

DELTA WINDS

VOLUME 21

A Magazine of Student Essays

2008

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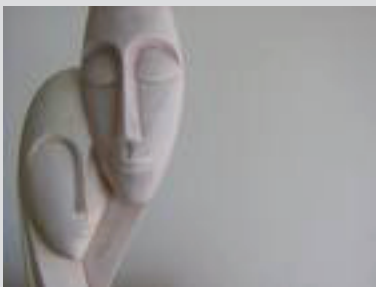
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Letter from the Editors

In the past, *Delta Winds* writers have been republished by Bedford/St. Martins, Roxbury Press, and Thomson Press. Recently, Longman, Norton, and Holt, Rinehart and Winston have followed suit in discovering the quality of work by Delta College authors. In this year's volume, we wish to celebrate recent accomplishments by our "alumni." From the 2005 volume of *Delta Winds*, Bryan Tortolani's "Macho-Man—An In-depth Analysis of the Prejudices of Disability" has been reprinted in *Short Takes*, by Elizabeth Penfield and published by Longman in 2007. First published in *Delta Winds* in 2004, "My Technologically-Challenged Life," by Monica Wunderlich has been reprinted in *Once More to the Lake*, by Thomas Cooley and published by W.W. Norton, 2008. Holt, Rinehart and Winston has expressed interest in reprinting excerpts from Melody Nelson's "Hooked on 'Caramel-Colored Gold,'" published in 2002 by *Delta Winds*. Finally, Shafeeq Sadiq was asked to update his essay "Racism and Sexism in Advertising," originally published in 1997 in *Delta Winds*, for the 8th edition of *The Compact Reader*, by Jane Aaron, for Bedford/St. Martin's in 2008. Through widespread use in popular textbooks, *Delta Winds* essays continue to appeal to readers not only in the community but also in the far corners of college campuses across the country.

Rogene Reynolds is a 58-year-old, fourthth generation native of San Joaquin County. After forty years of family and two careers (bank operations and real estate sales), she is back to college with enthusiasm. Her plans include transfer to the next level, with a focus on polishing her writing skills. Rogene is a farmer's daughter, and "grew up on the back of a horse." Her interests include camping and hiking (at 10,000 feet), driving her Percherons, Molly and Barney, and reading—"I won't live long enough to read all the good books that have been written." Rogene has three daughters, four grandchildren and a host of pets, including a beloved Golden Retriever named "Puppy." She shares life with husband, Bill, her best friend for over 30 years. Home is two acres on Roberts Island, South of Stockton.



Devotion

by Rogene Reynolds

Somewhere I have read, or heard, that nothing is more important to personal happiness than one's choice of spouse. This seems so obvious on the face of it that one may wonder, "So, what else is new?" But have you really thought about the importance of fostering an environment of devotion?

"Devotion" has its Latin roots in the word "devotus"—to "vow." This means to promise, yes, but more particularly, to "center" your attention or activities on something or someone. To make something precious to you, to favor it with all your energy, to sacrifice your own comfort or preferences to satisfy someone else's needs—that is true devotion. With the exception of instinctive mother-love for helpless infants, humans don't have an innate talent for devotion. It is a character trait to be learned—reinforced by

lessons on loyalty and good faith. My story today is about my friends, Helen and Robert Poor, and the lesson they taught me about "devotion."

Helen and Robert were my neighbors—and truly for years I knew them only

slightly. We didn't interact often. I was busy with family and career—they were retired, and on their own time.

But, as they lived only half of a mile away, we often passed on the road or met at community gatherings. As time passed, they became very special friends.

They lived on Roberts Island for twenty-five years, in a small rented house. He worked at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory—she raised herbs and flowers to sell. After retiring, Robert joined Helen in her efforts, and their little homegrown

To make something precious to you, to favor it with all your energy, to sacrifice your own comfort or preferences to satisfy someone else's needs—that is true devotion.

business began to take off. Annually, they held wonderful sale events—plants, seeds, flowers (dried and fresh). All was so professionally done—and if you bought Helen’s seeds you could be assured of successful crops. Our common love of gardening brought us closer together, and I began to enjoy visits into their home.

Helen was always so cheerful—a bright elf-like lady, with silky white hair tied back under a baseball

cap. She was funny, earthy in a ladylike way, and Robert was her right-hand man. He patiently did all the heavy lifting—digging,

laying drip line. He was her perfect foil—short, a little burly, rather droll—careful to defer to her in conversation.

Their home was modest—tiny by most accounts—and rather unkempt. I remember stacks of papers and books—plant lore and U. C. Davis studies. The kitchen ceiling was rigged with hanging boards for drying flowers and herbs. They spent the best days of their lives enveloped in the scent of rosemary, sage, basil and thyme.

Although “outsiders” to Roberts Island, over the years, Robert and Helen had established a special place in the hearts of our little community. Robert enjoyed playing Santa Claus at our Farm Center holiday parties (he had a great natural grey beard!). Helen shared her plant lore with everyone—including our daughter. They had not been blessed with children, and Robert and our Rachel became buddies.

About ten years ago, I began

They spent the best days of their lives enveloped in the scent of rosemary, sage, basil and thyme.

to notice subtle changes in my friends. There was the Christmas when they declined our invitation to Open House, strange,

because they had always enjoyed it so much! Then at what was to be their last plant sale, held one bright September day in 1998, I remember Helen speaking sharply to Robert—in a tone of voice so unusual for her. I recall how he blanched and turned quietly from her anger.

A few months later I learned what was going on. Alzheimer’s Disease was taking Helen away. Robert

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had hidden it from all of us as long as possible.

If you have never lived through this disease, it is hard to explain how tragic and devastating it is. The afflicted person literally goes backward, mentally and physically, slipping finally into a vegetative state—forgetting even how to breathe. As it progresses, the person suffering with it loses all resemblance to the person you have known. It is hard to manage, can be filthy, and its horror falls most upon the loved ones who must watch helplessly, knowing the inevitable outcome.

Robert acknowledged our offers of assistance—but took care of Helen himself. He didn't invite company, and we respected his privacy. Only once did he ask me to help him. He called, needing to go to town for a medical appointment. Would I be so kind as to sit an hour or two with Helen? Of course, but I feared for what I might find. I should have known better than to doubt Robert.

Helen's bed had been moved into their living room, situated so that she could see out the big picture window. Priscilla curtains gently moved as a fresh breeze brought the sunlight in. It was all so clean and light! No sign of sickness or despair anywhere! Flowers on the table, soft music on the radio. . . . I turned to Robert, and he smiled. "I've been doing the best I can," he said softly.

Helen was beautiful. He kept her that way. Her long white hair shimmered on the snowy pillow. She was immaculately clean, absolutely comfortable, and so very peaceful.

I took her cool hand, and Robert said, "Thank you so much—I'll be back as soon as I can." He left, and for those two hours we waited, Helen and I. She never moved, just stared out the window.

I reflected on their life together—over fifty years of all the commotion, cares and turmoil of ordinary experience. How much they loved each other. How faithful Robert had been.

How DEVOTED he was.

Just a few months later, we learned that Robert had finally called on the local Hospice group to come help him at home. His

beloved Helen didn't spend one day in a hospital. At her death, Robert respected her wishes, and there was no service. I went by to express my condolences, and he welcomed me into that bright room once again. He was weary, but not bowed. He told me his beloved Helen was in his arms at her last moment.

My experiences before, and after Helen's illness have taught me not everyone can do what Robert did. Furthermore, no one should be faulted for admitting

the need for strangers or professionals to take the place of family under such trying circumstances. Emotionally and physically most of us are not equipped to provide such care.

But we can all learn the meaning of the word "devotion" by knowing this story. We can realize that the tragedies of life can be transcended by human love and loyalty. And we can try, as Robert said, to "do the best we can."





Shaunna Branham, originally from Daly City, feels that since moving to Stockton her puzzle (life) has been broken up and put back together in different spots. As a mother of two young boys, she has found herself more motivated than ever to do well and to give them more than what she had. She attends Delta College while still at Western Career College. She has a few more days left to obtain a certificate in medical assisting. She doesn't plan on stopping there. She is going for her A.S. in nursing at Delta and hopes to get her master's in registered nursing. As she says, "I am willing to start at the bottom to get to the top."

MY LIFE IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF TECHNOLOGY

BY SHAUNNA BRANHAM

Most Americans have to deal without some type of technology at a point in their lives. For myself, technology wasn't something I thought about, even though I used it every day. Just because it was at my fingertips didn't make it a hot commodity to me. Or so I believed.

Growing up just north of San Francisco, in a small speck of a city, I never noticed technology. I mean, we had two televisions, one in the living room and another in the bedroom. We also had a vacuum cleaner and a coffee maker. That was all one needed. It wasn't until later in life that I realized how much I was really missing out. A friend of mine pointed out my lack of a microwave, a cell phone (when they were the size of a

remote), and a car.

My mom wasn't a chef, but when she cooked it was amazing. When I asked her about a microwave, she told me, "If you want soggy tasteless food, get a job and buy your own microwave."

"But everyone else has

one; plus it will cook everything ten times faster."

I felt I was right. I mean everyone had a microwave. Why couldn't we? She gave me that get-the-hell-away-

I'd walk past a crowd of girls calling the crowd of guys at the other end of the hall. I'd wonder what they were saying, hoping they weren't talking about me

from-me look so I did. But I was out to set her straight; a microwave would be a good addition to our home. So I saved and I saved and about five months later I bought a microwave. I couldn't wait to try it out. Unfortunately it was what my mom said it would be. I placed some

leftover fried chicken in the microwave and set it for five minutes—the longest five minutes I was ever going to wait. When it finally blared calling for me to remove what I believed would be a piece of heaven, I found a soggy shriveled-up chicken leg screaming for help. It was wet on the outside and dry on the inside. I only ever used the microwave after that to heat water for tea. This was only my first stop to heartbreak with technology.

By the time I was fifteen I finally understood what a cell phone was, and I knew I needed to get one. My social status at school was in the middle. If it weren't for those I grew up with, I'd probably be at rock bottom. But everyone I knew carried around these pop-tart size phones that blatantly went off in class while a lecture was going on. I'd walk past a crowd of girls calling the crowd of guys at the other end of the hall. I'd wonder what they were saying, hoping they weren't talking about me. I felt it was time to take action.

“Mom, what if something happened to me at school, and

I'd need to call you?”

“That's what public phones are for.”

My mom always made us kids keep a quarter in our pockets just in case we had to call her in an emergency. I think I had carried mine for two years.

“What if I can't find a pay phone? Besides, you can get a cell phone for you, too.”

