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Letter from the Editors

Dedicated to Patrick Stapelberg

September 15, 1961—September 11, 2006

Looking over the shoulder of Patrick Stapelberg laying out copy on a Page-maker program was like watching a master pinball player maneuver a ball through a maze of bumpers and spinning lights. The ease with which he worked stood out. Patrick dazzled the bystander with it. After squaring his shoulders to the monitor, he would nonchalantly carry on five conversations while burning zip drives, downloading jokes from the Internet, flipping photos on end, and navigating columns of print over borders and the fixed dimensions of mysterious page breaks. He altered graphics and curved lines of letters up to the images he had chosen until each page was complete.

Such tasks, though, were for him rather simple. Instead, he preferred a good challenge. His interest was aroused with the out of the ordinary, such as modifying PDF files, designing magazine covers, and combining two photos of a flying ice skater into one. His talents with image modification caused some concern, however. When word got out that he

could touch up photos to hide blemishes, his phone rang off the hook with requests from across campus.

Inside the Print Shop, he seemed to be the pinball itself, bouncing from one wall to the next, spinning in circles, disappearing into side rooms and shooting out into view again, carrying copies and photos and enlargements with him. He was everywhere at once. “Ask Patrick” became a common expression with many projects for the College. When pressed for time, Patrick excelled. He could lay out an entire magazine within a few hours if he had to, and by the end of the week the publication would magically appear. His childlike fascination

with technology made the project a game, and the tools he used merely toys. Through it all, any compliments for his work and praise for his talents were dismissed with a shrug. For the most part, over the years, he kept his brilliant mind and serious thoughts on his own far side.

For his valuable contribution to publishing the writing of Delta College students, this volume of Delta Winds is dedicated to Patrick Stapelberg.



The Trick

by Paula Cordova

I've never told anyone this before, but it is with great pain that I will recount it for you. In the sixth grade, we had a witch of a teacher. She had an angry shade of auburn hair and the most piercing eyes. We all knew her tolerance level was very low and her patience nonexistent.

But it didn't seem to stop me from giving her a new victim in class.

I could have turned
back. My mind
screamed at me to
turn back. But the
awe on the students'
faces told me I
couldn't back out
now.

Our desks had been clustered in small groups of five, and I had been sandwiched amongst a few well-known students, and directly in front of me, with the top edge of his desk kissing mine, was Elijah Cleek.

It's funny how I could never tell you the names of the other students, or even what color their hair was, or the kind of clothes they wore, but I sure remember everything about Elijah Cleek. Enrolled mid-year, Elijah Cleek was a doe-eyed, slightly lumpy kid with a mess of brown hair. His clothes appeared unwashed and

tattered. His shoes grimy and well worn in.

Kids (probably the one sitting with us that very moment) had laughed at him and remarked that they saw him and his mother scrounging in dumpsters near their homes. Rumors flew like facts that he was homeless and wore stolen clothes. Even the teacher razzed him and his grungy wardrobe. Daily she would point her bony finger and send him to the bathroom to get himself "cleaned up and respectable looking".

Our teacher briefly explained the project that we would be working on. Seemingly bitter, she chewed over the details quickly and sat herself quietly at her desk for twenty minutes to herself. The group, instead of hashing out the project, spoke jestingly at Elijah Cleek. This was nothing new to him. He always offered them suspicious eyes.

They taunted him that they had seen him and his mother at the gas station scrounging money off people. He denied their accusations with his wary eyes while he sucked on his bottom lip. Fortifying himself, Elijah Cleek did not let these young kids in. His pride was intact.

I didn't say anything to stop them.

Not only that, I did something much worse.

Feeling as though this were a competition into Elijah's fortitude, I began



Paula Cordova, lifelong learner, proud wife and mother, is a student at Delta College, ultimately aiming to become an English teacher, her dream since childhood. She also employs her muse to write stories, the current one being a zombie-survival story.



Elijah Cleek pushed his chair back and rose, all the while staring me in the eyes, expressionless.

to think of ways to gain entry.

I suggested a game. An old Indian game.

He looked at me, his eyes softening, trusting, for I had never spoken to him before.

“Sure,” he conceded.

The crowd around me squirmed with delight. What was I going to do?

“First I’ll need a quarter,” I said, to which the boy next to me was happy to dig out of his pocket.

I explained to Elijah Cleek that he must lay the quarter flat on a piece of paper. Then he was to take his pencil and trace the quarter’s edge repeatedly, over and over. The other students leaned in, anxious to see “the trick.” And so, he traced the quarter, his pencil spinning around its edges quickly.

“Now what?” he asked.

I could have turned back. My mind screamed at me to turn back. But the awe on the students’ faces told me I couldn’t back out now. I had to finish what I started.

And despite the tug in my heart to desist, I instructed, “Now, you take the quarter and sweep its edges on your face, over and over.”

Suspecting nothing, he did as I said, and proceeded to roll the quarter along his already dingy face. Streaks of pencil lead trailed the quarter, marking his face with distinguishable lines. The students around me burst with eruptive laughter, but I just sat there, eye to eye with Elijah Cleek.

Not understanding why they laughed,

he looked to me to fill him in, and I could do nothing but stare back at him.

The raucous explosion of laughter quickly alerted our teacher who stamped over to us.

“Elijah Cleek, again you come to class filthy,” she said, spitting out the word “filthy” as if it really were.

“Go to the restroom and clean your face. I am tired of telling you every-day not to come to school so dirty,” she yelled, again spitting out the word “dirty.”

Elijah Cleek pushed his chair back and rose, all the while staring me in the eyes, expressionless. And as he walked to the door, eyes glued on mine, my heart tore as if he held a piece of it. He opened the door, gave me one last sad gaze, and exited the class. Encompassed in the laughter of my peers, the snickering smirk of my teacher, I felt completely torn out of myself.

I ached, and to this day I still do. I’ll never forget the way his eyes looked like wells when they stared at me, like wells filled with the depth of wisdom. And though now he’s probably forgotten me, he’ll never know that he has taught me so much.

When competition arises, many people conform to the indecorum of competition in order to simply win, despite the costs.

HOP ON THE HORSE

by Nina Peñalosa

One November night, I stood on the upper level of the K Street mall in Sacramento overlooking a carousel. As I observed the blue feathers protruding atop each horse's head, I pulled a camera out of my purse and began to snap away, but every picture I took turned out a blur. So I put the camera away, stuck my hands in my pockets and drifted into thought. The horses brought back childhood memories of My Little Pony and that time in kindergarten I said if I were the President of the United States of America, I'd ride a horse.

*But no matter what,
we have to hop on
the horse and enjoy
the ride—ups and
downs included and,
for the most part, by
ourselves.*

Two little girls quickly interrupted me and my thoughts. I watched them run excitedly towards the carousel I had been staring at down below. As they shoved their dollar bills in the ticket machine, I couldn't help but envy them. Smiles were plastered on their faces as they raced up the ramp and darted towards a circular booth in between two horses that allowed them to spin around as fast as they pleased, like the teacups at Disneyland. A buzzer sounded and

away they went. Their almond-shaped eyes were shut tight as they mustered all the strength they had to steer the silver wheel before them. Infectious laughter echoed through the cool night breeze and into my ears.

I found myself envious of them because they were still young, innocent and most likely full of wonder about the world around them. At the age of twenty-one, I haven't lived my life to the fullest, but I've experienced an abundance of emotions and situations a child would have never dreamed of. I feel that as we grow older, our innocence begins to fade away much like yesterday and the day before. Much of my innocence and naïveté has since faded into distant memories.

The carousel reminded me of a trip to Disneyland when I was about five or six. Auntie Nelly went on King Arthur's Carousel with me and strapped me onto a white steed. After buckling me in with the brown leather strap, she turned her head and looked for another horse. "I'll be right over there, Nina. Ok?" she said. I turned around. Her finger was pointing at the horse behind me. The horse was too far behind. I began to whine, "No! Don't leave me!" Auntie Nelly assured me that she wouldn't be far away. I protested with a pouted lip and she begrudgingly stood by my white steed and me. I grasped the golden pole and smiled as I went up and down, round and round in Fantasyland.

As I watched the girls spin rapidly while the carousel went round and round, I thought life *is* a carousel.



Nina Peñalosa is a twenty-something-year-old girl with an insatiable appetite to explore the world around her, but is stuck in the bubble that is Stockton, California. She plans to flee the San Joaquin Valley in the fall when she transfers to San Francisco State University, where she plans to major in English with a concentration in Creative Writing and minor in Journalism. She likes music, art, perusing around bookstores and hopes to see her name written across the spine of one of those books someday.





It's a ride that goes around in circles while taking its passengers on a journey enduring great highs and lows.

Life throws us situations where we experience great euphoria. When I was in fifth grade, Auntie Nelly discovered that airfare to Italy was quite reasonable. Before I knew it, I was on my way to Italy with her and my older sister, Nikki. I was absolutely ecstatic. Every day before I left, I always told my friends, "I'm going to Italy!

That's out of the country!" That annoyed them greatly, but I didn't care—I was going to have real Italian pizza for crying out loud!

Then there are the unexpected moments in which we fall into an abyss of sadness. I recently just lost my grandpa a week before my birthday. For two years, Papa was in a nursing home, but he had been ill and bedridden for the last seven or nine years. My family was aware that he could go any day. Still, I wasn't prepared to say goodbye. At the nursing home, my face was tear-stained as I held Papa's warm hand. I didn't say a word, not even "I love you." Two days later he was gone.

Sometimes our world spins out of control, like those little girls in the spinning booth. Finals week always makes me insane. My head gets bombarded with worried thoughts and tons of questions. Should I write notes about this section? What if it's not even on the exam? Last semester, in the middle of studying for Natural Resources, I started crying just because the stress drove me to the point where I wondered if I was still sane.

I thought life is a carousel. It's a ride that goes around in circles while taking its passengers on a journey enduring great highs and lows.

But no matter what, we have to hop on the horse and enjoy the ride—ups and downs included and, for the most part, by ourselves. The horse is for us to

mount alone. No one can stand by our side for the whole journey. Like in life, we can't always hold someone's hand to protect us from the good or the bad.

