

Beginnings VIII

A PUBLICATION OF ADULT STUDENT WRITING OF THE

Ohio Writers' Conference

OHIO LITERACY RESOURCE CENTER

Foreword

Welcome to *Beginnings VIII*, the annual publication of creative, original writings by Ohio ABE students sponsored by the Ohio Literacy Resource Center's *Ohio Writers' Conference*. This year over 470 entries were submitted! Needless to say, it was a difficult task selecting the award winners. We thank *all* ABE students and their teachers for their outstanding dedication to this venture!

We are proud to say that this year's publication begins with a poem entitled *Education*, written by Jennifer Cline, a *former* ABE student and GED Scholar who is currently a freshman at Kent State University. The poem is a tribute to her struggles, persistence, and success and serves as a model for *all* ABE students and their dedication to pursue an education. In addition, for the third consecutive year, *Beginnings* features the artwork of ABE students. This year's edition captures the creativity of Kelly Bond and Maria Thomas, Live Oaks ABE.

The authors of *Beginnings VIII* and their teachers were honored during the 8th Annual Writers' Conference in Columbus, Ohio, on May 20, 2005. The conference featured keynote speaker and award-winning author, Angela Johnson. Angela, a native of Ohio and former Kent State University student, has published over 20 children's books and has received numerous literary awards including the *Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Award* (1991), the *Coretta Scott King Award* (1991 and 1994), and the 2004 *Michael L. Printz Award*. In addition, the attendees were entertained by award-winning storyteller, Lyn Ford. As many of you know, Lyn has become a dear friend of the *Ohio Writers' Conference* and engages the participants in stories that capture the essence of heartfelt family traditions.

In this edition of *Beginnings* we also acknowledge the writers who submitted entries that we were unable to publish. They are listed in the *Honorable Mention* section. We thank them for their commitment to writing and encourage them to continue to submit their original writings next year.

The OLRC thanks the Ohio Department of Education – Adult Basic and Literacy Education Office – for the continued support it has provided for this ongoing project. We also thank the OLRC staff, many reviewers, and the judges for their dedication to the *Ohio Writers' Conference*. Most of all, we thank the ABLE teachers who have encouraged their students to reflect, to write, and to submit entries. The success of this annual conference is truly a tribute to ABLE teachers and their students statewide!

Now, we hope you sit back and enjoy reading the creative writings of adult students in Ohio that include thoughts of *youth, family, love, places, fiction, pleasure, learning, and perseverance*.

Chris McKeon
2005 Conference Organizer

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EDUCATION

Steady pressing
Learning lessons
Stressing
But I am progressing.

Some confused
Many wanted to place blame
But I refused
And took charge of my name
I live free of shame

I climbed and I came
Closer to the flame
As I struggle to get higher
I'm far from reach of the fire
But its warmth sparks an inspire

Motivation Motivation
My life thirsts for education
If there's one thing that could feed
the hunger of an entire nation
It'd have to be pure education

Pure elation when I
Break through barriers I'm facing
It's safe to say I live this way
I'm chasing education

Through life will I find wisdom to set me free?
Through strife my education works to complete me
Never will I ever allow public's perception to deplete me
Full of Freedom, feeling ferocious
Reality won't defeat me

I define this life of mine
Reality can seat me
Pull off my shoes and massage me
With how tired my feet be

Education granting me
The power to define my destiny
Education giving me ideas
I will never be less than me

He's blessing me
With a life
That keeps testing me
Go ahead and question me
I trust my strength obsessively

Education

*Jennifer Cline
GED Scholar
GED Scholars Initiative
Freshman, Kent State University*

Thoughts of Youth



PURPLE MONSTER'S COMING!

I was a sneaky little kid. My favorite thing to do was scaring my baby brother Austin. Even though he was frightened of most everything, he loved to watch horror movies. His favorite movie was *Salem's Lot*. He watched it all the time. The vampire in the movie scared him the worst, and he called it "Purple Monster."

My other brother Justin and I scared Austin so much that he was afraid to go to the bathroom alone, so Mom made Justin and me take turns going with him. One night we were watching "Purple Monster," and it was my turn to go with Austin. I was about ten years old at the time, and Austin was four. He just stood at the toilet and wouldn't pee.

I finally got tired of waiting, so I slapped the shower curtain very hard and I screamed, "Austin, Purple Monster's coming!" Austin screamed as loud as he could, ran down the hallway with his underwear around his ankles, wrapped himself around Mom's leg, and peed all over her. It was so hilarious that I fell onto the floor laughing. My mom whipped me hard and grounded me for a whole month. It was very well worth it, though.

Shirley Mercer

INNOCENCE

Beyond the broken glass lying in the street,
Beyond the car fumes and tall skyscrapers,
Beyond the horrors of pain and death,
Beyond the T.V. and tabloid papers,
Exists a world of candy canes,
Of Barbie dolls and matchbox cars,
Of G.I. Joes and comic books,
Of pretend trips to distant stars.
Where children play and go to school.
Where everyone thinks pretending is cool.
Where swing sets and sandboxes are daily fun.
Where hatred is not known by anyone.
We all once were children.
We laughed and we played.
We called to our parents to see what we'd made.
We woke up one morning to realize we'd lost
Something so precious, so precious and dear.
But look to the children. You're certain to find
That innocence somewhere quite near.

Kandice DeMare

YOUTH

To be young again would be a wonderful thing
It's like running through the fields in spring.

To smell all the flowers as I go by
It's like my first swing, or my first slide.

Oh for those days when I could play
With no obligations, no bills to pay.

To turn back the clock for an hour or so;
I'd want to stay, but I'd have to go.

I see my youth now in my children's eyes
As I watch them swing towards the sky.

Andrea Slotter

WEST END MEMORIES

These are some of my childhood memories from when I was living in the west end of Cincinnati: listening to the radio, going swimming, and going on the church picnic.

The older people in the neighborhood would tell me on Sunday, "I want to see you in church. I'm going to let your father know this evening, when he comes home from work."

Every evening my father would turn on the radio to listen to the evening news. My sisters and brothers and I would sit on the floor in the front room and listen to the news with him. He would tell us that listening to the news can help you with your school homework.

Every night after the news went off, we would stay in the front room sitting on the floor waiting for the evening story to come on. My father would buy large bags of cooked pork rinds from "Peanut Jim".

We would eat pork rinds and peanuts and listen to the story on the radio. We would use our imaginations about what was happening in the story.

During summer vacation, when I was out of school, I would get up about nine o'clock in the morning and go swimming with my friends until about noon.

At noon, I would walk around the neighborhood asking people if they needed someone to go to the store for them. The money I made I would save to take my girlfriend to the movie on the weekend.

Every year, the church would give a picnic for the church members. That was one of the best days of the summer. We went to a park called Fernbank on the Ohio River. We played ball, we danced, and they had every kind of food that you wanted to eat.

Listening to the radio with my family, going swimming almost every day, going to the store for people to make money for the weekend, and going on the church picnic are some of my favorite memories. I will never forget living in the west end of Cincinnati.