My mom always made us kids keep a quarter in our pockets just in case we had to call her in an emergency. I think I carried mine for two years.

“If you want a cell phone, get a job and buy one.”

I didn't see the harm in having a cell phone. We needed to keep in touch during emergencies,

so I got a job. With my first paycheck I rushed out and bought a cell phone. I signed on the dotted line and didn't think twice because I had a cell phone and couldn't wait to show it off. After the free first month, a bill arrived in the mail: \$285! That became the end of the cell phone for me. I figured it was cheaper to carry a quarter around in my pocket. After some time, I convinced myself it was okay that I didn't have a cell phone because what I really wanted was a car.



I continued to work and saved over \$1500 in a year. My next trip was to the auto dealer. A group of my friends had gotten their driver's licenses and their parents let them drive to school. I didn't have a driver's license or even know how to drive, but I wanted a car plus I had \$1500. I was 0 for 2 with my mom, but I knew I could convince her to help get me a car and I was too young to do it by myself.

"Mom, everyone at school drives. I'm the only one who takes the bus."

"No! Your sisters take the bus!"

"Mom! Please! I have money. All you have to do is go with me down to a dealership, sign the papers, and give them the money!" See, I had it all planned out.

"What about payments? Insurance? A driver's license? Can you keep your job for about another fifty years?"

"All of that comes after the car!"

"NO!" She gave me that look before I could even say another word.

I was on my own again. Since I wasn't able to go to a dealership, I looked in the paper and saw an '87 Toyota wagon for \$1000. It was a sign. I got a twelve-year-old car, but I got to keep \$500 in my pocket. I met up with the seller of the car and it looked good, I guess. I wasn't sure what I was doing.

"So what do you think?"

"It's nice. I'll need to think it over so I'll be back"

"The car might not be here when you get back. An older lady was looking to buy it for \$1300."

"Oh no . . . okay. I'll take it!"

He handed me the keys and I gave him the money. "Oh, yeah, it needs a battery."

I got behind the wheel and started off up the hill. I couldn't wait to drive past the school so everyone could see what I got. I

managed to make it about five blocks carelessly swerving up the hill before I hit a parked car. I got out to check the damage. Not much, only a broken taillight for them and a scratched bumper for me. As I turned to get back in the car, I saw it rolling down the hill. Cars dodged and darted

out of the way. I chased after it not knowing what would happen if I caught up with it. But before I could reach the car, it smashed into a light pole. And

that was the end of that. I ended up paying a \$300 fine and \$189.99 for the taillight. Strike three. After that I found myself in a slump. I didn't care what gadget everyone had because I knew something would probably end up going wrong if I got it.

I still to this day use my microwave, a new one, to heat water for tea only. Everything

cooks, bakes, or reheats in my oven, and I'm okay with it. I will admit that after three more failed attempts to own a cell phone I have one now. Thank God for MetroPCS. And after having the worst luck with cars I'm doing a little better. Technology is a big deal to a lot of people, and

As I turned to get back in the car, I saw it rolling down the hill. Cars dodged and darted out of the way.

I found out if you don't try to keep up with everyone you'll be okay without it.

For me the repeated attempts to purchase a phone were worth it because I

have two small kids and I get worried about how they are doing. For the same reason I found it necessary to keep trying for a car after some initial setbacks: My mom totaled my first Camry, my second Camry was hit from the back and totaled, my Suburban died on me after two weeks of owning it, and my current cars, a Dakota and Bonneville, together

wouldn't make a whole car. I'm okay with technology.





Mary White sums up her upbringing in the following words: “Even though we were raised in poverty, we never really went without much. Our needs were met. We worked on the farm and went to church. At school, life was horrible. I was a sad kid, isolated from others. I was told that I was ugly and that nobody would like me. My self-esteem led me to fight all the time. I did not hang out with any kids because of all the words they said about me. I had to learn the hard way that kids were going to be kids, and I had to fight everyday to let them know that I may be ugly, but I could beat them up. No kid should ever have to go through what I went through in school. Today I am a student at Delta College, working on my A.A. degree in social science. Life is good now because I choose not to allow people to affect me. I am a woman with integrity, and I am no different from anyone else. I choose to accept people for who they are.”

School Bully

by Mary White

My grandparents, Cleveland and Laura Murphy, raised me along with seven other grandchildren. Life was wonderful surrounded by brothers, sisters, and cousins all of the time,

but being raised by my grandparents sometimes was a struggle for me. Not knowing who my birth parents were was extremely difficult, but growing up the odd man out proved even harder. Every family has a black sheep, a

person who all blame and responsibility falls on. In our household of eight children, I proved to be that person because of my own horrible actions.

My grandparents expected the girls to know how to cook and clean and how to care responsibly for a home. I took to cooking like a seal takes to the ocean. I was an excellent cook and I specialized in baking cakes and pies. No matter how skilled I was in the kitchen,

I knew I was different from everyone else in the household. At first glance I was much taller and slightly heavier than the other children at home and at

school. I was sociable, but it seemed that my friends were few and far between. I liked to save any money I could lay my hands on, so this is how I kept my schoolyard friends happy. When my money ran out, my friends often

left too.

I wanted to be popular and wanted to be liked, but I was not sure how to do it. The older I was, the bigger I seemed to grow, and the worse I began to feel about myself. As I became taller and heavier, the people who used to be my so-called friends began to make fun of me and call me cruel names. They called me names like “fat cow,” “big cow,” and the worst of them all “black bitch.”

I wanted to be popular and wanted to be liked, but I was not sure how to do it.

The hurtful names did something horrible to my calming kind spirit. I began to change, and I knew it was for the worse. Boys would laugh at the way I looked, and girls would create rumors about me. I was one of the only girls without a boyfriend, and I began to hate everything and everyone. I would fight everyday with my ex-friends, but I would never hit them back. I thought because I was bigger and stronger that they would just leave me alone, but that never happened.

One day at school a popular little white girl was crying, and a group

of mean black girls were teasing her. They took her coat, and they slapped her around. I could not believe that she was just sitting there and letting them hurt her. I realized that these were the same girls that used to be my old friends. I could not help the way I felt. I ran over to help the white girl, and I fought the other girls off. Needless to say, I won the fight, and everyone was shocked that I fought back. I noticed that after the fight some kids had a new respect for me. It was not because they liked me. It was because they were

I noticed that after the fight some kids had a new respect for me. It was not because they liked me. It was because they were scared of me.

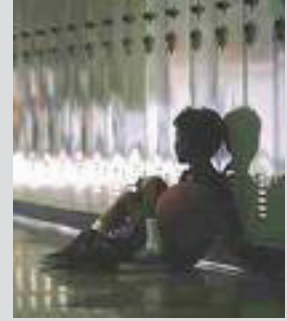
scared of me.

After that incident, in the halls at school, becoming a bully was an evolution that could not be avoided. I could not keep friends by being polite and money was often hard to come by. It was inevitable that I became the schoolyard bully. I decided that I wanted respect, and that I would take it by any means necessary. I began to rebel against any sort of

authority, or anyone who made fun of me. I loved the feeling of power that I had when I walked down the halls with my head held high, and people

moved out of the way. I loved the respect that I received when I wanted a seat in the lunchroom, and people moved so that I could be seated.

Secretly, I wished that I did not have to be mean and hurt others to be respected or popular, but I just did not know how to achieve those results any other way. I had tried to be polite and generous. I had also tried to be kind, caring, and friendly. However, it was to no avail. It just did not work. I began to feel that having friends that feared





*I began to feel
that having
friends that feared
me was better than
having no friends
at all.*

me was better than having no friends at all. I would often look at the kids I bullied with sympathy because just weeks, months, and years earlier, it was I that was being harassed, laughed at, and ridiculed. I often wanted to yell out loud that they needed to fight back like I did.

At night alone in the room that I shared with my sisters and cousins, I was just Mary. I had no respect, no power, only the thoughts of my actions. My brothers and cousins seemed to lose respect for me, because I always seemed mean, but I was just unhappy. It seemed like I was always in trouble at school, which turned into being in trouble at home. I was the black sheep of the family because of my horrible actions during the day, and for punishment I was forced to do the same chores I once loved. My grandparents were hard working people who could not understand why I was having such a hard time in school.

My grandmother would often counsel me from the Bible on how I should behave like Christ and walk in his image. Even though I heard her words, I never listened to them. I enjoyed the fame I seemed to have at all costs. Before I knew it, my teen years were in full swing, and I began staying out late, drinking and hanging out with boys. My grandparents could not believe my transformation from good girl to bad girl. They could not understand my life choices, and they knew that if I stayed on the same path, I was going to have a troubled life.

As I look back on my youth, I see the mistakes that I made, and I see the turning points where I changed for the worse. I realize my mistakes, and I feel sorry for the hurtful things that I did growing up. I hurt many people the same way those who bullied me hurt me. I fell into a vicious cycle of abuse and bullying when I should have just looked the other way and told on those who hurt me as a child. Maybe life decisions would have gone another way for me if I had made different decisions. I know now as an adult that respect is earned by positive actions, and not by destructive behaviors. I teach my grandchildren everyday that honesty, compassion, and kindness for others will gain them all the respect that they will ever need. I teach them that beauty comes in all sizes, shapes, and colors, and I hope these words of wisdom from an old bully will keep them from taking the path that I took.

The Fine Art of Procrastination

by Greg Patchen

A bad habit can be anything from nail biting to serial killing. I like to think that my bad habit is between these two habits. It is worse than nail biting, but nothing compared to serial killing; it is procrastination. I say that we procrastinators are misunderstood. It is true that we wait until the last minute to do anything, but it has worked for a bunch of us. Surprisingly, I get A's on most of my schoolwork. So why give up something that works for me? I can have all the fun I want until the day before my assignment is due, and then on that day I know that it is homework time. After many years of mastering my procrastinating ways, I have become proficient at finishing my homework right before it is due.

The day was Sunday, just like any other Sunday. I had a calculus test the next day along with an English paper and a chemistry quiz. I was not sweating though. I still had about 22 hours before the next school day. That gave me plenty of time to do

tons of homework, play a few video games, watch a bunch of TV, see a few friends, and hopefully get a couple hours of sleep. I started off the day by waking up around 10:00 A.M., but stayed in bed until 11:00 A.M. I knew that I had tons of homework to do, but told myself, "I'll do homework right after lunch."

I pulled out my X Box, plugged in my controller, loaded my Halo 2 disc, and started killing a bunch of aliens.