All rides must come to an end. For the amount of time we all have on the carousel that is life, I realize that I need to remember to enjoy the ride. If not, it will all be over before I know it and the only thing I'll have to look back on is a blurred picture.

Education in India

by Ranvir Singh Khatkar

One of the greatest advantages that India has over any other country is the way that the government has established its educational system. India's strict policies regarding higher education have enabled the country to produce the finest doctors, mathematicians, engineers and scientists in the world. One of the factors contributing to this success is the instructors and how they dictate

their classrooms. Limiting student choices until they get into college is another characteristic of this successful school system. The manner in which the colleges are set up helps individual students to pursue their life goals. Be-

cause the educational system is so strict in India, students succeed regardless of their social class.

Unlike instructors in western society, instructors from India are given full authority of how they would like to run their classes. Parents of a child in India will never object to the way a

teacher instructs or disciplines their child. An insubordinate child is dealt with in a way that is viewed as "uncivilized" in most other countries. If a child were to misbehave, depending on the situation, an instructor would physically hit the child to instill fear. Naturally nobody likes to get a beating, so the troublesome child will quickly change. My mother once had to hold a heavy book in her hands

Unlike other school systems in the world, India has a very dedicated and strict program aimed at helping students to become the best at their professions.

with her arms stretched out for coming to class late. Because of the humiliation my mother went through, she made sure to leave home twenty minutes early for the rest of her childhood. It is with the best intention that instructors in India control their

classrooms with an iron fist. These creative disciplinary actions help the students more than hurt them. Between the start of school and the start of college, students are not given many choices. Basically, it's like the military; the school will train students to become elite in a strict regiment. Students must wear



Ranvir Khatkar keeps his writing skills sharp by keeping a personal journal and writing numerous papers on different subjects. He has decided to major in English or Communications with hopes of getting into law school. If not law, he would like to do something that involves writing.



uniforms to school everyday. The fact that uniforms are mandatory helps ensure that student-focus is on the books, not on another kid's shirt. There are no classes called "electives" in India. All of the classes are comprehensive to help students grow mentally. Instructors teach several languages as early as the first years in grade school. Time is not wasted on irrelevant classes. Ultimately, this keeps a student fully focused on what is being taught. Limiting the choices of students until they get into college helps to develop good study habits.

There are many colleges in India that help students become what they desire to be as working professionals.

There are no such things as trade schools in India, only universities and colleges. Many are still all-girl or all-boy campuses that share a common goal: to provide optimal education. At the end of grade school most students apply to colleges that emphasize particular interests. One city can have five major universities blocks apart, yet they all focus in on

a particular subject. Because students have satisfied the general knowledge courses in grade school, they now waste no time in learning a specialty. Because colleges are not a repeat of grade school, students learn what they really need to learn in order to be the best at their



jobs. Colleges and universities in India provide excellent learning opportunities for students to concentrate on specific majors.

Unlike other school systems in the world, India has a very dedicated and strict program

Time is not wasted on irrelevant classes. Ultimately, this keeps a student fully focused on what is being taught.

aimed at helping students to become the best at their professions. Ruthless teachers become gods in the eyes of the children when they mature inside of

a classroom. Depriving students of decision making proves to be beneficial in the long run. Colleges that specialize in a major help the students gain valuable information that would otherwise be forgotten in another type of college. Altogether the strict educational system pays off because India continues to provide the rest of the world with the best professionals ever.

My English Professor

by Latricia Tyson

In the poor social-economic environment that I live in, it is hard to look up to anyone because the people who have the values that make a person admirable are few and far between. So, for me, it has been a difficult and grueling task to find someone worth looking up to, but it is a task that I have accomplished. Since my first semester back to college, there has been one especially kind voice of wisdom and understanding in an ocean

of many, a voice that I have come to admire significantly. Mr. Mark Slakey, an English Professor at San Joaquin Delta College, possesses the gift of a tremendously powerful educator. He has taught me to be a writer

with a voice, and he has inspired me to become an educator with aspirations of being as successful as he has been. Professor Mark Slakey teaches with enthusiasm and energy while enhancing the speaking power of those of us who feel that we do not have a voice. And he gives back to the community.

Professor Slakey should have been an actor. He teaches with such compelling enthusiasm that watching him teach is like watching an exciting play or movie. He shares his life's experiences and personnel practical knowledge to capture our attention and teach English

writing skills and ideas. For example, Professor Slakey shared a story with my class about his Alaska fishing job when he was younger. He explained to us that he was, for the most part, "bored out of his mind while on these escapades." One day, he was so bored that he and some of his other shipmates decided to poke some fun by antagonizing one of their not-so-smart shipmates. As he stood at the front of the class, his eyebrows raised,

His eyes moved from left to right with astonishing speed, his hands flipped page, after page, with eager anticipation, and his body sunk deep into the chair, as my essay developed and took on the form of literary art.

his eyes widened, and his mouth dropped completely open as he told his story. His facial expressions took me out of the classroom and on to the boat with him. It was the sea voyage that I had never experienced, it was the joke that I never got to tell, and it

was exciting. Most important, it was a vicarious experience that made me attentive and ready to learn. Who would have ever thought that English could be so lively, so tantalizing, and so much fun? Not everyone has the skills or the charisma to pull off an exciting and invigorating English class, but he does. Through his empowering charm he is capable of tightly holding his students' attention, which readies them for his lesson of the day. After we are ready for the lesson, he uses an array of pedagogical knowledge and reflective teaching to make sure that every student comprehends the



Latricia Tyson provided the following: "I am just a student paying respect to a teacher who made me remember, once upon a time, I had dreams, too."



Mark Slakey, Professor



material. He realizes that there is more than one way to learn, so he uses different techniques and asks if we understand. Because he is a good teacher, he knows that we should have a three-to-five second wait time for responses, so he waits. Later, he asks if there was anything that he could have done to help us better understand. These two techniques make us feel that we are important and keep us connected to each other.

Many people may not understand just how important that one word is to a foster child, but I do, as I was a foster child that never called my foster parents “Mother” or “Father.”

Thankfully, Professor Slakey knows that once he creates this bond with his students they’ll have a better chance at success. I have always thought that I had a voice, but I was never sure that it was a voice that needed to be heard until I met Professor Slakey. In just a few short weeks, Professor Slakey’s self-fulfilling prophecy made me comfortable enough to tell him anything, and I did. His ability to sit and attentively absorb every word is one of his most effective skills. For example, one of our essay assignments was to write about our community. While reading my essay “Love and Marriage,” he seemed to be engrossed with my every word. His eyes moved from left to right with astonishing speed, his hands flipped page, after page, with eager anticipation, and his body sunk deep into the

chair, as my essay developed and took on the form of literary art. After reading it, he simply said, “People need to know this.” After much consideration, I decided that people needed to hear it, too. Therefore, I took Professor Slakey’s advice and submitted my essay to the San Joaquin Delta College’s Final Draft and, to my surprise, it was published.

Not only does he share his greatness with his students, but he also shares it with the less fortunate by being a wonderful foster parent. I have had the opportunity of meeting one of his foster children, and she was a beautiful and extremely intelligent little girl. LaQuesha spoke highly of Professor Slakey in just one simple word—“Daddy.” Many people may not understand just how important that one word is to a foster child, but I do, as I was a foster child who never called my foster parents “Mother” or “Father.” He has taken on the hardest job in any community, which is to mend and heal the broken heart of a child, and he has made it look easy.

Mr. Slakey has a desire to bring about change, and the gift for doing so. He is a bright and shining inspiration to everyone that he meets; I am honored to have met such an outstanding role model, father and teacher. I hope that in the future the rest of his students are able to see Professor Slakey in the same light that I have and acknowledge the positive changes he may have brought about in them.

MILES TO GO BEFORE HE SLEPT: THE LIFE AND WORKS OF ROBERT FROST

by Kevan J. Riley

Ever since the days of my youth, Robert Frost has been one of my favorite poets. I can remember my mother reading me “Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening,” and to this day I enjoy the poem as much as I did back then. There is something relaxing about the way that he writes. Perhaps it is the way that he incorporates nature into his poems, or the way that his works have subtle yet profound messages. At any rate, I have come to greatly enjoy his poetry, and I have seen his poems appear in several different publications over the last year. When I recently stumbled across “Mending Wall” while reading an anthology, I loved it so much that it inspired me to examine his poems in depth to see if there is anything I missed in my past experiences with them. Frost’s poems are beautiful in and of themselves, but I think that I can appreciate them more now that I am older and I can understand the meaning that is implicit in so many of his works.

One of my favorite Frost poems is “Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening.” The title gives the poem the appearance of simplicity, though simple it is not. At first glance, it is merely an account of a traveler who stops in the woods to take in the beauty around him to “...watch his woods fill up with snow” (Frost 207). However, one might wonder why the traveler stops in the first place. I think it is because he was captivated by the beauty of the woods, entranced by the snow falling and the stillness of the night.

Apparently, the horse wonders why he stops as well, indicating so by giving “... his harness bells a shake / To ask if there is some mistake” (207). The beauty of the forest is evident, described as being “lovely, dark and deep” (207). The simple descriptions of the sights and sounds in this poem are part of the reason I love it so much. I can imagine what it was like stopping in a dark, silent forest to watch the snow fall. After enjoying this dreamy sight for a while, the speaker says: “But

In this poem, man’s need for human love is juxtaposed with nature’s innate lack of it, and the distance between nature and humanity is evident.

I have promises to keep,” (207), almost as though he has a fleeting glimpse of reality through the trance-like state he is in. However, with the repetition of the line “And miles to go before I sleep,” (207), it appears that he has not fully gotten over the wonders he has seen.

Some critics speculate that the theme of this poem is death. One such critic is Jeffrey Meyers, who writes: “The theme of ‘Stopping by Woods’—despite Frost’s disclaimer—is the temptation of death, even suicide, symbolized by the woods that are filling up with snow on the darkest evening of the year” (Meyers). When read in this light, the last line might imply that the speaker is waiting to die, using sleep as a metaphor. Such complexity provides an interesting contrast with the poem’s simple title, and like many of Frost’s works, this poem can be understood on a variety of levels.