Robert Wynn

A LESSON I NEVER FORGOT

The greatest memories always come from our childhood. Who doesn't remember a prank from his childhood or tenderness from somebody? In my case it came when I was three years old, and my father bought a country home close to my grandmother's house in the small town of Sacatin, Colombia. To live beside my grandmother was a blessing. I felt like a free bird, and I started visiting her every morning. In order to go there, I had to go over a little bridge. The smell of the flowers and the songs of the birds made this a wonderful place. She made friends with everybody, and the little children used to call her "Grandma." She had a lot of flowers and different kinds of fruits that she would give to people. She had the knowledge of healing the sick with natural medications. Rich people who lived in the neighboring town of Chippre had heard about my grandma and sometimes came to see her and ask her for healing medication.

One morning I went to my grandmother's house. As usual, I found her preparing breakfast. The smell of coffee, hot chocolate, scrambled eggs, and hot arepas whetted my appetite. My grandmother's kitchen was big. She used to cook on a wood stove, and that gave the food a special taste. In the corner she had a small bench where I used to sit, and in my little girl's mind, I would play make-believe with the things my grandmother had in her kitchen. The little wooden box in which she kept chocolate looked like a wonderful dresser for my dolls' clothes. The little pans and jars would be great to play with, too. In addition to that, she had a beautiful little grotto with the Virgin Mary in it. I wanted it very much but knew that I couldn't ask her for it because she told me one day, "This is a treasure that your grandpa gave me when I was fifteen years old."

One day I couldn't control myself and asked her for some of the things she had in her kitchen, and she said, "I

need all these things, even the grotto with Mary. When I die, I will leave them for you.”

I replied, “So when are you going to die?”

“I don’t know about that, but I do know that I don’t feel very well. Maybe one of these days I will die.”

“Maybe tonight?” I asked.

She agreed, “Maybe tonight.”

The next day I went to my grandmother’s house, and I was very excited because all those nice things were going to be mine. But when I got there, the smell of coffee, hot chocolate, etc., told me there was something wrong. She was there in the kitchen. “Good morning, Emilly,” Grandma said.

“Good morning, Grandma. Why did you lie to me?”

I replied.

“What? What are you talking about?” asked

Grandma.

“You told me yesterday you would probably die last night,” I said.

“So do you want me to die? Go away! I don’t like you!” she yelled at me.

I was very disappointed and went crying to my house. Later on I saw my mother and grandma laughing together.

Ten years later I was preparing for my first vacation. When I went to my grandmother to say good-bye, she was crying and told me that she was not feeling well lately, and when I come home, she might not be there. I told her my vacation was only for fifteen days, and that we would go to church together again when I returned. I was a little upset, but I loved to go to my uncle’s house in Pereira, so I went. Ten days later my father appeared unexpectedly to get me. I did not want to go, but he was very serious and firm.

When I got home, my mother was wearing a black dress. I asked her why, but she did not say anything, so I went to my room. My older sister was there and said, “This box is for you.” When I opened it, there was the beautiful

grotto with Virgin Mary in it and all the stuff I had asked my grandmother about ten years ago.

“Oh, no! No!” I cried.

My sister hugged me and said, “Yes, she died, but she said these things are yours.”

It was painful to remember what happened years ago when I asked her for those things. I was very upset like everyone else, but my sadness was deeper because I had learned the lesson of how far more important human beings are than any material thing.

Emily Nutter

STOLEN CHILD! LIFE IN URBAN AMERICA

Many years ago, there lived a child who was born to be a king. He enjoyed all of life's pleasures. He had food, clothing, shelter, and all of his heart's desires. In the middle of the night, he was taken to a far away country and left all alone.

As he sat alone in this deserted country under a coconut tree, he tried to figure out how to survive in this unfamiliar place. This young king is in a position, much like our children today. Many say that our youth are a lost generation, but in fact, they are like the stolen child living in the unfamiliar place. Both are struggling to survive. As this young frightened child sat under the coconut tree, a coconut fell upon his head.

This one coconut was the only resource he had. Many decisions had to be made to use the entire coconut in order to survive. Children living in urban America, like this young king, are living with limited resources. They often turn to selling, buying, using drugs and alcohol to escape from reality. These children are unaware of who they are and where they come from.

Some people believe that urban children are a lost generation. Our children are not lost. They were stolen by a force much greater. It is our responsibility to go out and rescue our children from poverty, abuse, drugs, and alcohol. Like the child who was born to be king, our children are all born with a purpose. Would someone please help the child find his way home?

Carl McDonald Sr.



Thoughts of Family



CHRISTMAS

Christmas is my favorite time of year. I have very fond memories of Christmas past. I especially remember what happened on a Christmas Day when I was about seven years old.

I woke up that morning, along with my brothers, so excited. I was ready to jump out of my skin. We were not allowed to go downstairs until my mom and dad were awake. My parents wanted to see our faces as we opened our presents. We all ran downstairs to see our Christmas tree lighted with presents neatly placed under the tree. As we started opening gifts, I was very happy with all of the things that I got, and I was happy for what my brothers got. When everything was all opened, the bottom of the tree was empty. I then noticed a note attached to the bottom of the tree addressed to me from Santa. I was so shocked. The note said that one of my presents was too big for the sleigh and that I would have to pick it up at Swallens the day after Christmas. I was so excited; I couldn't imagine what it was.

The day after Christmas, my family and I went to pick up my gift. When we pulled in the lot, there were sled marks in the snow and my dad said, "See Santa's tracks"? I was shaking with excitement. I got a sled/car; you could put skis on it for snow and then in the summer, you could put wheels on it. That is one of the fondest memories I have of Christmas.

Kelly Bond

MY GRANDMOTHER AND HER LIFE

My Grandmother has been an inspiration to me. My Grandmother was born on May 15, 1872 and passed away in 1962 at the age of 90 years.

My Grandmother was wise in everything she did. My Grandmother was a good woman. She spent about three fourths of her life living on farms. She had a lot of brothers who worked in the farm fields doing what had to be done. They all had to go to school in the winter but when it came time to plant they had to quit school.

When she was ten years old she lost both her father and mother. Her mother lived three days after her dad died. While her brothers went to gather neighbor women of that time to clean her up, my grandmother fixed breakfast. She made biscuits and gravy with ham and eggs. All of the children had to go and live with their aunts and uncles. My Grandmother lived with this one aunt who did not much like her so she had to go work in other people's homes.

She had a hard childhood, but she succeeded in becoming a good mother. My Grandmother raised eight kids by working in the fields and canning what she raised in her garden.

My Grandmother raised me till I got married and left home. My Grandmother raised me because when my mother got married for the second time, my step dad did not want me because I was another man's child. My dad died before I was born. My mom got married when I was two years old.

My Grandmother was a good woman and I am trying to be like her in some ways. She believed in the old fashion medicine and taught me how to be a good mother. This is why I like to write about her.