I slowly ate my lunch thinking about all the homework I had to do. After my meal, I reluctantly walked to my room to study. I opened up my books, but all I could think about were the football games on TV. "Let me flip through a few stations and see the scores," I thought. I started watching with a bag of Cheetos in my lap and a cup of Mountain Dew in my hand. The next thing I knew I had watched two games, and four and a half hours had gone by. It was now 4:00 P.M., and I had not done any homework.

I knew that it was time to start my homework. I decided to start writing my paper first, so I opened up Microsoft Word. The only problem was that I had no idea what to



Greg Patchen is 18 years old and attending his first semester at Delta College. He plans on transferring to a four-year college after attending Delta for two years. Though he enjoys writing, Greg's true passion is mathematics and science.



write about. This is a writer's worst nightmare—the curse of the blank screen. I started out by typing my name, professor's name, class name, date, and page numbers. I spaced it out just right so that I had about half of a page. Then, I said to myself, "Well, I have half of a page; I think that I deserve a study break." I pulled out my X Box, plugged in my controller, loaded my Halo 2 disc, and started killing a bunch of aliens. I was only planning to play video games for about an hour or two, but I was actually on for four hours! It was now 8:00 P.M., no homework was done, and my mom was yelling at me to wash the dishes. I ran to the kitchen, packed the dishwasher, and started it. The whole process took about half an hour. Now, I was determined to start my homework. Procrastination was no longer an option . . . or was it?

I walked to my room, closed the door, unplugged my TV, turned off my computer, turned off my phone, and grabbed my chemistry book. Clearly, I did not want to be distracted. I basically forced myself to study. About 15 minutes later, my mom opened up my door and said that I had a call from the

house phone. Reluctantly I grabbed the phone and started talking to my friend. He asked me why my phone was off, so I told him that I needed to study. Instead of letting me study, he told me all about a new update to the online game we play. Intrigued, I turned my computer back on and checked it out. This was a terrible idea for me, especially

I spaced it out just right so that I had about half of a page. Then, I said to myself, "Well, I have half of a page; I think that I deserve a study break."

now. I logged onto the game and again lost track of time. Two more hours flew by, and I was basically nowhere

with my homework. Now, I was really determined to study. Even though I had said this before, this time I meant it.

The time was 10:30 P.M. I pulled out my chemistry book and studied like never before. I basically memorized each page before going onto the next. Study breaks were no longer permitted. As soon as I finished studying chemistry at 11:30 P.M., I decided to move on to calculus. I opened up my calculus book, but there was one small problem. I had no idea what I was looking at! I had procrastinated so long that I had not taken the time to ask my teacher for help. Anxiously, I read over each confusing graph, each difficult formula, each

long process, and each boring chapter. I repeated this process six times. I tried many practice questions and found out that I had memorized the material so well that I probably could have completed the calculus test in my sleep. It was now about 1:30 A.M. Although I was extremely tired, I still had an English essay to type.

I slowly walked to the kitchen to make coffee, but I had no idea how to make it. Both of my parents were asleep and I was fading fast from exhaustion. I opened up the refrigerator door in search of something with caffeine. Earlier I had left a half full energy drink in the refrigerator in case of an incident such as this. I grabbed the drink and chugged it, which turned out to be a dreadful idea. It usually takes about twenty minutes for an energy drink to pump a person full of energy, so I took a study break and watched TV. Twenty minutes passed, and all of a sudden my whole body started shaking. I had drunk the energy drink too fast, causing me to have too much energy! My hands were shaking so terribly that I couldn't type. This was a predicament: either I could try to type my paper while hitting all of the wrong keys or I could take a study break until I stopped shaking, at which time I would lose all of my energy and risk passing out. I knew that I could not take any more breaks, so I decided to type my paper in my shaky state. This proved to be the biggest struggle of the night.

It was now 2:30 A.M., which still gave me five hours to work before class started. I was shaking like crazy! Every sentence I wrote had to be edited and reedited. My other problem was that I had no idea what to write. I knew what my topic was, but I did not know exactly what the content should be. I basically came up with ideas as I was writing. If it sounded wonderful in my head, then it was put on my paper. Even a few ideas that did not sound so great made it onto my paper. I just wanted the paper finished. As I was finally losing the shakes, I was also losing energy and consciousness fast. I knew that I needed to finish my paper, so whatever popped into my head was written down. As a result, the paper only took me one hour to write, but the editing took forever. In my semi-consciousness, I realized that I had made several dumb mistakes. I scrolled down my paper and edited all of the fragments, run on sentences, misspelled words, punctuation errors, and terrible sentence wordings. After two hours of editing, I was finally finished!

Two and a half hours of sleep later my alarm rang, waking me from my short slumber. I reluctantly woke up and arrived to school. Yes, I was tired, but I was also ready for my test and quiz and to turn in my paper. I smoothly completed my test and quiz and later on proudly turned in my paper. I was confident that I aced everything, so I had no worries. Later on, it turned



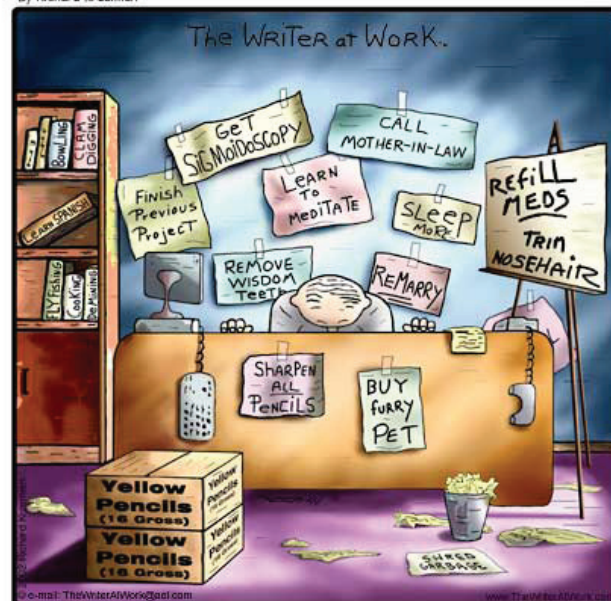
out that I was right. I aced my quiz, test, and paper. Clearly I had no problem at all procrastinating until the last minute. Years and years of the same routine had truly programmed me into a procrastination machine. I have never had a teacher who could tell if I had done my work the night before or if I had spent weeks working on it.

Years and years of the same routine had truly programmed me into a procrastination machine.

Everyone has procrastinated at one time or another, but I do not recommend excessive procrastination for everyone. Many people cannot handle the stress of completing their homework at the last minute, so instead they should space out their homework over a period of time. At first I did

not like waiting until the last minute to do my homework, but after years and years of practice I have learned to love it. My parents call me the King of Procrastination. Although I might be hurrying like a madman to finish my homework, it eventually gets finished with excellent results. My bad habits have not caught up with me yet, so until they do, procrastination will continue to be a part of my life. Maybe even this paper was written at 3:00 in the morning on the day it was due, but I will never tell.

By Richard Krzemien



Pressing tasks to be completed before beginning a new project.

Scrubbing Bubbles

by Michael Kost



Michael Kost, a native of the Stockton/Lodi area, presently works full-time managing a print and copy center. A part-time student at Delta College, he says that he is enjoying the benefits of taking courses over the Internet. He hopes to become a professional writer in some form or another in the future.

Usually (I like to think) I'm not too susceptible to the persuasive powers of modern advertising. Very rarely do I purchase a product that I have seen advertised unless I have previously made up my mind that it's something I really need. It is true that I may be persuaded to purchase one brand over another based on advertising, but to purchase something I don't need based on an ad? Doesn't happen very often.

However . . . within the last year or two a new gadget came out that I couldn't resist: the Automatic Shower Cleaner by S.C. Johnson, a Family Company. Finally. . . with this little gizmo the geniuses at S.C. Johnson developed a way to ensure the cleanliness of my shower with no more effort than the simple touch of a button! Ha-ha! So long squeegee! Be gone!

Normally I'd be somewhat skeptical of such a claim, but this . . . this employed the

powers of none other than "The Scrubbing Bubbles." It had to work. Give this baby two weeks and your shower will be clean as a whistle . . . fresh as a meadow in the Swiss Alps on a spring afternoon . . . slicker than snot (oh wait, you don't want that, you'd slip and break

Finally . . . with this little gizmo the geniuses at S.C. Johnson developed a way to ensure the cleanliness of my shower with no more effort than the simple touch of a button!

your neck—not to mention the fact that it would be completely disgusting!). Anyway, I could hardly wait to watch the progress day by day as the grime and mildew and filth just slowly disappeared. (Okay, so my shower's not that bad, but it does have water spots and some hard water mineral deposits and probably some soap residue, but that's it!)

Well, the days turned into weeks, and the weeks turned into more than a month and my shower was no more sparkling clean than the day I first installed this "wonder contraption." Oh the disappointment! Oh the gut-wrenching pain and heartache of having been

Oh, the gut-wrenching pain and heartache of having been deceived by someone so close . . . a gigantic multi-billion dollar conglomerate over a thousand miles away that had worked so hard to earn my trust in several strategically positioned, thirty-second television commercial spots!



deceived by someone so close . . . a gigantic multi-billion dollar conglomerate over a thousand miles away that had worked so hard to earn my trust in several strategically positioned, thirty-second television commercial spots! A-go-nee, A-GO-NEE, as Daffy Duck would say. The worst part, though, was that I had to apologize to the squeegee. We're on speaking terms now, but it's just not quite the same anymore.

Oh, well. I really don't harbor any resentment over the whole debacle. I mean, seriously, how long can a person stay mad at those cute little Scrubbing Bubbles anyway? I know they did their best. Truth be told, I still have the Automatic Shower Cleaner by S.C. Johnson, a Family Company, still hanging in my shower. Guess I'm just a big softy (or is it lazy).

In retrospect, I'm not completely sure I really grasp the depth of the significance of this segment of my life's journey, nor will I be able to truly comprehend its ramifications as pertains to Freudian psychoanalytical modalities, but if someone, say, oh . . . I don't know . . . maybe my English 1D teacher, perhaps, were to hold a gun to my head and force me to compose a "statement of principle drawn from [my] empirical experience and posed as a hypothesis," I'd have to submit the following (credit P.T. Barnum): "There's a sucker born every minute!"



Taboo

by Steven Stewart

From mini skirts and jumbo sunglasses to belts and overalls, our American society is on a huge rollercoaster of different personal appearances. The causes range from age to a variety of vibrant cultures displaying their unique style. It is a definite that in a lifetime one will encounter apparel that

may seem attractive and bizarre. Through different regions of this nation, people explode with colorful clothing, or maybe no clothing at all. Aside from clothing,

some people come as tall as a tree, while some are no taller than a smurf. But no matter where one may trek, there seems to be a common factor in America: to be so fat as to be morbidly obese or to be so skinny as to be labeled skeletal is taboo. Life on the extremes is no-man's land.