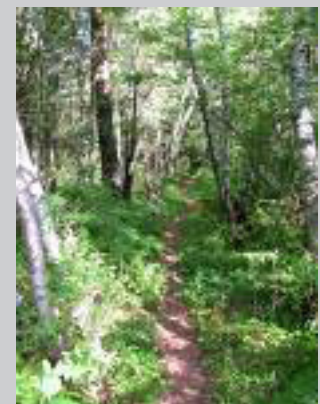
Another of my Frost favorites is the



Kevan Riley is currently studying information technology at Delta, and hopes to one day obtain his bachelor’s degree. He is a native of Stockton, where he resides with his wife. This is his first published piece of writing.



A Sample of Robert Frost Poetry



Robert Frost Trail



Robert Frost

ironically comedic poem “The Road Not Taken.” The poem is written from the perspective of the narrator, who comes to a fork in the road and has to make a decision about which way to go. The odd part about the poem is that both paths are thrice described as being equal to each other. The first time, he ponders one road, and then goes down the other, calling it “...just as fair” (103). Secondly, he says the daily use of the paths has “...worn them really about the same” (103). Also, both paths seem to “...equally lay / In leaves no step had trodden black” (103). This being the case, how does the choice of the road less traveled make any difference at all? At that rate, if the poem clearly describes the paths as equals, why does Frost describe the chosen road

as “...the one less traveled by” (103)? This is all part of the irony of the title, for there is no way to define which road is the one not taken. I think that the whole idea behind the poem is that no matter what choice we make in life, there are no paths in life that have never been traveled. The only thing we can count on is that our choices lead inevitably on to other choices, or as Frost puts it: “...way leads on to way...” (103). It is not so much the path chosen but the choosing of the path that “made all the difference” (103). This poem is a fine example of how Frost was often able to weave deep meanings into short and seemingly simple poems.

Although Frost is famous for his use of nature in his poetry, he often wrote about people, relationships, and the human experience. One such poem is “Mending Wall,” one of his most famous pieces. The poem revolves around the narrator and his neighbor, who are repairing a wall that separates them. Although the initial use of the word “wall” implies a physical

wall, it becomes more and more apparent throughout the poem that the wall is, in fact, a symbol of the things that drive people to separate themselves from others. “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,” (39) the speaker says. It is obvious that the narrator himself is the one who doesn’t love the wall, but his goal in the poem is to get his neighbor to realize it. “Good fences make good neighbors,” (39) the neighbor says, using a phrase that he learned from his father. “He moves in darkness as it seems to me / Not of woods only and the shade of trees” (40),

notes the narrator, implying that the neighbor’s irrational need for a wall is keeping him “in darkness,” or in other words, ignorant of what the narrator

has been hinting at throughout the poem. The poet sums up his feelings about it perfectly: “Before I built a wall I’d ask to know / What I was walling in or walling out” (39). The title of this poem utilizes the same sort of wordplay that was previously seen in “The Road Not Taken.” Much like the previous poem asked “Which road is it?”, this poem begs the question of just what is being mended, the wall, or the relationship? Perhaps it is a question best left to the reader to decide.

Many of Frost’s poems tend to be about people and the experiences they go through. “Acquainted With the Night” is a good example. Frank Lentricchia describes the poem as “Frost’s quintessential dramatic lyric of homelessness” (Lentricchia), an opinion with which I agree. Perhaps it is not a physical lack of a home, but rather a sense of having no identity in the world. The narrator of the poem seems to have trouble coping with his identity crisis: “I have passed by the

watchman on his beat / And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain" (Frost 234). During his walk, he hears an "...interrupted cry," but knows that its purpose is "...not to call me back or say goodbye" (234). The fact that he describes the time as being "...neither wrong nor right" (234) further reinforces his sense of loneliness, as no one is calling for him, nor does anyone care that he is out so late. The night, then, symbolizes the man's loneliness, the melancholy he experiences as a result of having no home. Perhaps the entire situation of walking alone in the night is metaphorical, representing a painful life experience.

These are just a few of my favorite poems by Robert Frost. They are sometimes short and simply worded, which is probably why I liked them as a child. However, with a little analysis, it is clear that they are anything but simple. Perhaps one of the greatest misconceptions about Frost is that he is only a nature poet. Although it is clear that most of his poetry draws images from nature, these images are usually used to describe the psychological aspects of the human experience. Frost himself once said: "I am not a nature poet. There is almost always a person in my poems" (Frequently). In "The Road Not Taken," the emphasis is not on the discovery of the country path itself, but rather what drives the man to choose a particular route over another. In "The Wood-Pile," a man wanders through a swamp and discovers an abandoned pile of chopped wood. However, the narrator describes the man who abandoned the wood as "Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks" (Frost 101). Thus, the woodpile is symbolic of the things that people leave behind when they take on new challenges in life. Frost uses the natural setting of the swamp to convey a truth about humanity, rather than just to exalt nature itself. A similar metaphor is used in "In Hardwood Groves." This short poem uses the image of fallen and decaying leaves to represent the necessity of the cycle of life and death. In the poem "Birches," Frost describes his desire to be a "...swinger of birches," (118) or in other words, he wishes to enjoy simple pleasures, unencumbered by the "...pathless

wood..."(118) of everyday life.

Frost sometimes used nature in stark contrast to man. In "The Most of It," a man cries to nature for love, but gets only a "...mocking echo of his own (voice) / From some tree-hidden cliff" (307). In this poem, man's need for human love is juxtaposed with nature's innate lack of it, and the distance between nature and humanity is evident. The poem is bleak, certainly not the pastoral-type poem that is typically associated with Frost. Another dark poem is "Sand Dunes," in which the sea is characterized as an enemy of man. "She may know cove and cape / But she does not know mankind" (239). This dire view of nature seems to oppose Frost's other poems, which view nature idyllically. However, like many of Frost's poems, the sea and sand themselves are not the point. They are symbolic of the differences between man and nature. John F. Lynen summed it up by saying: "This contrast between man and nature is the central theme of Frost's nature poetry" (Lynen).

Robert Frost has been described as America's poet, and he is certainly deserving of such a title. His poems were a breath of fresh air in their time, using common language in traditional meters as opposed to the more experimental verbiage used by poets of the day. Careful examination of his writing reveals the intricate way that Frost wove natural images into powerful metaphors. His works create a balance of simplistic dialogue and complex psychological observation. The United States Library of Congress describes him as the "best known and most beloved American poet of the 20th century" (Poet). Over the course of his career, he received many honors, including becoming a Poet Laureate, and reading a poem at the presidential inauguration of John F. Kennedy. His most famous poems, such as "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening," are ingrained in American culture. In a recent poll by Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, "The Road Not Taken" was voted America's Favorite Poem (Frequently). On a personal level, I have grown to appreciate Frost's poetry more and more over time, as I can

understand the depth of his work better as an adult. Therein lies the beauty of his poetry: the ability to appeal to people of all ages, and still convey the same sense of wonder that I experienced when I first heard it. The appeal of Frost's work has endured for the last century, and it will undoubtedly endure for the next and the next.

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The Shades in Between

by Lois Steele



Lois Steele has been a student at Delta for four years. She loves reading and music. She is an English major with a deep interest in psychology and sociology. She has been accepted at UOP in the English program and has plans to be an editor.

As long as I can remember, my attraction to other people has been a bubbling fountain. When I was younger I was more single minded in my devotion; as a child and as an adolescent I became painfully infatuated with one particular person. I am in my twenties now, and my fountain overflows to dozens of people at a time—male and female. The dynamics of being bisexual and the relationships that resulted from

Not long after my sexuality crystallized and hardened in my mind like a sculpture, I came out to my family. I told my sister Suzy over the phone, the line crackling with tension until she replied cheerfully, “So, what kind of women do you like?” I caught Leslie while she was sitting cross-legged on the floor in front of her full-length mirror, putting on her makeup. Her reply was similarly nonchalant: “So am

As long as I can remember, my attraction to other people has been a bubbling fountain.

it have changed my life forever. I had been aware of heterosexual urges since I was five years old, but I did not discover that I had homosexual feelings until I was sixteen. I began to think, “I’d date a girl if she asked me.” Girls appealed to me; I idolized them and put them on pedestals. I would blush when my sister Leslie’s friend Veronica paid attention to me, as I did when Leslie’s friend Matt spoke to me.

I, so’s Jason, so’s Peaches.” My father bought me a button that says, “I don’t do boys.” My mother was unsurprised; she had accurately guessed the sex of her other two children, but had thought that I was going to be a boy. Pictures of me from that time show a girl invariably in jeans, with a boy’s haircut. She wears a pentacle and black lipstick and t-shirts with slogans such as “Let’s get one thing straight. I’m not.” I wore cologne as well as perfume and



worshipped k.d. lang. I bought a Marilyn Monroe poster and made collages of actresses that I thought were attractive. I dressed and acted the way that I thought a person who likes women was supposed to act, not the way that I was. At the time I believed that I had fallen in love with my coworker, Sok. One sunny day I strolled around my neighborhood and composed a poem confessing my feelings. I was foolish enough to give it to her, my raw feelings that could never have been reciprocated. I might as well have given her a grenade. She let me down gently.

My first serious relationship was when I was eighteen, with Ryan, a man six years older than

THE DYNAMICS OF BEING
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LIFE FOREVER.

I. Ryan had just moved to Stockton from Washington, where he left behind a mother dead from ovarian cancer and two small children. I was alternating between periods of suicidal depression. I fell desperately in love with him, and he let me. I thought that I could save him with my clingy love. Picture a seven-year-old trying to lift a fifty-pound duffel bag and only being able to slide it across the floor a little.

I was dabbling in Buddhism by then, and I decided that I should love Ryan unconditionally. I tried my best, when he went to Washington and did not talk to me for a month, when he said things he did not mean, when he refused to

acknowledge my pain because his pain was sharper. Our relationship limped along like a wounded animal; it lay down, got up and shambled around, lay down again, and then it finally died. The third time that we broke up was the last time. After a botched attempt at being friends, I stopped speaking to him. I have not seen him since.