Ida E. Osborn

HOW HE INSPIRES ME

For as long as I can remember, my Grandfather has been an inspiration to me. Ever since my childhood, I've relied on his infinite wisdom to help carry me through. Wisdom, in this case, refers to more than his intelligence. A warm heart and kind soul offered support during times of distress. His ability to see reason would help to keep my family and me on the correct path. Most importantly of all, he never abated; in his mind, giving up or giving in were never options.

In my memories of growing up, there are plenty in which my Grandfather showed perfect examples of generosity. For instance, when my parents divorced, he offered me a shoulder to cry on. When his son struggled with drugs and alcohol, he didn't pass judgment. Instead, he offered his son a person to talk to. Even when I dropped out of high school, he didn't think any less of me.

As a teenager, my Grandfather's knack for finding logic and reason were of great assistance. Whenever emotion ran high, his calm words would help to keep my head above water. For example, when my father moved out of the state, my Grandfather helped to ease my pain by pointing out my father's reasons for moving away. Also, when my first pet died, he helped me realize that death was a part of life, and there was nothing I could have done to prevent the passing away.

Through it all, my Grandfather has never backed down or backed out. His childhood wasn't easy; nine brothers and sisters in a small house would not be easy to survive. He raised a family, ran a ranch, and worked full time through his entire adulthood. Even after developing Alzheimer's, he fought to live and be himself.

In the end, I think my Grandfather would be proud of me. After all, he did teach me that knowledge, kindness, and perseverance are incredibly important, and I think I learned well.

Rebecca Zielinski

TRULY A LOVE STORY

I said farewell to a dear friend in the fall of 2000. She was my dearest friend and sister-in-law; her name was Kathleen.

As a young girl at the age of fourteen, she and her girlfriend were hit by a drunk driver while walking home from school. As they walked and were playing their flutes, a car came screeching and swerving around the curves, out of control. It hit Kathy and Patty, throwing them 300 feet into the air. Kathy ended up in an embankment face down with major internal injuries. Patty, her best friend, was also thrown down over the hill.

Patty and Kathy were nearly dead. The car that hit them never stopped or even turned around. Lying in the hospital in a coma for over a month, the girls finally came to. For their families, it was a miraculous moment. After being in the hospital for two months and getting stronger, Patty was released before Kathy.

Kathy was out of the hospital in time for her big dance at school. Oh how she didn't want to miss that! She still wanted to go even though her black hair wasn't there. Her hair had been shaven in the hospital to reconstruct her skull after the violent blow. So, she and her best friend, Patty, went to the shopping center and got a wig. How they laughed and even cried, but that didn't stop her! Saturday came and off Kathy went looking as pretty as she possibly could.

As Kathy became older, she began having severe headaches and saw numerous doctors, but they said that it was normal. In the summer of 1967, Kathy went to a party and there he was – the most handsome man she had ever

seen! He had blonde hair and the prettiest eyes. He had his cigarettes rolled up in his sleeve and looked “dreamy”(as she told me). It was love at first sight!

Kathy and George continued seeing each other for months, going dancing, watching drive-in movies, and going out for a soda pop. They were in love.

In 1968 he was called out to war. Everyday Kathy would write, or he would call if he had a chance. George was in the Marines for four years. In his last year of service, he asked Kathy for her hand in marriage. But Kathy had not told him of the news that the doctors had told her and her mother. The doctors felt that she would never be able to have children due to that hit and run accident.

The young couple married in the summer of 1974. To their surprise and after many years of prayers, on October 31, 1977, they had a beautiful baby boy. Oh, how this boy was the love of their lives! “Buddy” they called him. Buddy was a fast learner, did everything his dad would do, and more. He was Daddy’s boy!

Surprisingly, after he was born, then came another boy. Oh, how they were proud of this little guy, Jeffrey! He, too, was a fast learner and Daddy’s boy. Growing up in a loving, caring, environment is just what Kathy always dreamed about. George would work everyday on the road as a truck driver, and she would stay and tend to the house and their two God-given boys.

One day while my brother, George, was at work, Kathy decided to start supper while the boys and George were not home. She had been experiencing a headache for a while. She had put on a pan of vegetable oil for homemade French fries. She loved to cook and bake for her family. Her headache was becoming more intense. Kathy sat down for a

while, forgetting about what she was doing, dozing off into a deep sleep. The oil was getting hotter and hotter; it burst out into flames catching the kitchen curtains on fire. It had spread. It was a miracle that the alarm had gone off. Kathy was waking up from the noise of the smoke alarm. She put the fire out with baking soda. At that moment, the boys came home and panicked when seeing smoke as they came in the front door.

For the next few years, Kathy continued experiencing more and more head pain. Kathy and George made a decision to see a neurologist. The doctor gathered the family and broke the devastating news that Kathy suffered from a tumor in the heart of the brain. At that time, it was the size of a golf ball and continuing to grow. The doctor said he could go in and cut, but he would only be able to remove a little of the tumor because of its location.

So, they made a decision to go ahead and do the surgery. In July of 1983, she had the surgery. The boys were very little, not quite understanding what was going on. Buddy, the oldest, was 8 years old, and Jeffrey was 6. After being in the hospital for 8 weeks, Kathy got to come home. The boys were very happy to see mom, but mom could not see them. We thought that it would clear up after awhile, but it never did.

Years went by. My brother and Kathy asked if I could stay and help with the boys since I did not have a family of my own, so I moved in to help out. Kathy was able to use a walker for a while, and then it got to where her equilibrium was bad. She would lose her balance and fall, and she had taken some bad falls. If she could not get around with that, she would crawl to where she was going. She would yell out to us because she would get lost while looking for the bedroom or bathroom.

In spite of her condition, she kept her sense of humor. George would take her to the park and she would wear his Jack Daniels hat, although they did not drink. They thought it would be funny because of her staggering when he would hold her up. They would laugh and laugh! Oh, how he loved her and she loved him!

Years went by and she got worse. George thought it would be best for her to live in a nursing home. How that broke his heart dearly! The boys were teenagers by then, going out with the guys and having girlfriends. It was hard for them. They sat with mom while dad was working or I couldn't be there. We traded weekends so we could have a break. She was put in the nursing home and was in there for over 4 years. We visited her often, switching days and weekends. We would read to her and she loved listening to the "oldies but goodies" radio stations, so I would turn the radio up loud for her to hear.

Buddy went off to college to pursue his dream of becoming a music teacher. He followed in his mother's footsteps; she also went to Bowling Green University to study to be an English teacher. Jeffrey followed his dad's footsteps by starting his own construction business.

Kathy would be so proud of her little guys. It was a fall night in 2000 when we were called to come down to the nursing home. The Hospice Center informed us that they had given Kathy one day to live, if that long. Sitting by her side, her two handsome young men would talk to her and comfort her as much as they could. She passed. As we were walking out of the room, the "oldies but goodies" station was playing the song, "When A Man Loves A Woman." For the last time, I turned around and turned up the volume on the radio.

