy tales.



Dania Yadira Avelar, also known as Yaya, has lived in Stockton all of her life, nineteen years to be precise. Her favorite hobbies are meditating, practicing yoga, interpreting her dreams, and spending valuable time with her family. Currently, she is a member of the Alpha Gamma Sigma club and enjoys doing community service with her friends. Also, she loves her job as a statistics tutor at Delta College because relieving her tutees from their academic plights thrills her. Her future goals are to join the Peace Corps for a couple of years, raise a happy family, and graduate from Stanford with a PhD in psychology. She feels that being raised in a Mexican-American family has caused religion to influence her perspective about life. Her ultimate goal is to get closer to God and be at peace with everyone around her.

She mentioned everything from mermaids who longed to become human to gorgeous princesses who waited tolerantly for their charming prince. After her long narratives, I found myself dozing off to a cozy slumber. When I woke up from my siesta, I customarily found a plate filled with chocolate chip cookies waiting for me. For the duration of my life I will always savor my grandmother's habitually exaggerated stories, her scrumptious cookies, and most of all her sweet aroma.



Finally, Gardenia evokes my mother's colossal attentiveness. It seems as though my mom was born with a sixth sense: she always knows when I have a problem even though

scented air I feel as if nothing can go wrong and that everything will be fine. After my mom's question, I know there is no way to avoid having "the talk." Therefore, I take a deep breath and tell her what is bothering me. In a couple of minutes, my mom finds a simple solution to my crisis. Following our conversation, she wraps her warm, slender arms around me and gives me a little smack on my forehead. I feel composed and protected whenever my mom's unforgettable cologne embraces me.


HUNTING MY GRANDMA DOWN WAS BY NO MEANS A PROBLEM FOR ME BECAUSE ALL I HAD TO DO WAS ELEVATE MY NOSE, CATCH HOLD OF THE PERFUME, AND FOLLOW IT.

my facade expresses unmitigated merriment. On every occasion, she starts off by giving me "that" look and pinpointing my quandary. Then, she stands six inches away from my face, gazes deep into my dark russet eyes, and says, "Come on, spill the beans." At that instant the only thing I can focus on is on her sweet perfume. Every time I sniff the

As the years have progressed, it is evident that my perspective about Christmas has changed. Before, I did appreciate my family's company, but I placed significant emphasis on the presents I received. I did not realize this until my father gave me Gardenia as a Christmas present. I have learned that whenever someone bestows a gift, to not place so much value on the object itself, but on what the object represents; love, friendship, and success are some examples. Perhaps some day other colognes will engrave many memories in my mind and soul, but only time will tell.

Sylvia Plath

by Sara McDougall



I came to Sylvia Plath's work like most people do, through her fictionalized autobiographical novel The Bell Jar. As an adolescent girl, I identified with Esther Greenwood's sense of being lost and trapped under the distorting "bell jar" of mental illness and suicidal thought (264).

However, it soon became evident to me that it was unfair to judge

Sara McDougall is a Liberal Arts major. This is her first published collegiate piece.

THE POET SEEMS TO HAVE VIEWED THE CANDLES AS AMBASSADORS OF A PURER TIME AND PLACE, AND TOOK THEIR DESCENT INTO QUAIN OLD-FASHIONEDNESS AS A SIGN OF HER OWN IMPENDING AGE-INDUCED OBSCURITY.

Sylvia Plath as an author based on the things she considered unworthy of publication. Her real art was her poetry, which is written (and read on recordings of the poet) in such a manner as to bring the author's unique humor and personality to light.

People are so often caught up in the tragic romance of her death and the dissolution of her marriage that they bypass the immensity of her poetic gift. Plath's daughter, Frieda Hughes, in a poem entitled "Readers," published in Britain's The Guardian speaks of the phenomenon of Plath-fandom: "They scooped out her eyes to see how she saw, /And bit away her tongue in tiny mouthfuls/ To speak with her voice." Instead of holding Sylvia Plath up as modern poetic martyr or symbol of literary feminism, appropriating her for one's own use, one ought to leave her family and psychological life be and acknowledge Plath for the parts of her life she actively created and chose while living to make public. Her poetry speaks with a vibrancy and clarity that is at once thoroughly modern and ancient, and its beauty is what she should be remembered for.

Sylvia Plath, like so many other gods and goddesses of American literature, was born in New England to intellectual parents, both of whom were teachers. Sylvia Plath came into the world on October 27, 1932 to Otto Plath and Aurelia Schober Plath. Two years later the couple gave birth to a son named Warren. Sylvia was by all accounts a very bright, happy and creative child. She adored and was adored by her parents and grandparents, and lived in a very supportive, happy extended family home for the first eight years of her life (Schober Plath 18). The Plath children

were read to often, from diverse material, and they often created their own stories.