As greatly attracted to Ryan as I was, I was intensely eager to be in a relationship with a woman. I met Angela the day before my twentieth birthday. She had not been in a relationship for two years, after her last girlfriend cheated

on her with a male friend. I was desperate to be with her; I had yet to meet a single

female who was attracted to me. Less than a month later I told her that I was in love with her, and two months after that we were living together. Picture two adjacent seesaws, with a lone child on each, trying to operate them; they both realize that they can share one seesaw, and they go up and down, up and down.

At first, we were quite pleased with each other. "You don't make me psycho," Ang would confess lovingly. Then I realized that I did not want to turn off my fountain, or direct its spray in one direction. I became taken with a male coworker and pleaded with her to let me date both of them. We fought constantly, and one night after she had

stormed out I locked myself in the bathroom with my sleeping pills; I came very close to killing myself. However, I called my friend Genevieve and she talked me out of doing anything rash.

As time passed, I was able to see how insensitive I was being to Ang, and our relationship improved. In fact, everything about my life improved. With support from Ang and our circle of friends, I was able to overcome my suicidal ideation and



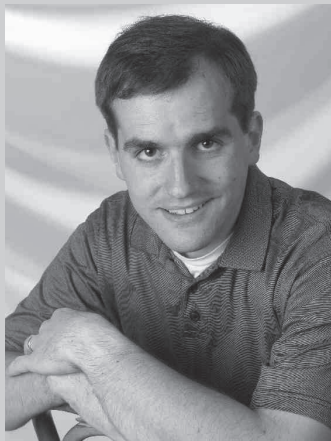
depression. The two and a half years I spent with Ang were the happiest of my life. Yet I realized that we would be better friends than lovers. I loved Ang, but I was not attracted to her. We parted ways amiably, and we are still friends.

I enjoy being bisexual, for the most part. I have experienced remarkably

little prejudice; the stereotypes about bisexuals being fence sitters and unfaithful lovers have not affected me. I am comfortable with my sexuality and my mannerisms; I am no longer inter-

ested in changing myself to conform to clichés of how I *should* be. Unfortunately, I still have the annoying habit of confessing romantic feelings that are unreciprocated. I like to think that my past relationships have taught me about life, and that I am not as naïve as I used to

be. Now that I am single, my fountain is going full blast and I am open to starting a new, healthy relationship. Picture two adults who like each and enjoy each other's company.



Chad Whiteley is a native Texan, who can best be described as a country preacher. His early adult life was spent learning about the traditional Baptist faith in the Ouachita Mountains of Southwest Arkansas. From there, he began his ministry in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona. For the last six years, he has served as the Senior Pastor of the First Missionary Baptist Church of Manteca, California. He, his wife and his loyal dog seek to serve the churches wherever there is need. His recent return to college to study Business Administration illustrates his newfound belief in a properly educated ministry. His intentions are to go on to Colorado Christian University, and then to Seminary to further refine ministry skills.



CONFORMITY IN THE QUEST FOR POPULARITY

by Chad Whiteley

I became popular when I was nine years old, and I knew it. My father was the coach of the football team in Alto, Texas, and let me attend school where he worked. Usually, I had to go to the local school in my hometown, but for that year, I was allowed to attend school in a foreign district. Hailing from the larger town of Lufkin made me a “city-slicker,” and because my dad was the football coach, I was considered especially manly. I did not contend with either charge, as both helped me in my quest for popularity.

THERE ARE LITTLE PEOPLE YOU HAVE TO FIRST BEFRIEND AND THEN LATER BELITTLE. THAT IS JUST HOW THE GAME WORKS.

Popularity is an interesting thing. It does not come upon you all at once; rather, it requires some time to work towards. There are little people you have to first befriend and then later belittle. That is just how the game works. There must be those who are in the in-group, and those in the out-group (Allport 40). Even to this day I remember the young man whom I sacrificed to make it to the top of the social ladder: Daryl Ragsdale. We had been friends for some time before the day I offered him up to my friends as a token of my desire to

conform. He knew me well enough to know what I liked most in the world. At that point in my life, it was the Sunday comics. Each paper has a different set, so I liked to read the funny pages from various publications in order to get a full grasp on the happenings of the illustrated universe. That day, Daryl brought me the comics from the Fort Worth Star Telegram. Allport states, “some in-group

memberships have to be fought for” (36). So, on that day, Daryl stood with his hand outstretched offering this colorful extension of love

and friendship, and his fight to gain membership into our elite band of popular fourth graders. To bring such a gift, he had to premeditate. He had to have been thinking about me. He had to seriously care. That gift was the substance of Daryl’s desire to continue as my friend, and his concern for me as an individual. I do not remember anybody in my in-group telling me any rules about conformity. According to the group-norm theory of prejudice, groups sometimes use subtle pressures to keep members in line (Allport 39). At the time, I felt that

if I did not jettison Daryl, I could run the risk of losing several “friends.” Without thinking much, I told Daryl that comics were for “babies.” I remember my new friends breaking

into a sing-song of “Baby! Baby! Comics are for babies!” I am almost certain that I could see tears welling up

in Daryl’s eyes. To me, at that moment, I did not care. My allegiance to the popular crowd required some sacrifices. I must not be inhibited by the childish, silly things such as comics. The reality is that at that point I probably had the power to bring Daryl into the fold, but I chose otherwise simply because of my perception of the group wishes.

I would never again attain that lofty height

of popularity. Later, I got the chance to see Daryl’s story unfold through a different set of eyes. As I vainly tried to regain my popularity in a new school district, I became the one often jettisoned at the sacrificial altar of others’ popularity. The most interesting thing to me is the fact that of all the people I tried to impress throughout school, I can remember not one name. But, the young man that will

haunt me forever is the one I shunned. When I think back to that day, I realize I learned several lessons. The hurt that I inflicted upon Daryl taught me

I REMEMBER MY NEW FRIENDS BREAKING INTO A SING-SONG OF “BABY! BABY! COMICS ARE FOR BABIES!”

that sometimes we behave in morally disagreeable ways to preserve our group membership. The fact that I inflicted such pain without the group giving me

concrete rules teaches me that in-groups by their very nature have unwritten but clearly understood rules of engagement with members of out-groups. Finally, I learned that having a common enemy in Daryl unified our in-group behind a cause. The in-group members

themselves were actually less important than the member of the out-group that was receiving our negative attention. This is most likely because our in-group was

defined not by mutual respect for one another, but by disdain for everyone else.



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PREJUDICE AND PRIDE

by Susan Siders

Susan Siders is, first and foremost, the mother of seven wonderful children. Because one of her children is autistic, her original intention was to return to school in order to become a special education teacher. However, the guidance and support she received from her English professors, Kathy Adams and Anna Villegas, have motivated Susan to become an English major. Susan hopes one day to teach at Delta College.

Because I am shabbily dressed on the outside, people think I'm not worth respect or attention, but really I am well dressed on the inside, which is what matters to me. I used to be the perfectly coiffed woman, almost to a fault. My clothes, chosen the night before and freshly starched, matched my earrings,

shoes and nails

daily. I indulged in expensive perfume smelling of floral, leather and woods, never of chemical extracts. I took such arrogant pride in my own spectacle that I couldn't imagine others did not see me the same way I did.

However, the journey of my appearance took a rebellious turn when I met him. He oozed a polished charm and confidence. His appearance was impeccable. Even as I felt his attention completely focused on me, my peripheral vision allowed me the favor of seeing

that everyone was watching us. Most of them were women and I knew just what they were thinking. I could feel the dense, instinctive nature of jealousy and envy in the air. Simultaneously, I smugly soaked it all in and began to fear what would happen if he looked beyond my appearance.

At this time, my appearance was one of the few areas of my life I still felt I had control of. I attracted little or no attention from men, which lessened the threat of violence.

The relationship between us intensified. However, so did his addictive behavior. He was a hard drinker and a drug-user. His drug addiction quickly added severe violence to the picture. I became a punching

bag. But worse, I was now a victim of endless verbal abuse. Yet, I somehow managed to go through four pregnancies and to work full-time in a fog. My appearance, like my relationship and self-esteem, deteriorated. Constant verbal bashing tends to do that to a

person. The almost daily slap in the face stung less than the ceaseless assault of words I endured minute by minute, hour by hour, and day by day for years on end. The ensuing decline of my appearance was a statement of what those that knew

me best or didn't know me at all thought of me. They knew that I was ugly, incompetent, a bad mother and just plain stupid. My attire mirrored what everybody, including myself, thought about me. At this time, my appearance was one of the few areas of my life I still felt I had control of. I attracted little or no attention from men, which lessened the threat of violence.

Second, I subconsciously rebelled against his preconceived idea of me. Lastly, although I thought no one knew the hell I was going through, I believed that the world perceived me as unqualified to belong to anything beautiful.

When I had reached my lowest point, I left. Now, all the years of abuse still

cling, hovering somewhere between my heart and my brain. I have been to years of therapy and have started the healing process. However, I still wear clothes as if they were a coat or armor.

The deep-seated, unconscious dislike of self has lessened, but the perception from others has not. Usually I am dressed in sweats, my hair pulled back in a ponytail, with not a trace of makeup. As I approach retail cashiers or bank tellers, I am inevitably faced with a cool indifference or fiery arrogance. Even as I begin to speak politely, the indifference and arrogance only seem to heighten, as both are

stuck in the rigidity of a generalization that allows for no exception.

I am patient at this point in my life. I refuse to dress the way people want me to dress in order to command a little respect or gain some attention. I do, however, speak in a manner that allows strangers to consider me as a possible exception to their rule.

I could feel the dense, instinctive nature of jealousy and envy in the air. Simultaneously, I smugly soaked it all in and began to fear what would happen if he looked beyond my appearance.