Debbie Shepherd

MY LIFETIME LESSON

The most influential person in my life is my father. He hasn't been in my life for the past five years. In the thirteen years he raised me, we built a relationship that lasts a lifetime. Even though he kept breaking my heart, I still have a lot of love for him. My dad died July 9th of the year 2000. My father has made the biggest impact on my life.

My dad and I had a really close relationship. We had the kind of relationship where you're so close to someone and you're always around them, which builds a lot of memories. I never go a day without thinking of him or even mentioning him. We had an almost perfect father-daughter relationship. He showed a kind of love for me that no one else has or could even come close to.

My dad had problems that weren't noticeable, but they affected his life and my family. My mother divorced him about a year before he died. I never was given an explanation why. I was told they fought too much, which was true.

The minute I found out my dad was dead, I knew my life would never feel the same. I never knew my father's drinking was a problem, which could lead to different drugs. The day he passed away was the same day I found out the reason why my parents separated. On that day, he overdosed on a powerful pill, Oxycontin, which was the reason why he never woke up.

You would never think something like a pill so small could take your father's life forever. My dad's death changed my life permanently. He made me the person I am today. Our time spent together was short, but I could never even imagine how I would feel or who I would be if I never knew him.

Stephanie Clark

A SPECIAL LOVE

A father and young son, that's something sweet,
But a Grandpa and Grandson, that can't be beat.

The way they play throughout the day,
A love that strong makes you stop and say "hey."

The way they talk,
the way Grandpa laughs when the little one walks.

It fills your heart with such happiness and glee,
There is no more love than the two of thee.

So many things being taught,
He sure learns from Grandpa, he sure learns a lot!

That kind of love cannot be broken,
It can only be felt and not spoken.

Kevin L. Izor

MY HERO

When I say my hero, I look at the person I love very deeply. That person would be my mother. My mother loved and took care of her family. My mother never had the money to buy herself anything, because she had four girls, and her husband had two children.

My mother loved her husband and children. When she married, her husband already had two children from a previous relationship. My mother also had two children from a previous relationship. After their marriage they had two children together. It was kind of like the Brady bunch. We lived in a two-bedroom house. All five of us girls shared a room. My brother had his own room. The living room was my mother's room.

My mom was always the one who worked. The job she had paid very little. I don't see how she paid the rent or bills. Even with six children, she managed to buy clothing and other things we needed. Even though most of our clothing came from the thrift store, we still had clothes. It was hard trying to buy shampoo, soap, laundry soap, toilet paper, and toothpaste for six children.

When I think back, I remember my mother holding us tight and telling us how much she loved us. I remember her wearing holey clothes and worn down shoes. I remember when going to the store, she always looked but never bought herself anything.

My mother is really the true hero. She taught us how to love, and how to take care of a family. She taught us that family comes first even if it takes going without. That is why my mother is my hero.

Rose Salyer

MY MOTHER IS SOMEONE VERY SPECIAL TO ME

My mother is someone very special to me. I never knew her very well. At the age of six years old, she was taken from me by death. I remember very little about her.

It was early fall, September 4, 1942. How do I remember? I remember my father saying she passed on the birthday of a close friend. His name was Jeff, and it was the beginning of a school year for me. I was ready to enter the first grade.

The lady that was to be my teacher, Mrs. Evans, was moving in her home just a short distance from where our family lived. My father was helping her and her husband to move into their home when my grandmother yelled to us that something was wrong with my mother. My father and I rushed to see what the problem was.

We lived in a rural mountain area in the state of Tennessee and carried our water in pails from a nearby spring that flowed from the mountain a short distance from our log mountain home. My mother had gone to the spring for some water and had been too long. My grandmother got concerned and went to see about her. She had a seizure, passed out, fell, and rolled under a fence and down a small hill into the small stream of water which flowed from the spring. Her head was lying the water. She had probably drowned.

I would like to get to know her for the person she really was. I wish I could just sit and talk with her for a few hours and then take her to a nice restaurant for dinner to enjoy a good meal with her. Where we lived there were no restaurants. That would be something I could do for her that she was never able to do in her short life. I would love to

take her for a long drive in my car and enjoy some scenery. I'm sure she would enjoy that.

If I could spend one day with my mother, I would love to know how she felt about my two younger sisters and me. My youngest sister was only six months old at the time of her death. I wonder if she would be proud of my sisters and me. I wonder what she would think about us and her six grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. I'm sure she would be very proud of all of us. I would like to know what her likes and dislikes were.

As I vaguely remember, she was a very neat, well-kept lady. She wore nice dresses that my grandmother sewed for her. My grandmother made all of our clothes. She was always a neat and clean person. Her long black hair was worn pulled to the back of her head, as most ladies wore their hair in those days; she was beautiful as I remember. I remember her playing hide and seek with my oldest sister and me one time. One of us would hide our face, and the other two would hide behind trees. Then the person hiding their face would find the two that were hiding; it was fun.

I remember my mother being a real good lady and a wonderful person. Everyone spoke well of her. I do not remember ever hearing her complain about anything. She never knew what a hardship was; it was just the way of life we lived and was accepted as our best.

If I could spend one day with my mother, it would be a very special day. I would live that day to its fullest. It would be the most wonderful day of my life. But, she was taken from me at such an early age. I will always remember and hold onto what memories I have of her.

Art Massengill

MY DAD, THE INSPIRATION LEADER

The person who has inspired me is my dad. The reason is because he has taught me the way of life. He's showed me how to work on things. He's also showed me how to rig things, which means how to fix things with equipment and the proper tools to do it with.

He's the one that brought me to bowling. My dad is the first one in our family to bowl a 300. Then he had his problem.

It was a Monday. We went to Home Depot to pick up carpet. He got dizzy in the store. I thought nothing of it. We went back to the apartment complex to lay tile. He took his medication, and we went bowling. It was one of our bad nights. We lost all the games. Then we went home and had dinner and we went to bed.

Then came Sunday morning. It was about 3:30 – 4:00 a.m. Dad wasn't feeling so good. He was burning up. We called for the squad and before the squad pulled away, we told mom if they find out anything to give us a call.

It took them about 2 days to find anything. When they found out what the problem was, they told our mom. They said it was a stroke on the left side of the brain. Usually when a person had a stroke it takes everything, from your strength to your balance to everything else. The only thing it took from him was his balance.

He told us that the doctor said it would take from 6 months to a year for him to get back to the normal stuff that he did before the stroke. But today our dad, Randy McCoy, is back doing whatever he wants to do. It took him 2 months to

walk on his own without any help. When the league started back up, he was out there with the rest of us bowling.

When he stepped out on the lanes on Saturday night for the first time in over 3 months, I had a smile on my face and in my heart. I kept it all night long. To this day I still have that smile in my heart. Watching him bowl is like watching an angel get his wings, and it makes me proud to know him. I will never forget that day.

Terry Kimbler

ABOUT MY MOM AND DAD

I was born on October 10, 1978. It was in Cambodia, when the war hit us. My mom, dad, my brother, and my sister were with me. We tried to hide from the soldiers, but I cried too much.