Who knows how one may travel down the road to obesity? The possibilities are endless! It could be genetics involving appetite and

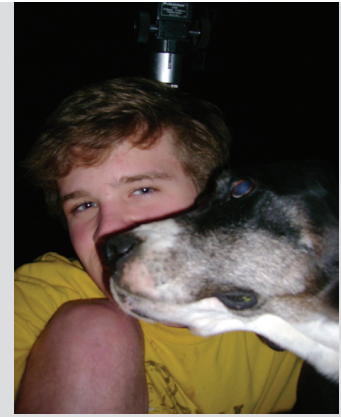
metabolism; the person could be a "binge eater;" or he could just be extremely sedentary as he sits and watches TV (which is found to lower metabolism unlike other unenergetic activities such as reading). People give many explanations for their obesity, such as "I eat food when I'm depressed" or "because

It is also a mystery why some people happen to come to resemble a mummified corpse found buried under the vast sand dunes of Egypt.

it tastes good!" I'm not pointing the finger of blame at anyone and presuming that being fat is a "bad" thing. If people are comfortable with the way they look,

that's fine. I'm just saying people in the "In" crowd may find it a little shocking to see fat rolls cascading down a massive thigh like the waters of the mighty Niagara Falls.

It is also a mystery why some people happen to come to resemble a mummified corpse found buried under the vast sand dunes of Egypt. I'd say that unless you're lost starving in some God-forsaken desolate land, the easiest way of getting to that point is through Anorexia



Steven Stewart describes himself as "just a kid with ADHD wandering through the vast forest of life."



The beautified eyes of America constantly lay scrutiny upon a weary, unsuspecting public.

nervosa or Bulimia nervosa. The people affected by Anorexia are around 1% and by Bulimia around 3%. People may have come upon eating disorders by a desire to become skinny, to resemble someone, to attract someone, to perform better in sports, or they may be scared of the idea of fatness, or maybe they see themselves as fat when they are indeed skinny. I wouldn't be surprised in the near future to see a guitarist carrying around these afflicted people, gently strumming their prominent bones as the tone is magnified in the hollows of their chest cavities.

Both skinny and heavy people make their own personal statement with their bodies, not with their clothes. It is what makes them stand out in the crowd. Unfortunately their fashion sense puts them in great danger. The gentle gargantuan may become diabetic, have a stroke, acquire blood clots, go blind, have a heart attack, have increased chances for certain cancers, and may become bed-ridden due to immense weight, all of which may lead to death. The frail figure may experience an eroded esophagus, decadence of the teeth, stunted growth, and have missed periods. She may become infertile, become malnourished, have a weak heart, suffer osteoporosis, and become bloated. The worst one is going through the process of starvation. In the end, it may lead to a sudden death. Both outcomes, being obese or malnourished, don't seem to be very favorable.

The beautified eyes of America constantly lay scrutiny upon a weary, unsuspecting public. Ironically, the ones who most often cast judgment seem best fit to be judged themselves. But we all have our endeavors, our chains, and our mountains. Situations pertaining to the extremes of weight are very serious, even life threatening. If given the proper help, all people big or small can recover and fit nicely into the assembly line of the other freak shows and blonde Barbies that walk the streets of America.



The Use of Performance-Enhancing Drugs in Sports

by Michael Scott

In the last couple of years, many athletes in different sports have been caught using performance-enhancing drugs. When an athlete tests positive for performance-enhancing drugs, the athlete is usually well known. Also, there have been many instances never reported. It has come to a point where when an athlete is doing really well in his sport, speculations on the use of steroids or other performing-enhancing drugs arise. But the bothersome thing about sports today is that the speculations may very well be true. The use of steroids, and other performance-enhancing drugs, is dangerous. Although it has enhanced the entertainment value of sports, it also has diminished the value of sportsmanship.

The use of performance-enhancing drugs in sports is widespread, becoming a matter of public knowledge and debate. It has gotten to the point where athletes from other countries are coming to the United States to buy performance-enhancing drugs that are illegal in their home countries. In his article "Performance-Enhancing Substances Raise Serious Ethical Questions for Athletes," Kirk Johnson states that as a result of publicity, sales of performance-enhancing products have increased and companies are swiftly creating new products. According to Johnson, "Met-Rx ... said that it was developing a gum that boosted testosterone ... while you chew. Another company has developed a steroid that dissolves under the tongue.

It has gotten to the point where athletes from other countries are coming to the United States to buy performance-enhancing drugs that are illegal in their home countries.



Michael Scott is twenty years old and has lived in Stockton for five years. After graduating from Bear Creek High School, he has attended Delta since the fall of 2005. He has been a member of the football team since he began attending Delta. Michael's goal is to graduate this semester with his AA and finish both his education and his football career at a four-year college. In his spare time, he enjoys sports, movies, and spending time with family.



**Anabolic steroids
are made in many
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into the skin.**

Advertising copy on the Internet bursts with claims about everything from better state of mind to heightened sexual performance” (para. 18).

Athletes are also using dietary supplements that are advertised as having the same effects as prescription-only performance-enhancing drugs. Studies indicate that some supplements change into illegal steroids once they’re taken into the body. In “Performance-Enhancing Dietary Supplements Are Dangerous,” Gwen Knapp says, “supplement use has been linked to the deaths of several athletes, who exceeded the recommended dosages or mixed their intake of supplements with other medications” (para. 1). She states that supplements are easy to buy, and athletes are drawn to them as if they were Michael Jordan’s latest shoe. At first, a chain of vitamin stores didn’t want to stock androstenedione, but when Mark McGwire admitted to using it during his record-breaking season, it became the must have ingredient. Knapp believes that the problem with supplements is that they are almost unregulated.

The risky side effects of performance-enhancing drugs should be publicized. Steven Ungerleider asserts in his article “Steroids are Dangerous” that even though steroid use may increase an athlete’s endurance and muscle growth, it also has many risky side effects. Anabolic steroids are made in many forms that can be taken orally, injected, or rubbed into the skin. In “Steroids Are Harmful,” Doug West states that steroids have many serious physical and psychological consequences. They can cause cancer and strokes, stunt bone growth, and lead to aggression (para. 1). They also may induce a sense of invincibility and promote excessively macho behavior, and sometimes, attacks of rage or psychosis (Ungerleider para. 12). Men may also experience reduced sperm count, shrunken testicles, inability to achieve an erection, and irreversible breast enlargement. Women may develop deep voices and excessive body hair. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the more serious life-threatening effects of steroid abuse are heart attacks, strokes, and liver cancer (West para. 7). As far as the psychological toll, depression and addiction are other potential problems. Other problems include irritability, impaired judgment, delusions and paranoid jealousy (para. 8). Also, injecting steroids with contaminated needles creates a risk of HIV and other blood-borne infections (Ungerleider para. 13).

Why are athletes today, more athletic than athletes in the past? Some people say it’s because a lot of athletes are using performance-enhancing drugs. In “Athletes Will Never

Stop Using Performance-Enhancing Drugs,” Matt Barnard states that people should recognize that even the best athletes go to great lengths in order to succeed. Definitely, one great length is the use of performance-enhancing drugs. Some athletes struggle to achieve and keep up with better competition. Though they condemn the use of drugs, international athletic associations and their corporate sponsors, covertly encourage drug use by demanding higher standards of achievement from athletes in order to reach fans and gain profit (Barnard para. 1).

However, Steve Olivier openly discourages the use of drugs. He states in his article “Banning Performance-Enhancing Drugs is Justified” that athletes should be prohibited from taking performance-enhancing substances because these substances can harm those who use them. According to Olivier, “the use of performance-enhancing substances is not only illegal, it is also

morally reprehensible in that it violates the virtues of honesty and trustworthiness, which go to the heart of the fairness and integrity of competitive sport” (para. 4). It also can be harmful to others. The use of performance-enhancing drugs by role models can be an influence on young athletes. If a young athlete, who is easily influenced,

Men may also experience reduced sperm count, shrunken testicles, inability to achieve an erection, and irreversible breast enlargement. Women may develop deep voices and excessive body hair.

sees his hero attaining success through the use of performance-enhancing drugs, he’s going to perceive that as the only way to attain success.

The college level has been pretty successful at preventing the use of drugs. In “Testing for Steroids Has Been Effective at the College Level,” Jack L. Copeland asserts that the drug testing program set up by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has helped reduce steroid use by college athletes. Since athletes know they will be tested, most avoid steroid use. The NCAA works with a laboratory that does an excellent job of identifying new performance-enhancing





drugs and the substances that are taken to mask them. Also, the NCAA spends a lot of money on educational efforts that inform college athletes about banned drugs (para. 1). The NCAA's drug-testing effort not only seeks to limit the use of performance-enhancing drugs, but also the use of "street drugs." Positive tests for banned substances have only been around one percent for several years now (para. 16). It was a bold move into unmarked territory when the NCAA membership approved the NCAA's drug-testing program in 1986. Now, doubts about the program's ability to effectively discourage drug abuse have been satisfied. Mary Wilbert, NCAA program coordinator in health and safety, says, "The program does give support to those who don't want to use substances, and lets them feel they don't have to use them" (qtd in Copeland para. 66).

It is now thought that there should be a focus on drugs on the high school and lower levels. Greg Schwab recognizes in "Steroid Use Among High School Athletes is a Growing Problem" that the use of dietary supplements and

performance-enhancing drugs among high school athletes is increasing tremendously. According to a survey by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2.7 percent of eighth- and tenth-graders and 2.9 percent of twelfth-graders admitted they had taken steroids at least once (Ungerleider para. 6). Recent studies have shown that the use of steroids among high school athletes

If a young athlete, who is easily influenced, sees his hero attaining success through the use of performance-enhancing drugs, he's going to perceive that as the only way to attain success.

has increased as much as sixty percent. West believes many young adults are using steroids to comply with cultural standards of manliness, to achieve the perfect body, or to boost athletic performance. The values taught by participation in a team or individual sport, the values of competition, teamwork, dedication, and cooperation, have been replaced by the value of excelling at the highest level. High school athletes are willing to do a lot in order to excel. According to Schwab, high school athletes use all sports supplements as part of their training regimen, and the supplements are too easy to get. "While I am no expert on this, I have always believed that dietary supplements can

lead athletes to using performance-enhancing drugs like anabolic steroids” (Schwab para. 2). Also, professional athletes are huge influences. When a professional athlete admits to using steroids, some young athletes might think that it is part of what one must do to become an elite athlete. Schwab asserts that the use of steroids and supplements among high school athletes is a problem that needs to be addressed.