Elena Carlsson for twenty years has been a teacher of music. After graduating from Music College in Russia, in Ulyanovsk, she traveled extensively, living and working with children for six years in Mongolia and for seven years in Lithuania. The most successful time in her career was when she lived in her own city of Ulyanovsk, Russia, where for ten years she taught music in Elementary School #1, rated the best elementary school in all of Ulyanovsk. Elena misses her country, job, friends and relatives. She has lived in Stockton for almost two and half years already. Learning English is never boring for her, even though it takes a lot of time and strength. She has two children--a daughter and a son--whom she loves very much. Her best friend and helper in her life is her husband, who supports her in all things. She likes everything beautiful, charming and attractive, and appreciates polite, intelligent and patient people. Her future dream is to work with children again as a teacher in an elementary school in America.

My Admirable Grandpa Grigoriy

by Elena Carlsson

I called him "Ded." This is what we call our grandpas in Russia. This short and not too expressive word I said one hundred times per day. "Ded, do you have some money; I want ice cream so much!" "Ded, I have to go to the library; don't you want to go with me?" "Ded, I have an essay assignment in my Russian class; maybe you have some idea what I can write about?" "Ded, I can't solve this math problem and I need some help!"

"There is no problem that we can't solve together!" he answered, and "together" we solved it. Every time he gave me the understanding that I did it, and he helped just a little. Of course, I liked this method and firmly believed in my merit, and with bright eyes I rushed to the kitchen to my grandma, who cooked dinner for us, and proudly showed her my solved problem.

"Ded, Sergey from our neighborhood is a very bad and rude boy. You know him, don't you? We were fighting yesterday, and I hate him!" I looked at his warm blue eyes, and

understood already that my wonderful friend, Ded Grigoriy, had thought up something to make us friends again because he knew how much I liked this boy. Next day, when I came back from my school, I discovered Sergey with my grandpa together playing chess. "O, good morning, Sweetheart. I want to

I looked at his warm blue eyes, and understood already that my wonderful friend, Ded Grigoriy, had thought up something to make us friends again because he knew how much I liked this boy.

introduce you to my young friend Sergey; he is our neighbor and a very good chess player. I hope that you'll become good friends because you like chess too."

He had a unique talent to join people and make them friends, and he was a very good friend who always came to help. "Ded, tomorrow we have a party at school, but I don't have any new shoes..." He understood that it was the first party in my life, and even though he didn't have enough money, we went to the store to buy new and beautiful shoes for me. He was my best friend, and I still don't know if I have had a better friend in my life.

I liked to spend time with him be-

cause it was always interesting and educational. I liked to go with him to the library and then read books outside our home under the tree in our backyard. The leaves of this old tree rustled and relaxed us, and Ded and I enjoyed our reading and our

put things off for tomorrow because you don't know if it'll come." He lived by this simple, wise slogan, which his offspring learned very well and were always thankful for. "Tell me who your friends are and



conversation. He always taught me to be nice with people; he solved any conflict peacefully and quietly, and he always gave good advice.

Where did he get this wisdom? He lived not an easy life. He worked hard, and he was the breadwinner in the family. He had been through wartime years (it was the brutal and long World War II) and had stayed alive. He lost his health in this war, but he never complained. Instead, he tried to saturate his day with his eternal love and care for his children and grandchildren. He always enjoyed every single day and event, and he always taught us to be optimistic, energetic, and appreciative people because he knew what life is and how important it is to value and enjoy every present moment of it. "Enjoy your day today and never

I'll tell you who you are" was another saying he tried to teach us. Many times these simple words of advice rescued me and many other people from making mistakes with our choice of friends and the start of horrible relationships. Like any teenager I was involved once in bad (but very "significant" for me!)

He always enjoyed every single day and event, and he always taught us to be optimistic, energetic, and appreciative people because he knew what life is and how important it is to value and enjoy every present moment of it.

company; we learned how to become "modern people." We learned how to smoke and drink, and spent time very merry and cool... My grandpa spent more than one evening with me to explain what it means to be a modern and confident person. "Knowledge and kindness make a man a man. Try to find the friends not just for fun, but for a real friendship and real support." Thanks for your wisdom, Ded; I will remember your advice all my life.

Grandpa Grigoriy created a special rule in our family: every Sunday we got together for a family dinner. What a wonderful time it was! I remember going with my amazing grandpa to the flea market to shop for groceries. We bought full baskets of fresh and aromatic fruits, colorful and appetizing vegetables, excellent meat, and, of course, different sweets for the kids. My grandma cooked wonderful, very healthy, simple and delicious Russian food such as *pelmeny*, *golubtsy*, *borsch*, *kotlety*, *piroshky*, and many more. We really enjoyed this dinner and not just because of this delicious food, but also for the wonderful and kind atmosphere that was present there.

My grandpa liked to see people happy and cheerful. During the dinner we asked him to sing;

“Knowledge and kindness make a man a man. Try to find the friends not just for fun, but for a real friendship and real support.”

he had a very beautiful voice. He always started with our favorite Russian song, “*Moros*,” about the beauty of Russia’s great nature. The voice of my grandpa was very nice and clear and sounded so deep and tender that the hearts of everybody were filled with warmth. I was always proud when my Ded told me, “Lenochka, begin to sing.” I started, and he continued, and then all the voices joined together, and our song sounded so majestic and beautiful that everybody forgot about any problems, which sank in this sea of sounds... Yes, Grandpa, you always

could make us happy because you were such a light and cheerful person.

Many years have gone since my Grandpa Grisha passed away. But I still love him, remember and admire him, and very often talk with him and ask him for his friendly advice and light support.



We Were Soldiers

by Colby Yeager

I sat with my classmates as we watched the horrors of war play out in cinematic proportions. We watched critically acclaimed actors such as Mel Gibson and Chris Klein portray soldiers in a war that shattered American solidarity, the Vietnam War. I watched the movie riveted with tears streaming down my face, knowing that the man who sat behind me was reliving his own terrifying experience

in this tragic fight. His presence was so strong with me, and yet I

didn't even know his name. When the lights came up I was unable to move, almost paralyzed. The man behind me smiled at me through his own tears and handed me a small memento from his days fighting the Viet Cong—a tiny piece of history, a tiny scrap of metal that kept this man alive and connected me to a war that took place more than three decades ago.

The movie We Were Soldiers gives its audience an intimate look not only at life and death on the battlefield but also at the life and grief of the wives left behind. As the movie opens we are

introduced to Lieutenant Colonel Hal Moore, played by Mel Gibson, and to Mrs. Moore, played by Madeline Stowe. This is a couple who really love each other, and it is obvious how deeply connected the Lieutenant Colonel is to his many children. Through this initial introduction we are given a glimpse into Lieutenant Colonel Moore as a husband and father rather than just a soldier.

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As tensions escalate in Southeast Asia, these soldiers, whom we have come to know, are deployed to the jungles of Vietnam. They say goodbye to their families and ship out, armed with youthful pride and the knowledge that many of them will not come home alive. It is a powerful scene as the men steal out of their homes in the cover of darkness, most with silent tears streaking their young faces. They come together on their old baseball field, again in silence, and we watch as these young men transform from fathers and husbands into soldiers. The scene is also brilliant because it shows these men stepping off of a baseball field and onto the battlefield;

Colby Yeager was a student in English 30: Film as Literature at Delta College during the summer of 2004. Captain Travis Nolen served with the 7th Air Cavalry in Vietnam and was awarded the Bronze Star and the Silver Star for his valor in helping a wounded fellow POW escape from the infamous Hoa Lo Prison (also known as “the Hanoi Hilton”). In this essay Colby reflects upon the impact of viewing “We Were Soldiers” and of Captain Nolen’s visit to her class to discuss his experiences in relation to events depicted in the film.



The movie then cuts to his wife vacuuming. This is a very poignant contrast between the violent war and the fact that these wives had to continue to do routine chores and continue to live life as usual.

they leave as boys and arrive as men. From this point we follow the men into battle and we also follow their wives as they battle the banality and horrors of the daily life of military wives.

We Were Soldiers depicts the horrors of war on the battlefield realistically and dramatically, but it is the depiction of the wives that really struck me. Perhaps it is because I could never be a soldier myself, or perhaps it is because I am a woman, or perhaps it is because I have held the hands of my worried friends and we prayed for the safe return of their military husbands, that I was so affected by the story of the wives.

There is a scene in the movie where the audience is not sure if Lieutenant Colonel Moore is going to live. The movie then

The scene is also brilliant because it shows these men stepping off of a baseball field and onto the battlefield; they leave as boys and arrive as men.

cuts to his wife vacuuming. This is a very poignant contrast between the violent war and the fact that these wives had to continue to do routine chores and continue to live life as usual. As Mrs. Moore is vacuuming, a cab pulls up to her door with a telegram but the devastating message is not for her. Mrs. Moore takes the telegram, to deliver herself, and instructs the cabbie to bring any others to her. Just as her husband was leading and caring for his men, she was leading and caring for their wives. Each time she delivers another telegram, which are now coming in by the handful daily, a

tangible sadness rises up. A reality sinks in; this movie is based on a true story that took place in a true war. This happened. This war was more than a blurb in our history books. This was real.

Watching this movie gave me a better understanding of the Vietnam War. I generally stay away from war movies; I guess they are just a little too much reality. I had heard war stories from uncles and friends who fought but they were just that, stories. To see the Viet Cong sneaking up like ghosts or watching young American soldiers throw themselves on grenades to save their comrades is truly moving. Witnessing the wives of soldiers learn that they are

twenty-year-old widows and that their children are now orphans shook me to the core. Yes, this

was just a movie but it portrays reality. As I watched I wondered just how "Hollywood" this movie was and if the man sitting behind me was going to scoff at this depiction of his nightmare. He did not mock the film. He dried his eyes, smiled at me, and handed me his "lucky charm": a tiny piece of metal that saved his life, a tiny piece of history that changed my perspective.

His name was Captain Nolen, and he was a soldier and a prisoner of war in the Vietnam War. His lucky charm was a penny given to him by another soldier. Captain Nolen carried the

penny in his left shirt pocket and had he not, he would have been shot through the heart and killed. Holding the tiny penny, which had stopped a screaming bullet in its tracks, I felt that I was holding the Captain's life in my hands. The



bullet was still penetrating the penny and the violent beauty of it was poetic. An enemy bullet piercing the image of Abraham Lincoln, yet unable to reach its target, the heart of an American soldier, makes a very strong statement. To even write about that moment brings tears to my



eyes because I grieve for the injustice done to all involved in the war, and I am filled with such pride that I share my little piece of the world with men and women like Captain Nolen.