When Sylvia was eight years old, her father died after a long illness caused by severe complications from diabetes. The death hit Plath very hard, and for the rest of her life, she struggled with her unfinished relationship with her father. Many of her poems and journals make mention of bees; her father was a distinguished entymologist who specialized in the study of bees. As a student, Sylvia Plath was regarded as a very intelligent, dedicated girl. She began writing poetry early, and some of her poetic efforts, as well as her drawings, were published. In 1950, she began the fall term at Smith College in Massachusetts on the scholarship endowed by the novelist Olive Higgins Prouty, who later became a close friend of the poet.

For two years, Plath was a diligent student and writer, serving on the editorial board of The Smith Review and getting her poems published in popular magazines (Ames 250). After winning a vast number of prizes the previous year for her writing, in the summer of 1952 Sylvia Plath was chosen as a guest editor for Mademoiselle magazine and traveled to New York to work a month, (the events fictionalized in the beginning of her novel The Bell Jar). This month also signified the poet's first serious breakdown and the beginning of six months of depression as well as a suicide attempt and subsequent hospitalization.

Following this protracted episode, Plath returned to Smith College to finish her degree. After graduating in 1955, Plath moved to Cambridge on a Fulbright scholarship. In England, she met and fell in

love with the Poet Laureate of Great Britain, Ted Hughes. The two were married in June of 1956. The poets lived in England for a year following their wedding and then moved to Massachusetts where Plath taught at her alma mater and tried, though in vain, to publish her work (Ames 256).

The Hugheses moved back to England in the winter of 1959 and welcomed their first child, a daughter named Frieda, in the



spring of 1960. Plath's first collection of poetry, titled The Colossus and Other Poems was published finally in that same year. The poet also applied for and was awarded a Eugene F. Saxton fellowship. In the winter of 1962, the Hughes' second child, a boy named Nicholas, was born. During that time, Plath was writing poems every day and working on the manuscript of what would become The Bell Jar. Later in that year, Plath and husband Hughes separated, and Plath threw herself into writing the Ariel poems in the early hours of the morning before her children woke up. In 1963, Plath published her novel in Britain under a pseudonym to protect her family and friends back in the States.

Beaten down by a particularly tough bout of influenza and plagued by the depression she had fought off for the entirety of her adult life, Plath committed suicide in the winter of 1963. Her last and most famous collection of brilliant poems, called Ariel after the poet's horse, was published in 1965.

Though Plath's life work is often overshadowed by the infamy of her personal affairs, it stands as an impressive collection both in content and quantity. The Collected Poems boasts 274 works, to say nothing of her extensive journals and other prose. The 1960 poem "Candles," from The Collected Poems imagines the ordinary household objects of the title to be relics of another era, far removed from the poet's own. Plath personifies these wax beings, giving them "fingers [...] the bodies of saints" (148). She also describes them as "Nun-souled, they burn heavenward and never marry" (149). The poet seems to have viewed the candles as ambassadors of a purer time and place, and took their descent into quaint old-fashionedness as a sign of her own impending age-induced obscurity. She mentions that the candles "Drag up false, Edwardian sentiments" and apparently images as well; she imparts views of her grandparents in Europe during the time of the "kindly" candles (149). Her idea of the candles having thoughts and souls inside their "milky" bodies is beautiful, as is her notion of the selective light which candles give being gentle and kind to even those less than beautiful. The idea recalls the childhood fantasy of one's toys being capable of thought and emotion and having affection for their owners.

The 1959 poem "Mushrooms" takes that

theme of personification a bit farther, speaking in the "perfectly voiceless" voices of various fungi. The poet speaks of the dual nature of the fungus. Although the mushrooms are very quiet, "Bland mannered, asking little or nothing," they are often dangerous, poisonous, the bane of gardeners and people with children or pets that will eat any and everything. Their "soft fists insist on [...] paving. Our hammers, our rams [...] widen the crannies, / shoulder through holes" (139). Because of their quiet insistence, "We shall by morning inherit the earth. / Our foot's in the door" (140). The idea of quiet insistence winning the inheritance of the earth is both heartening and frightening. If one assumes that these mushrooms (and therefore everything which they can possibly represent) are benign, even goodly, then the concept of the inheritance of the meek is wonderful. It is the righteous being rewarded, goodness fought for and preserved. However, because Plath's poem remains ambiguous throughout, the reader has no way of knowing the motive of the mushrooms. Do they seek only to propagate their species, or to remove all others from their path? And because they are so quiet, who would hear them creeping as they infiltrated like a cancer, bringing their sinister rule over a paralyzed victim? They are, after all, mold.

Many of Sylvia Plath's poems center around bees. Her father kept bees during the poet's childhood. Throughout her life, and certainly her writing, bees were representative of her father, Otto Plath, and Sylvia Plath later kept bees of her own while in England. Her 1959 poem "The Beekeeper's Daughter" uses vivid sensory images to convey the memories of her father tending his colonies of bees in the family garden. She describes her father as "Hieratical in [his] frock coat, maestro of the bees," betraying the place he had held in her heart since his death. The final line, "The queen bee marries the winter of your year," is enigmatic. Did she mean to make comment on her father's devotion to his bees (instead of her), or was she simply tying the harvesting of honey to the season (118)?