We had no food or water. It was hard for us to find a place to hide because I cried. I had to take a bath with cow dump, and drink them too. We ran and ran to Thailand. That was when my brother and sister died, because of no food. After that I don't remember how we survived in Thailand.

In America, I went to school from grade 1 through grade 9. That's when I dropped out because I was pregnant. I stayed home. I never thought I would have a chance to go back to school, but I did.

I live away from my mom and dad. I love them a lot. Whenever I need them to help me with something, they help me. If I need money, they will give it to me. If I need a ride, they will help me. Now it is hard for me to think, because they always help me. But I can help them.

I'm the person that thinks a lot. I'm afraid that one of these days, they will be sick. I know they will need me. I will give up my life for my mom and dad because they brought me to this world, so I can see the sky. They helped me through the war, to Thailand, and into America, where we all have freedom. Now, we don't have to run. We have enough food to eat and a place to stay. Thank you Mom and Dad. I love you with all my heart.

Sochea Sang

IN MY FATHER'S TIME

In my father's time, he was raised in a holler called "Rocky Fort." There were no roads or sidewalks. The closest dirt road was at least two miles away. There were no stores close to his family house either. Anything that his family bought from the store, they would have to carry by horseback. Heavy things like building materials, they brought in by sled or wagon with the help of the horses.

In my father's time, his family had no inside electric. They kept their milk cold in a spring. Their bologna stayed at room temperature, and their eggs and a lot of their meats were fresh daily.

In my father's time, he had very few toys. He made cars out of matchboxes, and he used shoeboxes as trucks. They didn't have video games, computers, VCRs, DVDs and most people didn't have TVs. Televisions were very expensive and only the higher-class people could afford them.

In my father's time, he had to walk to school. He didn't have a bus to ride. He had to walk on a little path that went through the woods two miles to his school. His school was a one-room schoolhouse, which only went to the 8th grade.

In my father's time, he had to do his chores every morning before he went to school. He had to gather the eggs from the hens and milk the goats.

After school my father had to feed the animals again. Then he had to work the crops during garden season. They had 10 acres of farmland. He would then have to draw water from the well, gather wood for cooking and heat in the

winter, do his homework, eat dinner, and get cleaned up for bed. There was little, if any, time to play or relax.

In my father's time, he had to take a bath in the middle of his backyard in a washtub. His mother used a lot of home remedies if his family got sick. Some of these remedies included herbs, which they picked off the land. Ginger was used for the flu; ginseng was used for aches and pains; and Queen of the Melba, which was found by the water, was used for menstrual cramps. His mother would store the herbs in sealed containers to keep them fresh, and whenever someone was sick, she would boil them and make a tea for them to drink.

In my father's time, his family didn't put their money in the bank. They kept it hidden in their house, and sometimes they hid it outside. They saved every dime that they could.

In my father's time, his mother and two sisters did all their laundry on washboards, and then they hung the clothes outside to dry on clotheslines. They canned and dried all of their vegetables. They butchered their own meat. They cooked almost everything from scratch.

In my father's time, he spent his Saturdays working in the garden and cutting lumber for cooking and heat in the winter. He also did anything else that needed to be done around the house, including his daily chores.

In my father's time, he would rest on Sunday. He would either go fishing or hunting for fun. He always hoped to catch some fish or kill an animal because that would mean that his family would have some good food to eat for a few days.

In my father's time, he was the man of the house most of the time. His father worked the coal mines, and later his father worked at Armco Steel, and he was gone from home for days at a time.

In my father's time, he also had to help with his crippled sister who had polio when she was 12 months old and became crippled for life. The family didn't have a wheelchair, so he had to lift her at least 12 times a day, even though she was 3 years older than him. She was a big woman too. She weighed at least 300 pounds.

In my father's time, there weren't many jobs in his hometown of Manchester, Kentucky. My father didn't want to leave his family, but he wanted to work at a job where he wouldn't have to struggle. He had heard from his dad that there were jobs in Ohio. When my father turned 17 years old, still just a kid himself, he came to Ohio and moved in with one of his sisters who already lived here. He then got a job at Pepsi Cola Bottling Company. This is where he met my mother and they got married and had four children.

In my father's time, life was much harder for him than he made it for us. We didn't always have the best, but we had everything we needed and some of what we wanted. We had indoor plumbing and electric, though my father still sat in the dark. There were many times we would come home from shopping and my father would be sitting in the dark. We had a TV too, though my father seldom watched it. We raised a small garden every year. We had to do chores daily too, but nothing compared to what my father had to do while growing up. And on Sunday we rested.

In my father's time, his holidays were different for him than they were for us. Christmas for him was a big dinner, fresh fruit, hard candy, and sometimes one or two presents. Birthdays were a homemade cake and a big dinner

of his choice, but he never had a party or received any presents. Thanksgiving was a big dinner, and on New Year's, they did nothing at all. On the Fourth of July, they would shoot their guns in the sky. Halloween was a holiday that they didn't celebrate at all because they lived one mile away from the nearest house, so by the time they walked to one house, it would be time to turn around and come back home. At Easter they would sometimes walk to the school to an Easter egg hunt, but they didn't get Easter baskets.

In my father's time, life was definitely harder. When I was about five years old, we drove to Manchester, Kentucky. We brought a sack lunch with us. We then walked to the place my grandma had since moved to which was still a long way off of the nearest dirt road at a place called Mud Lick. I thought my feet were surely going to fall off. I remember being carried some of the way there. And I remember, just when I was sure that I couldn't walk another step, my father turned around and came back to carry me. He had the saddest look in his eyes; I think he thought he had made a mistake by making us walk a long way as he had when he was a child. He opened his arms when he got to me, and I refused. I said I'd walk. And I did walk, all the way there without saying a word too. I had blisters on my feet the next day too. I remember playing on a big huge rock while I was there. I saw what I thought was a snake statue, until it moved. I was scared to death. Then my grandma moved from there to a new farm house at a place called Sand Hill which was still in Manchester, Kentucky. I remember begging to draw water from the well. It looked like fun. It wasn't; trust me. I thought my arm was going to break. Everything was so heavy. It seemed like forever until I was done. Never again did I ask to get the water from the well. I can't imagine drawing water enough time to make a bath! One time I went with my grandma to get a chicken at that same farm house. We went to the chicken coup, I thought that was weird, but I didn't ask. The next thing I knew, my grandma grabbed a chicken by

the neck, slugged it around, and snapped its head off. The chicken started running around with no head. I didn't eat chicken for dinner that night or for a long time after that.

In my father's time, life was different for him than it is today. My father is retired and he has 3 grandchildren. He lost his wife, my mother, in 1994 from complications during a colonoscopy. All of his immediate family has passed away. He also lost a son who was murdered. But despite the hardships, my father has moved on with his life. I'm so glad my father took that chance and moved to Ohio when he was only 17 years old, though sometimes I think he misses that rural life. I know a few times while we were growing up he thought about buying a farm. I'm glad he didn't though because farm life is a hard life.