In order to prevent the youth from going down the dead-end trail, it is the responsibility of the “parents, youth workers and educators

... to exert a more positive long-lasting influence on our kids by investing our time and ourselves in loving them for who they are while shattering the false images our culture convincingly sells regarding who they must be” (West para. 11).

Some people believe that steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs don’t harm. In “Performance-Enhancing Dietary Supplements Are Safe,” the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN) states that within recommended dosage limits, performance-enhancing drugs, such as creatine and ephedra, are safe. People seek an “edge” to support and improve performance,

and millions of people have found that sports supplements are one helpful tool. But performance-enhancing products shouldn’t be promoted to children. Creatine is considered safe for healthy people, but it shouldn’t be used by people with kidney problems (Council para. 2). According to studies by Columbia and Harvard, and a safety evaluation by Cantox, ephedra can be used safely. The CRN asserts that “media

Recent studies have shown that the use of steroids among high school athletes has increased as much as sixty percent.

assertions that supplements are unregulated as a result of the 1994 Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act are

false–The Food and Drug Administration has the authority to regulate supplements in the same way that it regulates any other food product” (para. 1). According to Dr. Annette Dickinson, the CRN’s vice president for scientific and regulatory affairs, “The truth is that dietary supplements are used by more than half of Americans, are beneficial in a variety of ways, and have a safety record comparable to that of any other food category” (qtd. in CRN, para. 7).

Today, it seems as if fans are starting to accept performance-enhancing drugs in sports. Barnard believes we will certainly accept drugs in sport,

just as we accept them in medicine, cosmetics or farming. In 1998, Mark McGwire hit the most home runs in a single season, breaking what is considered the most prestigious sports record in America. He later admitted to using a performance-enhancing drug, androstenedione, during his record-breaking season. But instead of dooming baseball, he was credited with “reviving interest in America’s first game, giving it a renewed sense of value after the player strikes of 1994” (Barnard para. 3).

Today, sports are fine without supernatural athletes; they have been for centuries. Sports are probably as popular as ever, providing entertainment to millions of fans all over the world. But the use of performance-enhancing drugs is violating the moral principles that govern sports. Athletes are admired for their skills and ability, but it should be their natural athleticism that gets them recognized. Athletes should practice and play as hard as they can in working to be successful. In its article, “Performance-Enhancing Drugs Tarnish Athletics,” the European Commission asserts the belief that the use of performance-enhancing drugs “is at odds with the principle that athletes should work without artificial resources to achieve success” (para.

1). Some athletes should just ask themselves one question: Do we really want to harm our bodies and tarnish the image of sports in order to be successful?

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Women Like Me

by Rosaline Smith

As time passes, customs are passed down to the next generation. Customs reflect values, morals, and tradition. In the short story “Women Like Us,” Haitian author Edwidge Danticat reveals the core tradition of women of color, their morals and dedication. During segregation, black women were required to perform their duties in compliance with their bosses’ demands. The narrator of this story is a daughter who wants to write because it is a calling that must be answered. As a young black woman in this new millennium, I express myself through more than just my outward appearance. I am also showing my mind. Like Danticat, I, too, want to write because it is a passion for me, not just a hobby. Writing takes the place of bodily action and restores verbal expression. As an only child of a single mother, I have done what is expected of me, but in the privacy of my heart and mind

As an only child of a single mother, I have done what is expected of me, but in the privacy of my heart and mind I write to reveal to myself what exactly is true to me.

I write to reveal to myself what exactly is true to me. I may have things expected of me, but I would rather continue showing what I have inherited through my writing.

In “Women Like Us,” the narrator’s mother is worried about her daughter’s urge to write. The mother tries to make her daughter understand that as a young black woman, the daughter

should become a homemaker. “[Writing] was an act of indolence, something to be done in a corner when you could have been learning to cook.” The mother wants her to understand that being a woman is through the way she handles her hands and the work that they do. The mother’s belief is that a woman’s place is in the kitchen and not in writing down silly thoughts. The mother is distressed about her daughter’s unwillingness to do anything more than write. The mother and the women before her expressed



Rosaline Smith is a full-time student here at Delta and is planning on transferring to C.S.U. East Bay, where she is going for her B.S. in Health Sciences with a specialization in Community Health Education. Rosaline currently works on campus at the bookstore and enjoys it! She also enjoys spending her free time reading and usually goes to Barnes and Noble to relax.



She knows that if she can just write everything down, she will be the ultimate tie between the lost and rekindled passion of the black woman.

their feelings through cooking and caring for family. The lessons of life, such as having dignity and respect for others, are taught when braiding hair and cooking meals. To the girl, writing is showing her dedication to her morals and past ancestors.

The narrator says that when she was little, she would hear the voices of 999 women not just telling but screaming for her to write. When she writes, she writes the stories and the experiences of women who came before her. Her need to write them down is significant, so that the stories can live on through written proof. Maybe the generation that comes after her will forget and not fully grasp the depth of dedication the women before her convey. Danticat describes braiding as taking a handful of coarse, unruly strands and attempting to bring them unity. She knows that if she can just write everything down,

she will be the ultimate tie between the lost and rekindled passion of the black woman.

The conflict between mother and daughter is created by the mother being uncertain with the change in tradition and the daughter's devotion to her writing. The mother believes that if she does not consistently let her daughter know the sacrifices she and her mother and the women before her made, all their efforts for a better life will go to waste: "There are nine hundred and ninety-nine women who went before you and worked their fingers to coconut rind so you can stand here before me holding that old torn notebook that you cradle against your breast like your prettiest Sunday braids. I would rather you had spit in my face." The daughter knows her mother has expectations of her, but she also feels that her duty is to transfer the past into the future. She writes in the old book the new experiences and the renewed lives of hundreds of women that cannot speak for themselves. She is a link, the spokeswoman for strength, dignity, and power.

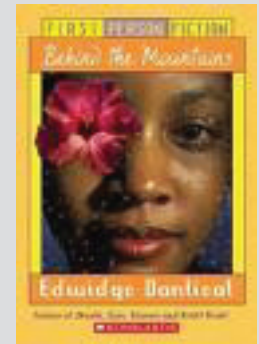
When the daughter looks in the mirror, she sees the faces of women who came before her, who struggled through life viewed as slaves. Now she can tell their stories as women and as people who did more than stay in the kitchen. It is time to bring the black woman forward and give her a voice that can be heard, but more importantly read, read by all women and men of every color. The times change when she picks up her pencil and begins to write, as a young woman, instead of picking up an apron and being defined by it. She wears her apron after she writes down her thoughts, emotions, and experiences. No more is she going to let her dreams and words disappear into food, which gives sustenance. Now her very words will provide

sustenance and give life to past and future generations.

Now is my chance as a young black woman to be perceived by my writing also and not just by my physical labor. Now my words are being heard. This is obtainable because of the women before me.

Now her very words will provide sustenance and give life to past and future generations.

They had the patience and dedication to back down, and fight battles that could be won. And as a woman, a black woman, I am continuing the war. We are no longer silent; our words are being read and given life by future women, who are inspired by our sacrifices.





Ken Lambert, a Locomotive Engineer, has worked in the railroad industry for 29 years. He has an incredible wife, three wonderful kids, and two beautiful grandchildren. He enjoys traveling, photography and working with computers. He finds his involvement with the Match-2 prisoner outreach especially rewarding; in the program he is involved with mentoring youthful offenders and offering them hope and encouragement. When asked why he would bother going back to college, he states: "Raising my children, I always encouraged them to finish what they started. I attended Chico State in the 1970s but was unable to complete the curriculum. Through the years my career has been an impediment to earning a degree. The Internet is now allowing me a chance to realize my dream."

Ken has the following advice for others: "I have been lucky enough to discover the secret of the 'fountain of youth,' which I will share with you. Like a child, never lose your sense of 'wonder.' The world is full of incredible secrets just waiting to be discovered, and your search for knowledge will help to retain your youth. Through this exploration we are able to discover and tap into our God-

IS WAL-MART GOOD FOR SMALL TOWN AMERICA?

BY KEN LAMBERT

I began this journey interested in why the small community of Lodi, California, would be so polarized by the planned construction of a super Wal-Mart. I had read various opinions in the "Letter to the Editor" section of the local Lodi News-Sentinel

newspaper. I overheard much discussion on the subject around town, and there had even been petitioners in front of local businesses. On one hand, it seemed like much ado about nothing. Yet on the other hand, Lodi already had a Wal-Mart, so why did it now need a 219,000 square foot version? I knew that the company offered some of the most competitive prices around, but I wasn't quite sure how they were able to do it. Could this be a clue to the controversy?

Lodi, California, is a relatively small community of about 50,000 residents. Things don't change very fast in Lodi, as slow growth is valued and even mandated

in certain situations. Many families have deep roots there, often going back several generations. Many families are related. The pace is slow. Folks like it that way.

Probably the most controversial issue and the one most likely to raise a debate, is the attempt to build a super Wal-Mart in Lodi.

So much so, that people often organize into political action committees when

their way of life seems threatened. Their "cause" is usually slowing the pace of housing development or the "Greenbelt" issue, which would help protect Lodi from the unrestricted growth and encroachment of the city of Stockton. Probably the most controversial issue and the one most likely to raise a debate, is the attempt to build a super Wal-Mart in Lodi. Wal-Mart is planning to build a new 219,000 square foot facility (Bonnet, Group). Why would the addition of the new store cause such a commotion? Is there something wrong with Lodi, the Wal-Mart Corporation, or was it just a bad mix?

The brainchild of founder

Sam Walton, Wal-Mart began operations in Rogers, Arkansas, in 1962. Through massive growth, the company now boasts 6,200 facilities around the globe, 3500 of which are in the United States as of 2005. Wal-Mart employs 1.6 million people, services 138 million customers, and claims annual sales of \$312.4 billion (Walmartfacts). Wal-Mart has definitely had its share of growing pains. It is the largest company in the world and the largest employer

in the United States and Mexico (Dicker 2-3).

Earlier in its infancy,

Wal-Mart's behavior might have only seemed a little odd. But now that it has become a giant, its operations are scrutinized, and many people are wondering if it is acting in a socially responsible way.