They were all soldiers and many fought gallantly for their cause. The loss of life for the Americans was no more tragic than the loss of life for the Viet Cong. In war there is no clear enemy. Each soldier is following orders and that filters down

from national leaders. I will never be a soldier, nor will I ever support the senseless killing of war, but I will always support our men and women in the armed forces.

It is important that we remember what happened in Vietnam. It is important that we see movies that depict the actual horror of war, the death, the gore, the honor. I hope that movies like We Were Soldiers will continue to be made so that men like Captain Nolen will always be remembered.

His lucky charm was a penny given to him by another soldier. Captain Nolen carried the penny in his left shirt pocket and had he not, he would have been shot through the heart and killed.



Derek Spencer was born on September 22, 1980, in Hayward, California, and grew up in Manteca, California. He graduated from East Union High School in 1999, and shortly after graduation enlisted in the United States Army for five years. He fought in the Iraq war as an Infantry Sniper with the 2nd Infantry Division. After his tour of duty ended, Derek returned home to California and enrolled in Delta Junior College. Derek is in his final semesters at Delta and preparing to transfer to Stanislaus State (CSU) to get his Bachelor's and Master's in history and plans to use his degrees to teach. Derek spends his extra time studying and volunteering at the Boys and Girls Club of Manteca, teaching Tae Kwon Do and telling his students "You can do anything that you put your mind to!"

Why Emus Don't Make Good House Pets

by Derek Spencer

I can see it now standing there in front of me, the Emu, with its mouth stretched wide. I can hear the distinctive sound that it made, and I can see the upside down 'v' shaped eyebrows as a red scorching flame out of nowhere appears behind its body. Absolute terror locks up my body, and my yells quiver slowly out of my throat as if I were in puberty at twelve years old again.

All of a sudden the Emu charges me. What is this? I cannot move! Oh no oh nooo...

I wake up in my bed thinking to myself, "Oh, thank you, god." This nightmare continues to haunt my dreams. I quickly wipe the sticky cold sweat off my forehead and think back on the day I learned that emus do not make good house pets.

Two years ago my grandfather invited me and my mother to come over to his place for lunch. My grandfather, always the Santa Claus of our family, decided to surprise us with his pet emu. My mother and I had never seen an emu before. We walked in the backyard, hoping to see a bird perhaps the size of a chicken. Standing there, seeing the emu, I thought, "If it were a chicken, this would be the Arnold Schwarzenegger of all chickens."

I remember looking at it from the legs up as the song "March of the Volkins" began to play in the back of my mind. It had veins pulsating in its thighs, thighs that rivaled those of Serena Williams. I scrolled upwards to its brown down feathers that covered its wide running-back frame. The bird's neck ended

in a long six-inch beak, much like a Roman spear ready to impale me. Then it happened--we locked eyes and the wind began to pick up. The atmosphere befitted a western movie, com-

plete with tumbleweeds rolling by. Its black coal eyes pierced right through me. I held my own. There was no way this emu could win this stare-off competition, for I was on top of the food chain! Or so I thought.

My mother, probably unaware of the phrase "curiosity killed the cat," leaped forward towards the emu as if it were an everyday housedog. But this was no dog. It opened its beak and made a god-awful noise. "Skreeeeek!" This had the effect of nails on a chalkboard, making the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. All of a sudden the emu jumped up and delivered a front kick to my mother's ribs much like the

My mother, probably unaware of the phrase "curiosity killed the cat," leaped forward towards the emu as if it were an everyday housedog.

trinity kick in Matrix. The kick sent my mother flying five feet in the air landing her on her back. I quickly ran to my mother's rescue. Dropping down to one knee and placing my left hand behind her neck, I asked, "Are you okay? Are you all right?" She grabbed her side and looked at me and said, "Get out of here. Save yourself." Then, she passed out cold from shock. My pulse began to rise and I looked up at the Emu. The Rocky Soundtrack was now playing in my head, as I looked my enemy up and down and Michael Buffer's voice called out:

Gazing up at him, I lay there on my side as its left eyebrow rose up and its mouth opened wide, yelling "Shreeeeeeeeak," indicating to me who was the victor.

"In this corner, from the Australian out-back, weighing in at an even 140 pounds, standing 5 feet 11 inches tall with a record of one K.O.--Thhhhheeee EMU!!"

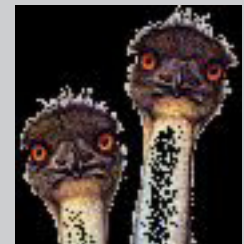
My Kung Fu style would be flawless against the emu, I thought, as I pulled myself up. I had no way at that time of knowing that emus run up to speeds of 40 mph. It caught me off guard when it struck my face with a kick. Its claws ripped through my flesh, knocking me

down on the ground. Gazing up at him, I lay there on my side as its left eyebrow rose up and its mouth opened wide, yelling "Shreeeeeeeeak," indicating to me who was the victor. My face, along with my pride, was hurt. I had broken the cardinal rule of "never underestimate your opponent," for I had lost. The emu's fighting record was now two K.O.s. Quickly my grandfather came to

the rescue and put his "pet" back in his pen. He then drove me and my mother to the nearest hospital.

The damaged included my mother with three broken

ribs and me with six stinging stitches to my face. I did find it ironic that emus are not aggressive animals, but require a "Dangerous Wild Animal's License." It is without a doubt safe to say in my case that emus do not make good house pets, as my scars continue to remind me. In a couple of months it is Thanksgiving, and according to some light reading, emu meat is 97% fat free and has lower cholesterol than most meats... oh, I will have my revenge!





Laura Lee Carpenter, forty-two-years-old, has four children and two grandchildren. She grew up in Stockton and graduated with a GED when she turned sixteen. As she states, "Growing up I had every opportunity to succeed. I chose to waste it all. I was always too busy trying to find the high that would not go away. I spent time in prison and even more time in a number of county jails around California. Today, I have been clean and sober for at least one year and have not been to jail for over two years." She has been enrolled at Delta College for four semesters and holds a 4.0 GPA. Recently, she received an Outstanding Student Award here at Delta College. Her goal is to be an excellent role model for her children and grandchildren. "I have a support system. I am skilled and capable and I could go out and find a job with a decent paycheck, but today I would rather pursue an education and get a career, so that I may find satisfaction in what I choose to do."

Busted!

by Laura Lee Carpenter

Change is inevitable. Change can be good or bad, can evoke many responses in people, and happens each and every day of our lives. Changes can be profound, and without change there would be no growth, spiritually, mentally, or physically. There are times when changes in our lives seem so scary, so bad, so ultimately devastating that we feel there can be no recovery. We feel that from the moment of a specific change our lives will be a downward spiral. Sometimes this is where the most rewarding things we gain in a lifetime will be found. This may be the moment of clarity one needs to go forward, on to new and better ways, feelings and moments. One may dive deep into the downward spiral only to find that it was only a small part of the quest for a better day, a brighter future. Without the bad experiences people have, I must ask, how would we know the value of what is good, beautiful, and truly elating? We must have these comparisons in order to know anything about growth.

I have always been the sort to find trouble without even looking. I was always an easy target, not to be taken advantage of, but rather to go along with someone on an "adventure." One adventure led to another, and before I knew it, I became a

statistic. In the system I had been given many numbers, as given out by all county jail facilities and state penitentiaries. Yes, I am an addict and a convict. Most people do not know this about me; however, I am not ashamed. Everyone has skeletons in a closet, a locked box, or possibly under a mound of dirt, deep behind a shed. It's a good thing I have a large closet.

Everyone has skeletons in a closet, a locked box, or possibly under a mound of dirt, deep behind a shed. It's a good thing I have a large closet.

For several years I had been off parole and had returned my number back to the state; then, I got arrested, once

again. This time it was only a drug offense, but this was the arrest that changed my life. I was driving around at two o'clock in the morning in my 1984 Fiero, which was my home. I had vowed to myself that I would not have any passengers in it. Most of the people I knew would use me for their own personal gain, so somehow in my gut I felt carrying passengers would bring trouble to me. That is the natural thing to expect when you are me. I decided one early morning to go against my gut instinct and give a homeless man I knew a ride to his favorite camping place. With the back of the Fiero piled up with his camp gear we sped off. I was to drive him to the camp, go directly back to his place, put my belongings back in the car and go back to my usual place

to park and sleep—a place that was quiet and devoid of people, a place where I felt safe. Off we drove.

We decided to go a different route than I would normally have taken through the neighborhood where I spent most of my waking hours. We did not get two blocks from the starting point and we were pulled over by a California Highway Patrolman. [How dare the California Highway Patrol be driving through my neighborhood, and at this hour!] I had expired tags on my license plate and my car was piled high with camp gear. This was plenty of reason to be pulled over. I had drugs in my jacket pocket. I was disgusted with myself for going against a gut feeling and a vow I had made to myself. Jail and prison is, to me, cake, so the fear I felt was not from doing time but from not knowing where my belongings would end up. I did not know what would happen to my car. My plan was to hurry up and get out of this mess so that I could retrieve the car and my belongings before my husband could. This plan did not work out. Instead, the worst thing that could have happened to my possessions did happen. My husband retrieved both my belongings and my car. Back to my husband was a place I was scared to death to go.

The arresting officer was the cause of my change. People plant seeds. We nurture the growth of what we receive, good, bad, or indifferent. This officer—who had driven past me several different times while I was parked in my safe place to rest—was the kindest, most compassionate, and most caring cop I had ever come across. When he arrested me, he did not have my car towed. He was not

loud or violent. He did not put the cuffs on too tight or shove me in the back seat of his car. He spent time talking with me, not at me. He asked me about my life. He asked me how I got any number of the bruises that were noticeable on my face, arms, and neck. He asked me if I knew that there was a way out. He cared about me. He cared about me enough to threaten my husband with jail if I were hurt again. The officer pulled my husband over at a later date to inquire of my whereabouts when I was supposed to have been in court. He arrested my husband, who is now in prison.