Karen Smith

A TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER

Jane M. Ellington (Scales) a.k.a. Honey, was born on September 4th in Tuskegee, Alabama. She was the youngest of 14 children. She always had a fashion sense and loved to dress with the little she had. When she became a teenager, she learned to sew clothes and cut hair. She also learned to crochet. She made clothes from yarn as well as different fabrics. She used newspaper as a pattern. She made clothes for her family. She also made curtains and crocheted blankets and house shoes.

Honey moved to Cleveland, Ohio, in 1943 where she had her first son. She was young when she had her first child, so she gave her son to her older brother to raise while she got into the world of fashion and design. Ten years later in her life, she met a man who she later married. This man saw her talent for making clothes and cutting hair. He helped her find work in a barber shop. She started working in a barber shop on East 63rd and Scovill cutting hair, doing line-ups, and grooming. In her spare time, she made clothes. Soon she had four children with her husband. She had sent for her first son and that made five children. Honey worked at the Barber Shop, made clothes, and did all the motherly things for her family.

By 1964, Honey had eight children, five girls and three boys. By 1966, two of her children were killed, one by a drunk driver and the other shot by a Cleveland police. Honey went through a very hard time trying to accept that she would not see these children grow up. But she never gave up. She remained a strong woman. She divorced her husband. Then it was Honey and the children. Her cousin babysat for her, and she continued to work.

By 1979, Honey was teaching teachers to sew different fabrics at the Woodhill Job Centers in Cleveland. She made leather suits, drapes, and sheets of fabrics. Soon, she took one of her teacher's place and taught others to sew. I, Yolanda Lewis (Scales), am living proof of the clothes she made because I'm her youngest child.

God bless you mom for all you did for me and my siblings.

Jane M. "Honey" Ellington (Scales) departed her life in September of 1985.

Love you Mom!

Yolanda Lewis

A MOTHERS DAY

Beth woke up with the sound of rain hitting the siding of the house. She sat up stretching while reaching for her glasses on a table next to her bed. She looked at the clock and saw that she was late. Everybody had slept in. Beth jumped up and ran down the hall to get her to boys up. Beth rushed as she got the kids and herself ready to go to school and work.

They all got into the car with their backpacks and lunches. Beth asked her sons if they had everything then realized she had locked the keys in the house. "NO, NOT TODAY!" she blurted out. She asked her eight-year-old Tyler, who was the youngest, to help her. She lifted him up to an unlocked window so he could climb in and get the keys. Tyler got the keys, and they were finally ready to go.

Beth's sons went to two different schools. Tyler went to grade school and her oldest son Travis, who was twelve, went to middle school. When she was done dropping Travis and Tyler off to school, she headed to her job worrying all the way that she might get fired.

Beth worked at a big fancy restaurant that paid good money, plus tips. She'd been there for two years. As she was walking through towards the employee lounge she caught a glimpse of the schedule. Just then, she remembered something about a change she overheard her employer talking about the day before. Beth walked over to the schedule and sighed in relief to see that she was off today instead of tomorrow. Beth just shook her head and laughed at herself as she walked out and got back into her car.

Knowing that she didn't have to work, Beth decided to run some errands. She paid her electric, phone, and car

insurance bills. Then Beth got all her grocery shopping done without her kids. She thought this was really nice since all she heard from them is, "Can I have this?" over and over again when they went to the store with her.

Beth arrived home just before the boys got off the bus. They came in the front door as she was putting the groceries away. Beth yelled, "Hang them up," knowing that they would just throw their book bags and coats on the floor. Travis and Tyler sat down at the table to do their homework, and Beth started dinner.

After dinner Beth started cleaning up, washing dishes, and doing some laundry. When Beth got all the housework done it was already time for the kids to go to bed. When the boys went to sleep, Beth settled down in her bed and set the alarm, so she wouldn't be late in the morning. She finally fell asleep watching television with the remote in her hand.

Gina Rodgers



Thoughts of Love



HAPPINESS IS...

- ...having a wonderful home with lots of joy, peace, and love.
- ...having inner peace to be able to provide spiritually, physically, and emotionally for my children, as well as to better myself educationally to help myself and others.
- ...just getting up in the morning!
- ...having the freedom of making choices in life.
- ...when someone suddenly understands something difficult.
- ...being able to spend time with my wife, knowing that I am loved and cherished by many people.
- ...being a part of the team and being a team player.
- ...being able to see my children have fun.
- ...when my family sits around in front of the TV with popcorn and water and watches a family movie.
- ...having a loving, honest relationship with those around you. Happiness is having those around you believe in your hopes and dreams even though sometimes you have a hard time believing in yourself.
- ...a never ending process. If you choose to set goals, go for them and achieve them. Happiness is what you make life to be!

ABLE Class, Live Oaks

<i>Alondra Johnson</i>	<i>Maria Thomas</i>	<i>Dorothy Jones</i>
<i>Debbie Shepherd</i>	<i>Lynette Overbey</i>	<i>Gary Burnside</i>
<i>Kelly Bond</i>	<i>Jin Hui Dulle</i>	<i>Lisa Smith</i>
<i>Tonya Charles</i>	<i>Art Massengill</i>	<i>Sheila Pittman</i>

MY FORMAL INVITE

Got the meal hot, got the bevy on chill
Come prepared tonight. It's getting real
I've been waiting a long time
And now you're mine
I've been wanting you girl now I got my wish
Swimming in the timeless currents of true bliss
Destinies interchanging with each kiss
After dinner showing you pleasure unparalleled
In an ocean of love we both fell
But first let me sit you down with the candles lit
Usher in the background
Let's see how hot it can get
If it sounds good girl, you got my number
Just hit me
Tonight just me and you
Come have dinner with me

Michael Brown

THOSE EYES

I look into your eyes and wonder
What God must have been thinking
When he created you.

Those brown sharp eyes
With a million mad men
Looking back at me with nothing but love.

Love for me and only me
Those eyes.

Allena Norris

FORBIDDEN LOVE ...

Often times I find my mind wandering
To the deepest, darkest part of my heart,
To the one place no one can enter,
To the one place where our love is bound
In the chains that hold it from the light.

How I long each day to be with you.
It consumes my very being.
It consumes my every thought.
How I long for the day that I can
Proclaim my love for you to the world.
With each moment I spend in your arms, my love grows.

No, I dare not let these feelings slip!
The damage would be too irreparable,
The pain too much to bear,
The war I would surely lose
Against the one whose wrath we would incur.

So for now, these feelings must stay locked behind
The door in the deepest dungeons of my heart but
Soon, my dear, the day will come when the key shall
Unlock the door and our forbidden love shall be free.

Jose Plaja

LOVE

Love
Wonderful, Beautiful
Caring, Liking, Thinking
Innocence, Smile, Tear, Guilt
Terrible, Worst
Hatred

Mona Achkar

WHAT YOU HAVE DONE

Dear Love,

You were the most wonderful thing to me. You did things for me that anyone else could not do. You made me feel on top of the world. I remember those times we spent together. They were so good. As we got to know each other very well we became best friends. We got together and we hung out every day. But the truth is, the first time I met you, I fell in love.