The PBS special "Is Wal-Mart Good for America?" was quite an eye opener for me. The stockholders' meeting at University Arena in Fayetteville, Arkansas, appeared more like a religious revival, with people chanting "WAL-MART, WAL-MART." "Sam Walton's formula: Buy cheap, undersell competitors, and make your profit on high volume and fast turnover" (Smith). To what extent, though, is the company

willing to take their formula? Professor of Sociology at Duke University, Gary Gereffi, has determined that Wal-Mart has 6,000 suppliers, 80% of which are in China (Smith). With the cost of manufacturing so much less in China, those goods can be sold for less here. One has to wonder what becomes of the companies that used to manufacture those good in America? Also, what sort of jobs does this create overseas? As related in the book In Sam We Trust, by Bob Ortega,

a 1993 Dateline, NBC program showed Wal-Mart in less than favorable light.

Reporter Brian Ross confronted Wal-Mart CEO David Glass with clothing from ten stores that was shelved below "MADE IN AMERICA" signs. The clothing was actually made in Bangladesh. Mr. Glass believed it had been mistakenly placed there. He was then shown pictures of Bangladesh children sewing Wal-Mart's clothing. He stated that the photographs proved nothing, and the interview was immediately stopped. In hopes of repairing the damage, David Glass arranged a follow-up interview. When again asked about the photos of child labor in Bangladesh factories, Glass replied, "You and I might,

When again asked about the photos of child labor in Bangladesh factories, Glass replied, "You and I might, perhaps, define children differently."

Since Wal-Mart opened about 12 years ago, I have seen the demise of “Coast to Coast,” “Ace Hardware,” and “Henderson Bros. Hardware,” the last of which had been in business in Lodi for over 100 years.

perhaps, define children differently.” He noted that it is often difficult to tell the age of Asians because they are short (Dicker 109-111).

Lodi began as an agricultural community, and grapes comprise the major commodity grown there today. This feeds the local wine industry, which produces fine wines that are exported globally. In addition there is seasonal produce, much of it processed at the local canneries. One of its largest employers is General Mills Corporation, which produces many cereal and baking products. They partner with local growers and provide jobs for local residents. But there seems to be very little manufacturing of non-food items left in Lodi. Where have all the manufacturing jobs gone? The PBS special gave me a clue. They interviewed Yvonne Smith, spokesperson for the Port of Long Beach. She said that \$36 billion was imported from China each year at this port alone. These were finished consumer products. What was exported? When asked what we were shipping to China, she stated “raw materials.” We ship out the

raw materials, and they return as finished products. This contributes to a \$120 billion annual trade deficit with China. She said that Wal-Mart was their number one customer. With the off shoring of jobs to countries paying very low wages, is it any wonder American companies can no longer compete? It seems to me the recent free trade agreements have been more generous to foreign countries than our own.

Author Charles Fishman believes that Wal-Mart has had quite a drastic effect on the economy in the way it conducts business. He refers to this as the “Wal-Mart Effect.” When Wal-Mart comes to town, bringing its lower prices, it forces its competitors to lower theirs. Wages at these businesses must drop in order to compete. Buying habits are changed, and once viable businesses are now in jeopardy. Because of its sheer size, it is able to force its will. There is often a sense of foreboding that comes with this new retailing.

The Wal-Mart economy describes the nagging sense that there might be some unseen but terrible cost to be paid for “always low prices.” The Wal-Mart economy is a place where the jobs are traps: low wages, miserly benefits, stultifying work, no respect, no future. In the Wal-Mart economy, we as consumers often buy too much just because it’s cheap. We are slaves to our own impulse for a bargain (Fishman 9-10).

What effect does Wal-Mart have on the local community?

Looking at just one line of product, hardware, gives a good indication. Since Wal-Mart opened about 12 years ago, I have seen the demise of "Coast to Coast," "Ace Hardware," and "Henderson Bros. Hardware," the latter of which had been in business in Lodi for over 100 years. Lowe's, which recently opened for business, might not be adversely affected, but Orchard Supply Hardware, a regional chain, might suffer.

Another negative aspect of Wal-Mart coming to town has

been the loss of advertising by the local paper. When Wal-Mart first comes to town, they take out huge advertising

supplements, but after they corner the market and often drive other stores out of business, the advertising stops (Quinn 6-7). I saw this happen in Lodi. The Wal-Mart ads were quite unique in that they used store employees rather than paid models in their inserts. After about a year the advertising stopped. The local paper loses the revenue from those businesses that go under and from Wal-Mart, so in essence, they take a double hit.

The way Wal-Mart handles its banking can also have a negative effect on a community. Most businesses bank locally, the money continuing to circulate throughout the local economy.

This is not the case with Wal-Mart. The money goes into a local bank and an overnight wire transfer is made back to Bentonville, Arkansas, Wal-Mart's corporate headquarters (Quinn 9-10). Now Wal-Mart wants to get into banking in the U.S., but has run into considerable opposition. If they ever succeed, they will no longer have need for any other bank services.

The secret to Wal-Mart's ability to lower prices seems

to be the stranglehold it has on suppliers. Though Wal-Mart did not create the current style of

retailing, they have perfected it. Professor Edna Bonacich of U.C. Riverside refers to the old method as the push system, in which manufacturers produce items they believe retailers would want to buy. The newer method, called the pull system, involves the retailers deciding what they want to sell from sales data, and requiring the manufacturers to produce those products (Smith). Prof. Nelson Lichtenstein from U.C Santa Barbara, states it this way:

The power of Wal-Mart is such, it's reversed a 100-year history in which the manufacturer was powerful and the retailer was sort of the vassal. It's changed

The Wal-Mart economy is a place where the jobs are traps: low wages, miserly benefits, stultifying work, no respect, no future.



that. It turned that around entirely. Now the retailer, the mass global retailer, is at the center. That's the power. And the manufacturer becomes the serf, the vassal, the underling who has to do the bidding of the retailer. That's a new thing (Smith).

If a company can't produce what Wal-Mart wants at a price Wal-Mart feels is attainable, they go elsewhere; in most cases that is to China. As Dicker states, "China provides a combination of political stability, sturdy infrastructure, and a labor force willing to work for pennies an hour" (118-119). If major United States manufacturing firms are being cut out of the equation, small town companies could never hope to conduct business with Wal-Mart. Lower priced goods seem to lose their luster, though, when so many sacrificed jobs are figured into the equation.

No matter how low prices go, however, a person must have a job to afford to shop, even at Wal-Mart prices. When Wal-Mart knocks their competitors out, the only jobs left may be at Wal-Mart. In 2004 Wal-Mart claimed that its full time workers averaged \$9.64 per hour. Since full time is only thirty-two hours a week, annual take home is only \$18,000 a year. According to

the Federal Register, "For a family of four, the figure is nearly a thousand dollars below the poverty line." Many states report that Wal-Mart employees are among the largest groups seeking public assistance (Dicker 28). Is it necessary for the taxpayer to provide assistance to employees of the largest company in the world?

Unfortunately, this is not the only burden we taxpayers are shouldered with. Incentives are often offered to Wal-Mart to lure them into the community: "free or reduced price land, infrastructure assistance, tax-increment

The secret to Wal-Mart's ability to lower prices seems to be the stranglehold it has on suppliers.

financing, property tax breaks ... job-training and worker-recruitment funds" (Dicker 200). From "Everyday Low Wages: The Hidden Price We All Pay for Wal-Mart," a report by the Democratic staff of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives, February 16, 2004, comes the revelation that a single 220-employee Wal-Mart store costs the American taxpayer an average of half a million dollars a year (Dicker 208). Good Jobs First, a non-profit think tank, reports that state and federal governments have provided Wal-Mart with approximately \$4 billion in subsidies: a full 90 percent of their stores reaping the spoils. (Dicker 27-28). Those

are incentives we ultimately pay for and are not available to Wal-Mart's competitors.

With all the controversy surrounding Wal-Mart, it's easy to see why a planned super store would create such a firestorm in a small town like Lodi. I visited the super Wal-Mart in Stockton. It is huge. Definitely out of proportion for a town Lodi's size. It is sort of like having a St. Bernard in an apartment. It's a bad fit. In addition, the harmful side effects associated with the super center are more easily absorbed in a large city. Lodi would feel the full brunt. Unbelievably, Wal-Mart wants to build a super store in the city of Galt, a town considerably smaller than Lodi.

The Lodi News-Sentinel chronicles the steps taken by those for and against the proposed super center. One organization, "The Small City Preservation Committee," was active in drafting a local ballot initiative that would limit the size of commercial projects to 125,000 square feet unless voter approval was received. The reasons listed for such a measure are:

The loss of trees, open space and farmland, traffic congestion, displacement of locally owned small businesses, erosion or even elimination of Lodi's unique small-town atmosphere, disruption of the city's policy to support the downtown as

a retail and cultural area, increase in crime, and the tendency for city services to cost more than income generated by tax revenue (Bonnett, "Citizens").

The measure went on to defeat, though many people said they either did not understand the measure, or were worried that it would adversely affect auto dealerships needing large areas for development (Bonnett, "Measure").

I interviewed local attorney Ann Cerney on November 24, 2006. Though she was not the chairperson, she was an influential member of the group who often spoke for them. She said that "Measure M," as it was called, was not specifically aimed at Wal-Mart, but due to their proposed building project, they fell into their sights. She belongs to a loose-knit group of business owners and citizens hoping to retain the small town ambience that distinguishes Lodi from other "larger" communities. She said that a measure passed in the 1980s restricting growth to an annual rate of 2 percent was flawed, and has resulted in the growth rate now that can be as much as 12 percent. Hoping to increase the public coffers, city officials have been more than willing to allow the growth. Groups like hers act as sort of a "check and balance" on local government. They are not the only group fighting the proposed project. Steven Herum, the attorney



for “Lodi First,” has filed lawsuits challenging the environmental impact reports submitted by Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. and Browman Development Co (Kane). How long the legal maneuverings can go on is anyone’s guess. If Wal-Mart’s past practice is any indicator, this could be a long battle.

I realize that my caricature of Wal-Mart is not at all flattering. In its favor, though, Wal-Mart has definitely brought some good ideas and practices to the marketplace. I doubt if the American economy would be as efficient as it is today if it were not for the cost cutting techniques mastered by Wal-Mart. They have been able to cut out waste in the supply line, allowing them to deliver merchandise at the lowest possible price: a commitment that they can and do deliver on. With reported sales of \$315.6 billion in 2006 and net profit of \$11.2 billion, that only leaves the company with a profit of 3.5 percent profit margin (Fortune 500 - 2006). A large amount of the savings go to the consumer, but with Wal-Mart’s extreme emphasis on cost reduction, it inevitably must put employee, suppliers and communities at odds with the company’s interests.