Because of the caring, compassion, and concern of this California Highway Patrolman and his words to the judge in the courtroom, I received a much lesser charge than I would have received without him. He took the worst thing in my life away, drastic abuse. He gave me the opportunity I needed to become clean and sober. He gave me the opportunity to better myself. He gave me the opportunity to sit in class and the opportunity to write this essay. He gave me the opportunity to have a good life if I so choose. Without the love he is surely filled with, and without his obvious special understanding of human nature, I might never have received this opportunity to live life and to love life. I never saw it coming. Looking back, I am so grateful I was arrested by this particular officer. He has sown the seed, and now the task to nurture this delicate process of growth into full bloom is up to me. I dedicate to him the education I now receive.





In the following work, Nicholas Ridino analyzes Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain. The German-born Mann (1875-1955) earned The Nobel Prize in Literature five years following publication of The Magic Mountain (1924); however, the award principally noted the accomplishments of his earlier Buddenbrooks (1901). At Delta, Nicholas completes his general education requirements. He wishes to recommend the novel and its author to others.

THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN

by Nicholas Ridino

Der Zauberberg (The Magic Mountain)

Why, when I could have spent my time out of doors a free man, would I have chosen instead to spend seven years in a Swiss sanatorium? Actually, it only took me two months to read Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain, and, lying in my driveway of a summer evening, I did not feel like a prisoner, but rather like one undergoing elective surgery. Safely distanced from pain, I lived a "horizontal life" on my splendid lounge chair.

The Magic Mountain involves young engineer Hans Castorp and begins with his trip from Hamburg, Germany, to Davos-Platz, Switzerland, to visit his cousin Joachim. The prostrate Joachim, on military leave at the International Sanatorium Berghof, lies abed, recuperating from bronchitis. Castorp initially plans a three-week visit but ends up staying seven years. After an unpleasant acclimatization process, he becomes slightly ill and, on the advice of the hospital director, extends his stay. The reader understands that medical necessity does not prompt Castorp's extended stay; instead, he succumbs to the hospital's lure: the hospital promises release from suffering, but when its patients' enchantment becomes an indifference to life, their suffering increases.

Situated in pre-World War I, The Magic Mountain's sanatorium more closely resembles a resort than an

institution. In an institution, one cannot order beer or champagne with one's supper, as Castorp occasionally does, nor can one freely smoke Maria Mancini cigars or openly sift cognac into one's evening milk "to make it more palatable" (267).

The Magic Mountain includes an array of Austrian, French, German, Italian, Polish and Russian characters, all of whom converge to form a microcosm of European society at the Berghof. The Italian humanist Lodovico Settembrini makes Castorp's acquaintance early in the novel. With his literary background and pedagogic disposition, Settembrini challenges Castorp to revise, or perhaps repeal, his realist's perspective of the world; consequently, Castorp abandons his engineering interests for intellectual ones.

Settembrini predicts that the longer Castorp stays on the mountain, the further estranged he will become from his world "down below," and begin to see that world in all its arrogance, inflexibility, and folly. Instead of returning to Germany and instituting change in his life, Castorp renounces and distances himself from his former home. Settembrini shrewdly notes the fatality of this paradox and urges his friend to leave the Berghof at once.

Settembrini also fears Castorp's infatuation with the lure of Eros, embodied in Madame Clavdia Chauchat, the feline woman of the "hyperborean cheekbones and . . . blue-gray-green epicanthic eyes"

(Mann 75, 326). The slinking, sexy Russian woman reminds Castorp of his childhood friend Pribislav (pronounced “Pshibislav”) Hippe. Interestingly, Mann chooses this Kirghiz lad as a source of transgender comparison, thus rooting Castorp’s sexual tension in the homosexual. Supine beneath the pine-boughs of a stream-bordered glen, Castorp nurses a nosebleed, “transported to an earlier stage of life,” when as a schoolboy he borrowed a pencil from Hippe, so intensely transported that his “lifeless body lay there on the bench beside the [stream], while the real Hans Castorp [moved] about in an earlier time” (117).

Abandoning his engineering texts, Castorp begins studying biology. Lying on the hospital balcony of a winter’s eve (on a lounge chair so therapeutically comfortable he has termed it “splendid”), he fancies seeing his goddess Clavdia outlined among the stars, in all her wondrously complex anatomical beauty. Settembrini admonishes Castorp’s ardor for Chauchat, equating the engineer’s obsession with idolatry. But he quickly tires of Settembrini’s pedagogic reprimands. The two part dismissively in a chapter called Walpurgis Night, an evening of Mardis Gras festivities at the Berghof. During this festival, Castorp, intoxicated from champagne, overcomes his anxiety and speaks to Chauchat.

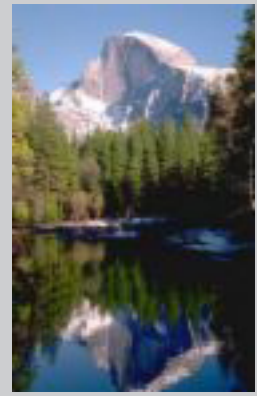
During their conversation, melodrama and improbability abound. Mann intentionally italicizes such phrases as Castorp’s “I have always loved you [Clavdia], for you are the ‘intimate you’ of my life, my dream, my destiny, my need, my eternal desire” to remind the reader to regard the character’s colloquy skeptically (336). Moreover, the improbability of such familiarity and intimacy between two relative strangers casts doubt on Castorp’s later acquisition of Chauchat’s x-ray. Presumably, Chauchat gives

Castorp this memento mori after sexual intercourse; but considering her romantic indifference to him, this bequeathment seems odd. Perhaps he steals the x-ray.

Despite these sketchy details, the next chronological peg—Chauchat’s departure from the Berghof—remains certain. Herr Naphta, the Jesuit lecturer and absolutist, replaces Chauchat. Opposed to the bourgeoisie, empirical in philosophy, and a hater of mankind, Naphta finds beauty in sickness, respectability in torture, and holiness in the obscene. His spiritual views obviously exasperate Settembrini’s humanistic sensibilities.

Fearing the effects of the absolutist’s caustic nature on Castorp, Settembrini warns the engineer to limit his association with Naphta. During one of many debates between Settembrini and Naphta, the latter lets fly the following anti-humanistic remark: “You see,” Naphta confides to Castorp, “what confuses the world is the incongruity between the swift flight of the mind and matter’s vast clumsy slowness, its dogged persistence and inertia” (498). Settembrini does his best to defend the body against Naphta’s spiritual assault, realizing he can shield Castorp from Naphta’s subtle guile only so much.

Based on Naphta’s above quotation, it seems that the decadence of the Berghof, and of its occupants, owes its origins to Naphta’s decayed philosophy. If not for this reason, little else accounts for such factors as the hospital director’s own melancholy and agitation, and the Berghof itself, an institution condoning alcohol and ribaldry, and thus contributing to its own dissolution. European ambition, then, becomes symptomatic of the Berghof’s irrationality. Moreover, Mann’s ironic and erratic persona generates a tremulousness serving as an undercurrent for his highly self-conscious novel, whose plot concerns



itself more with trivialities than with progressive story-content. While serious, Settembrini and Naphta's debates do not advance the story; moreover, the debates' convoluted nature reduces them, at times, to trivialities. If a less conscientious reader passed over these debates, his understanding of the novel would not suffer. But one reads for the sake of reading, and with the expectation that devotion will yield personal fulfillment; skimming over material denies the reader the novel's richness, which comes to its satiety with the arrival of the elderly Dutchman Mynheer Pieter Peeperkorn.

Simultaneously robust and sparse, the powerful Peeperkorn prefers opulence, pleasure, and potent liquefied spirits. Peeperkorn embodies a modern Dionysus, or Bacchus. While not a god, Peeperkorn maintains a lifestyle resembling that of the Greco-Roman god of wine, fertility, and nature. Described a "Personality" by Castorp, the formidable Peeperkorn stands outside the arena wherein Settembrini and Naphta come to intellectual blows, the one championing Nature, the other, the Spirit. Mann describes Peeperkorn's presence as a "counterforce . . . of which [Peeperkorn] was surely not even aware, or aware to God only knew what extent, so that the issue [under debate] seemed to pale, to lose its critical importance, indeed . . . to take on the stamp of frivolity" (577). For, when the man of "Personality" intercedes in the debate between the warring humanist and absolutist, when with his realistic views he uses reason to silence Naphta's wit, and practical matters to befuddle Settembrini's eloquence, the antagonists can do nothing but "step back into the shadows . . . becoming insignificant"; whereupon "Peeperkorn grabbed the scepter—directed, decided, ordered, commanded, controlled" (581). But as a man of "Personality," Peeperkorn finds himself out of his element

in intellectual forums; instead, he influences others. For instance, Peeperkorn's stature and might educes veneration from Castorp, who otherwise has reason to hate Peeperkorn, due to the latter's having arrived with Chauchat in tow.

Peeperkorn easily discerns Castorp and Chauchat's relationship. Instead of envying him, Peeperkorn prepares to offer Castorp the "satisfaction" that he presumes the engineer, having a former claim on Chauchat, desires. However, owing to Peeperkorn's infirmity, the men decide to forgo a gun duel. As a concession of goodwill, Peeperkorn allows Castorp the use of formal pronouns when addressing him, a privilege for which, ordinarily, Castorp would have groveled on the ground. But before Castorp gets much use out of calling Peeperkorn by his first name—Does Peeperkorn leave the Berghof? Or does he succumb to the malignant tropical fever that necessitated his stay, becoming the next cadaver "bobsledded" down the mountain? Well, the reader will just have to content himself with not knowing for the moment (as I had to), and to bear Mann's sarcastic admonishment with as much equanimity as possible: "But why this impatience? Not everything can be known right off" (565). Howsoever the great man "departs," his "departure" climaxes with Castorp kissing Chauchat on the brow.