As days, weeks, and months went by, you began to change me. You were all I cared about. I even let you come before my children. I became hurt in many ways from being with you. I stopped eating, sleeping, or caring for anything but you. I gave you all of my money and sanity. I started becoming more depressed every time I was with you. And still you were all I thought about. When you were coming next and was I going to get the money to see you again. But even still, I did whatever to satisfy my need for you. You controlled my every move. All I wanted was you.

Then the time came when I had to choose between you or my family. I had to get my family back. I was ready to leave you. You beat me up so bad. Mentally and physically, I couldn't take any more. I had to leave you alone.

So, I decided to tell someone about you, and that I did. The first few days were really hard without you. All I did was shake, sleep, and eat. All of my family knew about you and they just couldn't believe it. What really helped me stay alive was my higher power. If it weren't for Him, I don't know where I would be.

That was one of the best things I could have done for myself – getting you out of my life. I got to know who I am. I talked about my relationship with you to other people who have had the same problem in their lives. I am not the only one.

I feel so much better about myself now. I have almost all of my family back. We are all doing so much better now. I have never felt so good about myself and in some ways, I can thank you because I would have never gotten to know me for who I am. But I'll never take another hit of you again. I don't need your abuse in my life any more. I will stay as far away from you as possible. I hope you have a better understanding about how I feel about you and what you have done to me.

Yours Truly,

Your User

About The Author

The letter I wrote was a note to the one thing I have done in my life that I'll never forget – my drug addiction with cocaine. It really destroyed some time in my life. But today I'm all together – and I'm still alive. I hope for anyone who may have a problem with drugs that this could help you in some kind of way.

Elizabeth Haddad

MY DREAM MADE REALITY

When I was seventeen years old, I had a wonderful dream of an older man dressed in a white suit and wearing a hat. He was riding a white horse. I didn't talk with him.

Since that time I always thought about that particular dream and hoped that some day I would meet that fellow.

In May of 1999, I was working as a nurse in my country of Peru. While I was working, a friend of mine came to visit me and asked me if I wanted to meet the right guy for me. I answered yes!

At that time, I gave her my phone number. After a few days, my phone rang and I answered it. What a big surprise! I got the call that I was waiting for.

Here I am listening to his soft and melodious voice. Subsequently, we had numerous calls back and forth. In this way, we were learning about each other more and more.

In September 1999, this man traveled to my country to meet me. I was anxious at the airport when I was waiting for him. I felt that my heart was beating very hard. When the plane landed, I felt that my legs wanted to weaken.

Then I saw him, and I was surprised. He was the man I dreamed of twenty-one years ago! Although we didn't spend much time together, when he had to return to the United States, I was very sad.

On his next trip to see me, we got acquainted. Our relationship blossomed like the roses in the spring time.

We were married in a single, romantic ceremony. We continue to enjoy each other very much. It seems like a dream come true. Now I am having the best time of my life, hoping this reality will last forever.

Gloria Meza

THE DEATH OF MY CLOSE FRIEND, JERRY

Jerry was a neighbor who lived two houses down from me. He was an older gentleman who was in his fifties when I first met him. As he got older, I would offer to cut his grass in the summer and clean the snow from his driveway in the winter. Then we would just sit and talk about different things, like his son, Jerry Jr., and daughter-in-law, Libby.

Libby could do no wrong in Jerry's eyes. She would always call him "Pops." She'd say, "What's up, Pops? How are you today?" Jerry was also a grandfather. He had two granddaughters and one great-grandchild. Jerry was proud of all of them. I came to find out that Jerry was also Italian and a devout Catholic, and he had faith in God. He would go on to tell me how his son graduated from Chaminade-Julienne High School. He would say how proud he was of his son.

Jerry would often drive up to Frisch's to get something to eat. Later, Jerry had knee surgery, and he could no longer drive to Frisch's as much as he had in the past. After the surgery, he still had a hard time with his knee. I offered to check in on him periodically. We would have a baby monitor, one at his house and one at mine. I could hear him if he needed me, but he couldn't hear me. Jerry could walk with a cane, but he also needed therapy. The therapist would come once a week as needed.

Jerry had a great sense of humor. I remember he would say, "Here she comes, that old woman." I would ask him, "What are you talking about?" He would say, "The therapist, and there she is again." She would have him move his knee up and down and have him walking around his house. His therapist would ask him, "How are you doing today? Can we do some knee exercises?" Jerry would say something like,

“Sure, go ahead and do it,” as if he wanted her to do it herself. He would even count for her.

Jerry was being “ornery.” He wouldn’t do anything that she asked of him. She would tell him, “You must be having a bad day. I will be back next week.” He would laugh as she was leaving. I would tell him, “Jerry, you must behave yourself.” He would make me laugh by saying, “Cathy, next week lock the doors when she comes. She will think that no one is home.” Jerry had no problems doing exercises for me. There were days it was hard for him to bend his knee or lift his leg. Later in the day I would have him kick a soft pillow across the floor.

Jerry was doing fine until he came down with dementia. This is a form of cognitive judgment motor coordination and memory impairment. He had trouble thinking, planning, and organizing. Things seemed to be getting worse for Jerry, like the phone. It would ring, and he didn’t know how to answer it, not knowing which end to speak into. Nor could he remember if he took a bath or not. It was at that time Jerry’s son asked me if I would be interested in being his father’s caregiver. I was more than happy to help in this situation.

At this point, his son told him what was going on with his father’s life. He knew that he could no longer do the things that he once did. His son told him why I was over there so much. I would be bathing him, feeding him, and making sure that he took his daily medication.

I would stay days and nights on end as he got worse. When I stayed all night I would sleep on the couch, and he would be in his bed. There were many, many nights he could not sleep. His son would call the doctor. They said that there was nothing that could be done. This is part of the dementia. His brain would tell him when it was time to sleep,

but it was not at the time that he was supposed to be sleeping. At this point my brain was telling me I was tired and that I needed to sleep even though he could not sleep, but he would not let me.

I would try to sleep on the couch, and he would yell and I would go running into his room. I would ask, "Jerry, are you OK? What can I do for you?" He would laugh and say, "Were you asleep?" Sometimes he would say "Get in the bed with me." I would tell him the couch was OK for me, and he would chuckle and say, "I won't bite." He would sometimes tell me that his butt hurt. I would soon find out why. He put his teeth in his pants. He would do this off and on. That was good old Jerry and a part of his humor.

Even at the worst of times, his sense of humor never left him. Jerry finally passed away at his home in his sleep. He died peacefully, surrounded by his family and me. He had told me several times he wanted to die at home. When he died on that warm August evening, I felt comfortable knowing he did not die alone.

Cathy Loikoc



Thoughts of Places

I WANT TO BE LIKE THE OCEAN

I want to be like the ocean,
I would like to have its energy
Its strength...
The ocean is life.
It has wisdom and history.
The ocean is wonderful, powerful
Respected and admired.