Wal-Mart may have become too big for its own good. What once was a small company struggling to gain a foothold in the retail business has now become a giant mega-corporation that demands

and gets almost anything it desires. Its sheer size and market share allow it to dictate to others how business will be conducted. By importing massive amounts of cheap products from countries like China, manufacturing in America has been all but destroyed. Who will be left to buy the products in the future is anyone’s guess, as Wal-Mart is destroying its customer base.

The presence of the local Wal-Mart has not had the detrimental effect that some believed it would. Its size is in proportion to the other existing retailers such as K-Mart and Target. In fact, consumers probably benefit from the larger variety of merchandise and lower prices offered. But the proposed super Wal-Mart would be a drastic departure from this. Not only would they dominate the retail section, but then they would be able to control the grocery segment as well. Not just one, but two areas of retail could be unduly influenced.

In conclusion, is Wal-Mart good for small town America? With its older, smaller stores, I would say yes. It’s admirable that small towns would attempt to protect their downtown areas and the way of life they have always known, but retailing has changed significantly over the past few years, and larger stores have more to offer. There are still a number of competing retailers, allowing

consumers a choice. But when it comes to the larger super stores I would have to say no. It would allow a large retailer to dominate the market, concentrate too much retail in one area, hurt property values, cause traffic concerns, and eventually harm those businesses that do not benefit from Wal-Mart's presence. A super Wal-Mart would exert an even greater influence over our lives. Wal-Mart has become one huge vending machine for China, delivering all the shiny things we desire. But as our country's wealth leaves for China, I believe a little bit of America's soul goes with it.

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Oskar is from Colombia, South America. Because of his strong interest in learning English, he decided to come to the United States. He likes to write in Spanish a lot, but when his instructor from English 79 told him that this essay was so well written that it could be published in Delta Winds, he was delighted. From that day on, he began to believe he could also write in English, “the language of my dreams.” He strongly believes in the power and beauty of words. As he states, “When a person learns the language of a civilization, he or she also has the privilege of entering into the heart of that civilization.” Currently, he is taking English 1D this semester.

AMERICA THE PROMISED LAND

by Oskar

“America lives in the heart of every man everywhere who wishes to find a region where he will be free to work out his destiny as he chooses.” This profound quote from Woodrow Wilson captures the thinking of many of us who at some time desired to come to this country. Americans and non-Americans hear of the grandeur of this country where opportunities and dreams are made real. America is a mosaic—diverse in people, hopes, and dreams. People from the eastern and western hemispheres, from equatorial regions, and from south and north dream about emigrating to the United States of America. To those who live in tyranny, America is the land of perfect democracy. To those who are hungry, America is the land of abundance. To those who suffer abuse and persecution for political reasons, America is the land of hope, peace and tranquility. To those who carry the yoke of injustice, exploitation and poverty, America is the land of fairness and solace. To children and young people who aspire to obtain excellent

degrees, America is the land of education. To immigrants of all ages and cultures, including myself, America is the Promised Land, which is supposed to offer us a prosperous life. But upon arriving, do we feel accepted and welcomed? Are all our problems solved? Do we find the new Eden here? Perhaps

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some things turn out to be as we were expecting. But, for the most part, we find a sizzling cauldron where our identity is lost, where a non-defined culture confuses us, and where an egocentric and materialistic

society absorbs us.

When we come to America seeking to fulfill a dream, we come fragile, vulnerable, and needy. We lose our identity because the influence of American civilization exerts powerful pressure over our former and personal cultural principles. Like newborns, we find ourselves submerged in a strange, vast, and immense world. At the beginning we focus on accomplishing our goal; then we realize that among the many dreams we are looking for, the most

important one is to understand who we are and to whom we are relating.

But that quest is quite difficult to comprehend. We begin our adaptation process turning in all directions, trying to find models or patterns to follow. To our disappointment, the road goes in many directions. At home, our parents try to keep our own customs alive. In the streets we get different messages from our peers. In school we share with people from different backgrounds and cultures. The consumerist society flashes us with announcements everywhere, telling us to be somebody other than ourselves. We end up believing we need to adopt those false appearances to be accepted and to finally feel as if we belong. The younger generations anxiously begin to look for assurance, perhaps in what they wear, in drugs, and in gangs, among others. And then the moment comes when we wake up in darkness to find ourselves lost in that ocean of choices without knowledge of ourselves. We are neither from here, the new country, nor from there, the former one.

The question of who we are is closely related with the issue of culture. In America we do not find a culture that helps us to shape our social, ethical, and sacred values. It is easy to think that in the melting pot of American society all the cultures harmoniously relate and associate. We imagine that each of the ingredients for the special recipe mixes in the pot without losing its proper characteristics, contributing flavor, smell, color, spice and texture to the whole dish, but the struggle for survival and dominance does not permit such compatible relationships. We come to America marked by our own traditions and customs. We come from homogenous countries, where one culture prevails. However, here, in the United States, there is no one tradition that can unite all of us. When we celebrate New Year's Holiday in Colombia, for example, all business and activities in the nation come to a halt, because we all focus our attention on that particular holiday. The holiday involves at least three days of celebration. We grow up celebrating different feasts and recalling different traditions that shape our cultural identity. In the sizzling cauldron of America, all that beautiful sacredness of our former traditions dies to give way to celebrations that merely emphasize material aspects.

Christmas is a season when the shopping malls are beautifully decorated to attract people to spend money. Halloween is a time to buy expensive costumes. Valentine's Day is a particular occasion to buy a gift for our significant other. Mother's Day is an opportunity to give things to our mothers. And, of course, there are birthdays. I have a friend who always gives more than one present to his son for his birthday. Last year, because

We end up believing we need to adopt those false appearances to be accepted and to finally feel as if we belong.



of some economic crisis at his home, the best he could do was to accompany his son to his soccer game and to take him to his favorite restaurant. After the event, my friend shared with me his disillusion. He told me his son did not feel happy because he was expecting to receive some material presents. When the culture in which we live does not instill in us the appreciation of our traditions and our families as a central nucleus in society, we get confused and disoriented.

Another aspect that makes America a sizzling cauldron is the egocentrism and materialism so evident in the philosophy of life in this country. Success is measured merely by material achievements. Most of us come from countries with more economic limitations, where access to material things is more difficult. Consequently, we develop a deeper sense of community, and we focus more on simple ways to celebrate life. In America, the primary goal of many is to drive an expensive car and to buy a four-bedroom

house with a big yard and a swimming pool. To have the most sophisticated cell phone and the most modern laptop is crucial to others. To wear the most fashionable clothes and coolest tennis shoes seems essential for young people.

To be able to compete and fill the demands created by this economic system, we became slaves of work; consequently, we do not have

In the sizzling cauldron of America, all that beautiful sacredness of our former traditions dies to give way to celebrations that merely emphasize material aspects.

time to socialize and to strengthen our bonds with each other. The spacious house with a big yard and swimming pool becomes a hotel where we occasionally rest, many times ignoring others who live with us. We can live in a neighborhood for many years without knowing who is living next door. We desperately try to alleviate our lack of relationships

by possessing things, even beautiful and exotic pets. Young people try to find in gangs the support and the affection that should have been provided in their homes. We are

captivated by the comforts of this society and become intoxicated faithful followers of capitalism.



The first longing we had for a better and more humane life becomes opaque or obscured. Slowly, we are absorbed by the gigantic system that praises material things over the person. The consequence of this is the immense loneliness in which people live today. When we feel that we do not belong, without any culture that reaffirms our aspirations, we are living in a society where chaos and confusion prevail. This type of civilization is not the one we dreamed about when we thought of coming to this country. Surely, many

immigrants have found in America the Promised Land that has embraced them and that has offered them solace and a prosperous life. However, many other immigrants have not felt welcomed. For many, America is not the melting pot where identity and our culture are preserved, but the sizzling cauldron where aspirations and dreams are boiled away. Not only were our dreams not fulfilled in coming to America, but also, ironically, our identity and culture have vanished in the country of the Promises.



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Previously home-schooled for three years, Mary Guillory is in her first semester at Delta College. She is seventeen years old and the only girl of three children. Mary likes reading Delta Winds essays and is delighted to have her work included in the magazine.

What I Believe was Our Last Commute

by Mary Guillory

Suddenly, I hated Texas. It was to no fault of the state that I felt this way, but there is something about being stranded that causes one to be sickened by the surroundings. Texas was ALL around me. Thanks to our broken-down vans, Easter was celebrated with one dollar each: Dad sent Jack and me to a nearby vending machine. With so little money, we were lucky to get a bag of potato chips at rest area prices.

Louisiana did not seem so wretched to me now. I wished that we had never decided to move, but at the same time, I prayed for my father's mechanical skills to prove useful just one last time so that we'd all be able to enjoy the California sunshine again. The rain cleared after two days—finally—and Dad was able to befriend Pete and Bill, both of whom had been thrown out by their wives. Like us, a vehicle equaled a home for them, except they extended their home to the rest area, and ours was extended to the highway. They gave my dad a ride into town to get food and a new part for our van—the one that was most likely to run.

They gave my dad a ride into town to get food and a new part for our van—the one that was most likely to run.

The van repair began, but our dog was up to something else. After being mechanic's assistants all day, we discovered the surprise hidden inside the van. Jade had begun giving birth. At first, everyone except my dad was afraid to even get back inside the van. We all knew that animals could be very protective of their young and what the previous owners had told us about this Pit Bull was still on our minds. Even though we had grown close to her since the trip began, we

thought that somehow Jade would transform into a vicious animal, but Sweet

Jade did not transform and by morning, she had eight puppies. Jack and I laughed about how they had all come out smoking.

"Hot dogs—I mean puppies," I said, referring to the steam we had seen coming from their newborn bodies.

"Steaming cup of puppy," he countered; our jokes lasted long after we had left that rest area.

A day or two after the birth of the puppies, we were mobile

again. In Dallas, though, another motorist made us aware of our tire status. The conversation between her and my dad went something like this:

“You know your tire is gone?”

Dad replied, “You mean I have a flat?”

With wide eyes the woman said, “No, it’s GONE.”

To his surprise, we had been riding on a rim. Jack and I were asleep, but Mom had no trouble waking us to share the humorous dialogue. Dad was amazed that no one had felt any difference in the ride, but I wasn’t. We were all so relieved to be moving that as long as the van kept going, everything was fine.

Nature, however, was not about to let us ignore it as easily as the tire had. We dug out the spare tire and in no time were in windy Arizona. We could feel every swoosh that brushed the sides of our van. In fear of being blown from the road, we decided to wait the wind out at a rest area. Walking and breathing in the sandy wind was as difficult as driving in it.