Although the titan falls, life continues at the Berghof. Chauchat re-departs (whither we do not know), and Director Behrens hypothesizes about Castorp's case. Just by looking at the young engineer, Behrens observes his patient's pronounced listlessness. Castorp sees life deprived of care, without the semblance of hope, a life filled with depravity, in short, a life offering death attractively packaged as complacency (619). But Castorp cannot evade blame. Although the Berghof provides its patients a responsibility-free life, the "stupor"

into which Castorp falls remains his own fault. By shielding himself from the world, Castorp wraps himself in a hermetic existence where nothing ever changes, and in whose insensate embrace he can privately admit: “It was depravity with the best of consciences, the idealized apotheosis of a total refusal to obey Western demands for an active life” (637).

Consequences await Castorp, consequences darkly intimating themselves in a mental activity he calls “playing king,” a childish term borrowed from his schoolyard days, when “borrowing a pencil” from Hippe did not entail the sexual implications that the same request of Clavdia later does. While reaching for love with his mind, Castorp reaches for death with his body. Seizing hold of the homo dei (or “human god”) represents the highest aim of “playing king.” Hovering somewhere between the terrestrial and mystical realms (symbolized, respectively, in Settembrini and Naphta’s ideals), the homo dei awaits Castorp. Even if he does not realize the futility of his aim, the reader at length does. The reader also witnesses how Settembrini and Naphta, as well as their ideals, perish without a social “nutrient” off of which to feed.

In an outburst of pestilence and exasperation, Settembrini accuses Naphta of “molesting vulnerable youth . . . with [his] dubious ideas”—an accusation Naphta cannot tolerate without exacting reparations: namely, Settembrini’s life (686). As the neutral party, Castorp implores Settembrini to reject Naphta’s demand, citing Settembrini’s slander as metaphorical at the very worst. But Settembrini somehow finds a theoretical platform upon which to place personal and metaphorical slander side by side. Thus, human progress compels him to accept Naphta’s challenge. And the victor of their gun duel? Surely, the reader does not wish me to ruin his potential reading experience by

divulging pertinent facts.

Like a thunderbolt, the violence erupting between Settembrini and Naphta portends that erupting from the outside world. From the first page, we have approached the events announcing World War I. Only, in our delusion, we fostered dreams of fallacious continuance. Mann allots no more space to these events than he allots any of the novel’s other significant events, even though the events themselves brought work on his novel to a standstill. For Mann, substantiality lay in the trivialities of life. Examining these trivialities means expanding one’s knowledge of life’s processes, so that instead of becoming redundant, the trivialities become instructive.

With its soliloquy-like arias, literary leitmotifs, and contrapuntal symbolic-realism, The Magic Mountain reads like an opera. Although jagged as the crags of the mountain in some parts, the novel reaches a tonal beauty comparable to that of Carmen, a work very dear to Hans, and for whom the harmony of love, beauty, and death become discordantly entwined.

Reluctantly I folded up my lounge chair, ending my treatment at the Berghof. For a while, I feared I knew Hans a little too well, had, like him, enjoyed “playing king” a little too much. Like him, I rose to omnipotence only to descend to insignificance. Maybe, as Mann prays at the novel’s end, I and the rest of humanity can survive in both the spirit and the flesh, and that our dreams of love will someday arise from life, not death.

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Born in Las Vegas, Nevada, Sherrie Worrell now resides in San Marcos, California, with her husband Justyn and her cat, Sydney. Though they have no children, she and her husband love spending time with the families and especially their niece and nephew, Emily and Michael. Sherrie recently returned to school this past year to pursue her degree in Business. She is currently the Deputy City Clerk for the City of Poway, where she has worked for 9 years.

This paper is dedicated to Lisa, Emily and Michael Rogge with the hopes that one day a cure will be found to help those individuals diagnosed with Bipolar.

The Bipolar Child: How the Illness Affects the Family

by Sherrie Worrell

My nine-year-old niece, Emily, was diagnosed as bipolar at the early age of six. Medically, this disorder is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain that causes unusual shifts in a person's mood, energy, and ability to function. Bipolar disorder is very difficult to diagnose in children because it is often mistaken for age appropriate emotions and behaviors. The disease itself is considered hereditary, with the risk varying from 15% to 75%, depending on whether one or both parents have the illness.

What exactly is bipolar disorder (BPD)? Bipolar illnesses are a subset of mood disorders, of which major depressive disorder is the most common. Children with major depressive disorder suffer from periods of persistently low and hopeless moods characterized by apathy, poor energy and concentration, sleep disturbances, and thoughts of suicide. These depressive symptoms represent one side of the bipolar spectrum. An individual suffering from BPD experiences dramatic fluctuations of mood: from depressive symptoms to mania or hypomania behavior, involving pathological mood elevations characterized by grandiose

thoughts and behaviors, promiscuity, recklessness, agitated and sometimes incoherent speech and thoughts, and a profoundly decreased need for sleep.

In the United States more than two million people are diagnosed as being bipolar. It is not until recently that children have been diagnosed with this illness. According to "About Pediatric Bipolar Disorder,"

In fact, parents of bipolar children are often doing their best while bewildered, exhausted, frustrated, and in some cases, afraid of their own children's violent impulses.

"a significant proportion of the 3.4 million children and adolescents may actually be experiencing the early onset of bipolar disorder."

It is astounding to learn that so many children are affected

by this illness. Although a child's conduct may cover a wide array of "bad" behaviors, the underlying principle of the diagnosis is that the behaviors violate the basic rights of other people. These are behaviors that are often vicious, and the child typically shows no sign of remorse or guilt for having performed the violent acts.

Not all children with BPD have violent outbursts. However, the expectation of physically explosive and dangerous behavior has, to some extent, stigmatized these children.

In addition, critics question whether this syndrome of behavior can really be a BPD if it fails to conform to the symptoms that have long been accepted for adults. That is why it is so important that parents, grandparents, teachers, pastors, and medical professionals pay particular attention to the behaviors children are exhibiting.

In fact, parents of bipolar children are often doing their best while bewildered, exhausted, frustrated, and in some cases, afraid of their own children's violent impulses. The parents may become isolated from friends and family, who may be judgmental of the child and the parents' lack of control over their child's behavior. The parents may be further isolated if they avoid taking the child into public settings

that might become the catalyst for a humiliating meltdown. In [The Life of a Bipolar Child: What Every Parent and Professional Needs to Know](#), Trudy Carlson chronicles the life of her son Ben from birth until his suicide at the age of eighteen. Carlson states, "I thought I was alone in my frustration at not being taken seriously when I reported the symptoms my son exhibited" (1).

Families with bipolar children can also find that life at home revolves around the seemingly endless

demands and needs of the children. Some children hold their emotions in check at school, but fall apart in the safety and comfort of their own homes. This discrepancy in behavior can lead outsiders, including school personnel and extended family, to assume that faulty parenting is to blame for the children's difficult behavior at home.

Some children hold their emotions in check at school, but fall apart in the safety and comfort of their own homes.

I found this stigma to be very true during my interview with Lisa Rogge, a single mother of two, whose daughter Emily was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Lisa spoke about the perception of not being able to control her child. Many people, including friends and loved ones, told Lisa that she needed to be more stern with her daughter, and that she was using the illness as an excuse for her daughter's unruly behavior. It wasn't until Lisa moved back to her parents' home that her parents fully understood the complexity of the situation. As Lisa stated, "Many people thought I was making a mountain out of a molehill. Then they met the mountain!"

When asked how she felt when she got upset, Emily stated she wasn't exactly sure how she felt other than out of control. Emily's mother, though, gave an excellent scenario:





“Imagine if the sound of the kids in the next classroom, the hardness of the chair, the scratching of the tag in the back of your shirt, the flickering florescent bulb, and your teacher talking all hits your brain at the same force and ‘volume.’ Emily has no way to ignore all the extra things and listen just to the teacher. There are no ‘filters’ to help separate everything. This also explains why it is so difficult for bipolar children to process what they hear, such as directions or following a conversation. The message

gets into the brain, but then it doesn’t know where to go. Or, if it does get to the right place, that place doesn’t know how to process the information and it gets lost.”

Emily’s grandparents noted that, as an infant, Emily did not like to be wrapped tightly in a blanket or to be held too close. As she has grown up, Emily still doesn’t like to be constrained. For Emily’s grandparents, the most difficult challenge in helping to raise Emily has been trying to understand how they can help their granddaughter the most. Medication does help with the mood swings and acts of rage, but keeping that medication balanced is very hard to do with any child who is constantly growing. The disease has also taken an emotional

“Imagine if the sound of the kids in the next classroom, the hardness of the chair, the scratching of the tag in the back of your shirt, the flickering florescent bulb, and your teacher talking all hits your brain at the same force and ‘volume.’”

toll on both grandparents. A strict schedule of meals, study time, bath, and bedtime must be adhered to at all times. What happens when Emily is told that she cannot do something? That old phrase “all hell breaks loose” becomes the reality. There is usually

screaming, yelling, crying, and slamming of doors, while at the same time trying to keep everyone and everything else calm. Her grandfather said that the hardest thing for him has been learning a new kind of

patience. There have been times when Emily’s condition has caused conflict between him and his wife, and with his daughter—especially when it comes to disciplining Emily. Both grandparents agree that they worry about how their granddaughter is doing in school and what they can do to help. They are also concerned about the effects Emily’s actions will have on her younger brother.

According to “Bipolar Disorder,” “bipolar disorder is a long-term illness that currently has no cure. Staying on treatment, even during well times, can help to keep the disease under control and reduce the chance of having recurrent, worsening episodes.” So, how does BPD affect the family? It takes the entire family to help raise and

understand the bipolar child, or any child for that matter. You take the good days, as many or as few as there are, and enjoy them to the fullest. When the bad days set in, you have to focus and remember it is a disease and separate it from what the child's normal behavior would be in the situation. Praise the child for the good things and continually remind the child not to use the disease as a crutch or an excuse for individual actions. A bipolar child has to learn to control actions and to know right from wrong. It is a very fine line to follow. BPD is something that can divide a family very easily, if the family lets it happen. Successfully raising a bipolar child boils down to two key components: education and consistency.

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