From the 3rd of October 1962 to the 9th of that same month, Plath wrote a series of five poems cataloging her own experiences with tending a hive. The first, "The Bee Meeting," tells of attending a meeting in town to purchase a bee colony. The way she describes all the town characters at

PERHAPS THIS WAS A COMMENTARY ON HER OWN DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES; IT SEEMS AS THOUGH HER LOGIC WAS THAT WOMEN COULD "WINTER" BETTER THAN MEN BECAUSE THE COLD DIDN'T ALTER THEIR TRADITIONAL SOCIALLY-DEFINED DOMESTIC ROLES MUCH, BEING ALREADY CONFINED TO THEIR SPHERES.

PLATH'S WORD CHOICES OFTEN REQUIRE A CLIPPED, FORMAL DICTION OF THE READER, DREDGING UP THE POET'S OWN OLD-FASHIONED NEW ENGLAND ACCENT, COOL AND RESERVED UNTIL THE TENSION OF THE POEM BREAKS AND ANY GIVEN READER MUST SHOUT THE WORDS FEROCIOUSLY TO FULLY IMPRESS UPON THE LISTENING PUBLIC THEIR PROPER MEANING.

first appears to be the personification of the bees in a hive, swarming about, chattering, tending to one another. When Plath gets outfitted with protective gear, she feels that "they are making me one of them" (211). The poet evidently found the event somewhat traumatic; the harassment of the queen, the smells and sounds made her sick, left her feeling cold. The next poem, "The Arrival of the Bee Box," was written the next day, when her bees were delivered. Plath again finds the bees disconcerting:

It is like a Roman mob,
Small taken one by one, but my god, together!
I lay my ear to the furious Latin.
I am not a Caesar.
I have simply ordered a box of maniacs.
They can be sent back.
They can die, I need feed them nothing, I
am the owner.
[...] The box is only temporary. (213)

In the third poem, "Stings," Plath identifies with the bees. "I stand in a column of winged, unmiraculous women, / honey drudgers. / I am no drudge [...] I have a self to recover, a queen" (215). In imagining that she is recovering herself, Plath delves into the project with greater ardor, protecting herself from those that would harm her, becoming strong as the great red queen with "wings of glass." Poem four, "The Swarm," likens a loose swarm of bees to an army during war. Mentions of "Napoleon," "the furnace of greed," and "Russia, Poland and Germany" strike home the power and mindless destructiveness the bees are capable of: a large black army, flying heavy, stinging and killing without restraint. She remarks that "It seems bees have a notion of honor, / A black intractable mind. / Napoleon is pleased, he is pleased with everything" (217). The final poem in this bee series is "Wintering" in which the poet has harvested her honey, and the bees are surviving through the season on Tate & Lyle table syrup. She observes that the bees "have got rid of the men [...] Winter is for women" (219). Perhaps this was a commentary on her own difficult experiences; it seems as though her logic was that women could "winter" better than men because the cold didn't alter their traditional socially-defined domestic roles much, being already confined to their spheres.

"Lady Lazarus" appeared in Sylvia Plath's most famous collection of poetry, *Ariel*.

The poem tells the story of Plath's failed suicide attempts, and how she came back from each, like the biblical Lazarus. She states, "The second time I meant / To last it out and not come back at all. / I rocked shut / As a seashell" (245). And yet she came back, preserved by her family and by something in her body or mind that would not yet let her loose. Judging these stanzas, many people viewed her survival as miraculous, and took to viewing her like a circus attraction. Her use of German and an angry tone indicates that perhaps she was addressing this work to the specter of her father held in her head. The poem's last lines liken the poet to another mythological figure, the phoenix, who burns himself up only to rise anew. "Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air" (247).

Plath's word choices often require a clipped, formal diction of the reader, dredging up the poet's own old-fashioned New England accent, cool and reserved until the tension of the poem breaks and any given reader must shout the words ferociously to fully impress upon the listening public their proper meaning. Her poems range from torrents of madness like the aforementioned "Lady Lazarus" (245) in which she bawls out the men in her life who have wounded her to sweet, silly praises and lullabies, like the poem "You're," an ode to her unborn daughter Frieda (141).

Sylvia Plath's poems stand the test of time, even with fickle American audiences, because the poet was entertaining, sarcastic, and above all true. Even if her pieces cannot be interpreted as the events of her life verbatim or at all, they are true in the sense that they relate to the truth of human experience and are bound to hold grains of truth for several people who read them regardless of their individual lives.

WORKS CITED

- Ames, Lois. Afterword. *The Bell Jar*. By Sylvia Plath. 1971. New York: Perennial Classics, 1999.
- Hughes, Frieda. "Readers." *The Guardian*. 8 Nov. 1997.
- Plath, Aurelia Schober. Foreword. *Letters Home*. By Sylvia Plath. Ed. Aurelia Schober Plath. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.
- Plath, Sylvia. *The Collected Poems*. Ed. Ted Hughes. 1981. New York: HarperPerennial, 1992.