I was afraid when we let Jade out to eat; flashbacks from a few years earlier haunted me: A hurricane’s winds had sent our Pomeranian’s house, which she was attached to, flying and tumbling across our three acres of land. She ran and, when she caught

wind, flew through the grass with the house hot on her trail. We did rescue her, but the image, though humorous, was discomfoting.

Luckily, the only thing we lost in the Arizona winds was a water jug. It slipped from my brother’s grasp and was swept away. A little boy chased it on his bicycle, but the wind blew far faster than he could ever pedal (I say it was doing at least 100mph). The next morning we were well on our way to California. Upon crossing the borderline, we saw a jug near the road. We would like to believe it was ours, but that would be absurd... right? Whether it beat us there or not, we were just happy to finish the race.

It has been a long time since that trip, but my family still finds humor in its events. Out of our many trips to California from Louisiana and vice versa, this was, by far, the worst, but also the most memorable. Either my parents made up their minds about which state to live in or they did not wish to endure such a move again. All I know is that we have lived here in Stockton for three years and already that is a lot longer than we ever lived in either state since we started moving back and forth. During the trip, Jade became a trusted member of our family. She has since passed away, but we still laugh about the times we awoke to find her sleeping on top of us—not to mention her smoking puppies.



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 those books someday.

Wreck the Hall with Antique Vases

by Nina Peñalosa

At the wee age of four, I was blamed for a heinous act that I did not commit. It was Christmas Eve and I was in the living room playing with a baby Cabbage Patch Kid

I had received earlier that night.

My blue-eyed baby was cradled under one arm as I spun myself around in an orange chair. Visions of my older cousin, Cynthia, and sister, Nikki, blurred past my eyes with each spin I took.

The two of them were playing catch with their dolls in the hallway. Once in a while, a thud could be heard as a poor little dolly hit the door. A display table containing many of Mama's fragile knick-knacks stood nearby their playing spot.

A medley of shattered glass silenced the entire household. Planting my feet on the ground, I looked into the hallway. Cynthia and Nikki were looking at each other wide-eyed with astonishment. Pieces of Mama's antique white and blue vases were

scattered before their little feet. "What's going on?" we heard an adult ask from the family room.

"Go! Go!" said a panicked

voice. I saw Cynthia and Nikki quickly run to the safety of Mama and Papa's room leaving me at the scene of the crime.

The adults that were socializing in the living room had peaked their

heads into the opening of the hallway upon hearing the crash.

"What happened?" asked Cynthia and Nikki as they came out of hiding. I had just been been standing there, staring at the broken pieces of glass. All eyes were suddenly on me. I looked up and saw a sea of disgruntled faces, "Nina, what did you do?"

What did I do? I didn't do anything! Did they really think this was solely my fault? Before I knew it, Auntie Ashie was ushering

*Before I knew it,
Auntie Ashie was
ushering me into the
family room. Her
nostrils flared as
fear wrapped itself
around me.*

me into the family room. Her nostrils flared as fear wrapped itself around me. She bent down to my level and I felt her bony fingers sink into my shoulders. “Why did you do that? You need to play more carefully! Those are Mama’s vases.

sorry. “I di-di-didn’t do it,” I said through a throbbing throat. Now, Auntie Ashie was yelling at me in Tagalog, which sounded ten times scarier than when she was screaming at me in English. I told Mama I was sorry, and she gave me a little hug.



She can’t replace them! Go apologize to her,” she yelled. I looked into her brown eyes. They looked as if they were ablaze. Although the fire was underneath a shield of lenses, I feared the wrath that was Auntie Ashie from that moment on. She pushed me towards Mama. “Go ahead,” she nudged. I could feel the waterworks waiting to erupt. My eyes burned as I tried to hold the tears in. A volcanic emission of salty magma began to flow down my face.

Mama stood before me with kind eyes. “Maybe I won’t get in trouble,” I thought to myself. Everything seemed fine for a second until Auntie Ashie scolded for me to say

When Auntie Ashie finally finished verbally lashing me with her slick tongue, I ran straight to my mom and sobbed pathetically into her shoulder. I tried to tell her I didn’t do it, but I don’t think she believed me.

I sank into the comfort of the orange chair to find solace and cried some more in the dark. “You know I didn’t do it,” I confided in my doll.

Cynthia’s older sisters, Christina and Celeste, came in the room and sat across me. “Do you want to color, Nina?” Celeste asked as she gestured a coloring book my way.



Before I could take it Christina sneered, “No, don’t give it to her. She broke Mama’s vases.”

I swear, ever since I can remember Christina was such a discontented person, she was never nice to me--ever. “But I didn’t do anything,” I whispered. I thought about going into Christina’s room and tearing down all of her New Kids on the Block pin-ups, but I was already in enough trouble, so I decided against the idea.

The guilty duo, Cynthia and Nikki, slowly walked into the darkened living room and joined Christina and Celeste. I didn’t want them there. They let me take the blame for what they had done. The two of them didn’t even look

the slightest bit guilty, which only made me more furious. If there really were a Santa Claus, he’d strip them of their Cabbage Patch dolls and give them to little girls who were really nice. Then he’d

Now, Auntie Ashie was yelling at me in Tagalog, which sounded ten times scarier than when she was screaming at me in English.

reward Cynthia and Nikki with a lump of coal for their act of tomfoolery.

It wasn’t until Christmas day that they admitted to breaking Mama’s vases, but I

don’t remember them getting punished for it. If they did, I completely missed the chance to claim sweet victory. All is in the past now, and this memory is erased from most parties involved. Nonetheless, I’ll never forget that Christmas Eve when Cynthia and Nikki wrecked the hall with (Mama’s) antique vases.

Beauty Is the Beast

by Kellie Corber

Have you ever thought cosmetic surgery might not be so bad? Each year Americans spend millions on cosmetic surgery to fix the imperfections that make them unique.

Americans not only allow the media to tell them what is beautiful, but they hang on every word.

Brittany Spears appears with a flat stomach in a music video, and women rush to get liposuction.

Angelina Jolie does an interview on Access Hollywood and suddenly women

everywhere are making appointments for collagen injections. Let's face it. If I, as a woman, received every procedure to correct what society deems as unattractive, I would look atrocious. Cosmetic surgery does not produce a beauty; it produces a beast.

We have all seen the talk show with the woman who received the botched surgery. This poor woman went in for breast augmentation. She bought every word of garbage the

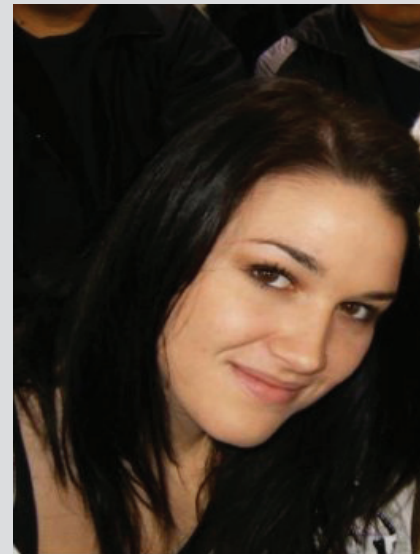
doctor said in the consultation and went in for surgery the following week. Two weeks after her surgery she noticed something was wrong. She was not healing the way she should have been. One of

If I, as a woman, received every procedure to correct what society deems as unattractive, I would look atrocious.

her nipples turned black and lost all feeling. When she consulted her surgeon, he denied all liability and accused her of not taking care of herself properly. Soon after, she lost her nipple entirely. With the tissue completely gone and her history of a

botched surgery, no other surgeon would attempt a corrective procedure. She was left disfigured and more insecure than ever before.

People who subject their bodies to cosmetic surgery are putting their lives at risk. In 2004, bestselling author Olivia Goldsmith died in New York of complications resulting from a facelift. She was successful and established, yet she still fell victim to the pursuit of perfection. When we see



A native to Southern California, Kellie Corber grew up in the small town of Redlands. A few years after high school, she grew restless of her citrus-rich town and moved on to see what else California had to offer her. She traveled to Fresno and lived for one year before finding Stockton. In Stockton, she discovered her passion for natural resource conservation and is actively investigating different ways she can satisfy it. She is still searching for the particular area she wishes to focus her major in, but the State Park Ranger program is a lead she is currently pursuing. In her free time Kellie loves to camp and travel. If there is a new experience to be had, she will likely be there. She is a strong, independent, competitive person and does not give up easily. Kellie is a single, twenty-three-year-old woman just starting her life. Kellie currently resides in her hometown of Redlands along with her best friend, Eddie, her Boston Terrier. She didn't leave the city of Stockton empty handed; the city and the people gave her a new outlook on life, and she credits Delta College for giving her a new ambition.

advertisements for facelifts, do we think death is a possible outcome?

Nigeria's first lady, Stella Obasanjo, died in a Spanish hospital due to complications of a cosmetic surgery to drain fats from her body. Anesthesia and sedation risks include abnormal heartbeat, heart attack, brain damage, nerve damage, stroke, blood clots, blood loss, and airway obstruction. Furthermore, infection, skin death, asymmetry, numbness, irregularities, puckers, scarring, and fluid collection after liposuction can result from the surgery itself. Stella Obasanjo died from multi-organ failure. She was 59 years old.

When will we stop listening to outside opinions of beauty and start creating our own? When I smile, I get wrinkles on the outside corners of my eyes. I used to be self-conscious about it, due to a cruel comment spoken by a boy in high school, but now the wrinkles remind me of my dad's smile. I want my children to look in the mirror and see me in their reflection just as I see my dad's smiling eyes. If more people thought like this, we would have fewer botched surgeries and more confident Americans. Then, we would have true beauty through diversity. Instead of striving

to fit one mold, people would make their own molds of what is beautiful.

One universal interpretation of beauty is an insane idea. If this pandemic continues to spread, we will be left with nothing of natural beauty. The world will be landscaped with insecure, penniless morons who all look like each other. Our natural essence will be lost, and our innocence along with it. Americans will be exploited, criticized, and judged solely on physical appearance. Twenty years from now we might live in a world where a photo is a mandatory accompaniment to a job application. This will be a world where we are not judged by our qualities or qualifications, but rather by our very thin outer shell.

Human beings need to step up and say no. Say no to implants. Say no to liposuction. Say no to face-lifts. Say no to nose jobs. Say no to losing our loved ones. We are already beautiful, with our dads' smiles and our mothers' eyes. We are beautiful to our parents, to our children, to our friends, and to our spouses just the way we are. Without alteration, we have attained beauty through the eyes of the only people who should matter to us in this world.