It is a home, a shelter, and a refuge
For the nature inside.
In its depth, prevails peace.
Its surface is an armor that protects the soul.
I want to be like the ocean,
I would like to have my heart serene
And feel my being, alive.

Marcela Szipina

SANTA'S HIDE-A-WAY HOLLOW

I met Bill Dieterle at Opportunity Resource Center last year when we chose Santa's Hide-a-Way Hollow as a charity we would like to help. We decided to raise money for the charity.

We all liked Bill when we met him. He seemed to really be Santa, although he was not dressed like him. But as he talked to us, he told us how he was before he changed. He was a boss at a big company in charge of many people. If one of his employees had asked for time off because their child was sick, he would tell them they were fired and now they'd have plenty of time. Then Bill's life changed when he met a little boy who was dying and who only wanted Santa to make his mother smile again.

Bill is now Santa to lots of ill children. He is building a new "North Pole" for them to visit him. But, sometimes he has to go to them.

He was Santa for one little girl who was very terribly ill. She was in a hospital, and time was running out for her. The doctors at the hospital told Bill that the only thing she wanted for Christmas was a Barbie Corvette, but the doctors knew she would not live until Christmas.

Bill hunted all over for this toy with no luck. Everywhere he went, he was told, "No Barbie Corvettes!" So, he called Mattel and told them the story. Mattel told him they would have it there by the time he was ready to leave for the hospital.

As he was putting on his boots the morning he was to visit this girl, the doorbell rang and there was a deliveryman with a package, which he handed to Santa.

Bill asked, "What do I owe you?"

The deliveryman replied, "Nothing. Mattel took care of it all," and left.

Santa went to the hospital and gave the little girl the wrapped package that contained the Barbie Corvette. The little girl smiled at Santa and hugged the toy and went to sleep. The next morning, the hospital called and told Santa that the little girl had died that night with the toy in her arms.

I have been to Santa's Hide-A-Way Hollow. (It is still under construction.) He has cabins and a small lake full of fish where the ill children can go and have fun. There are also trails through the woods where they can ride in a buggy or a sleigh, if there is snow. He is going to build a North Pole Village starting this summer with all sorts of wonderful things for the sick children.

I saw the "Kosar Kabin," donated by Bernie Kosar who played for the Cleveland Browns. The money we raised by selling ornaments and cookies provided a bed for that cabin.

If I had a very ill child, I would want Santa to visit him. He makes those children happy when they and their families are very sad. Sometimes, after the child has died, the parents come back to "The North Pole" and plant a pine tree for them. There is a plaque on each tree, and they can visit any time they want to.

Carrol Starcher

THE NECESSARY HOUSE

Many terms were used to identify the “Necessary House”. The Early American colonists referred to it as a privy. The English called it an outhouse. The more aristocratic people called it the House of Office. One of the oldest references, commonly used by the western world, was Jakes. If you were from Canada, you may have called it the Back 40, Auntie of the House of Parliament. Some other names used when seeking an outdoor toilet: One Holer or One Seater, Two Holer or Two Seater, Back House, Depository, Willie, Convenience, Closet, Throne, Post Office, Federal Building, White House, Roadside Rest and Oklahoma Potty.

Since the invention of the indoor Thunderbox in the 1730s, this ancient structure has vastly disappeared from the American home’s landscape. However, many remaining outhouses can be found on the premises of homes in rural communities. Some privies could even be found in parks.

I guess it would safe to say that my involvement with outhouses started in my childhood with my late Grandma Jessie Carter, with whom I had a special grandmother-grandson relationship. She introduced me to one of the standard outdoor comfort stations of South County Park in Pennsylvania. South Park is approximately 25 miles south of Downtown Pittsburgh. It was after the destruction of this series of park privies 20 years ago that I became quite fascinated with the Necessity.

Over the course of time my interest in the Johnnies has grown. I’ve researched as much information as possible via the internet and various outhouse publications. I’ve included the subject in some of my artwork. My in-depth studies of the construction and other architectural elements

of these structures have inspired me to draw detailed building plans for future projects I plan to do.

The average outhouse roof generally slants from front to back, while others have a roof that comes to a peak either in the front and back or on the sides of the building. While most outhouse doors are close to the center of the structure, other privy doors are off to the right or left side of the building. Other interesting attributes of the Necessity are the symbol on the front of the building. The symbol that's well known amongst outhouses is the crescent moon. A pair of identical outhouses that are only different by the design on the door can be individualized by the crescent moon signifying the ladies' accommodations. The star represents gentlemen. The last two symbols that come to mind are the diamond and the circle. The majority of the privy planks have circular shaped holes. 51% of the estimated 76 outhouses I've visited thus far have circular shaped holes in the planks.

Prior to the invention of toilet tissue, the Sears Roebuck catalog often served the purpose of toiletry items. When the Sears Roebuck was not available, leaves or newspaper could be a good alternative.

If it was not for my dear departed Grandmother, chances are I may have never discovered my hobby.

Jeffrey Carter

AN OHIO BOY SEES THE WORLD

Living in different parts of the country has been a learning experience for me. I think it was really neat to see how people live in other places, how they speak, their customs, and their values.

I was raised here in Ohio on a small farm outside of London, Ohio. I lived in the city of London also, so I got a taste of city life and country life.

In the country, we had a pump for drawing drinking water. There was also an outhouse! We had a big lot for a garden. We had a big coal-burning stove in the living room and a smaller one in the kitchen. They were hard times, but as I reflect, they were good times.

In the city, we had water inside the house; the bath and restroom were inside. This was a lot different than the country living! And we had neighbors that lived really close to our house.

Coming from this kind of background, I didn't know what to expect going to another part of the country, but I liked the thought of it.

I have a cousin who lives in Houston, Texas, and he had invited me to come down to visit him for a couple of weeks during the summer. This was in 1981. I had never been on an airplane before this time.

While I was down there, I decided to look around for work. I tell you, there was plenty of work, a lot more than there was in London, Ohio. I got a job at National Steel. I found out that a friend of mine from London was living there also, and he and I ended up renting a house together. It was

good at that time. It was like a boomtown there in Houston. This was a lot different than Ohio, which was depressed. There were so many people in Texas from Ohio, that we used to joke, "The last one out of Ohio, please turn out the lights!"

I met a girl from California who was just visiting a friend of hers there. We ended up getting a place of our own and got married two years later.

In 1983, Hurricane Alicia hit Galveston and Houston. Everything was a mess. Debris from trees was everywhere. We had three feet of branches in our front yard, plus a tree was on our front porch. We had no electricity for three weeks. We decided to move to California, closer to her parents. We packed up everything we owned and moved to San Jose. It was easy to get jobs. I got one in an auto body shop, and she in a law firm as a paralegal.

Living in California was a lot different than Texas. Not as hot, different type of people, not as prejudiced, more educated, no rednecks (Confederate flags), but it sure was expensive to live there.

Vacations to Mexico were easy to do. We went to Acapulco, Puerto Vallarta, Mazatlan, and Yalopa. You are treated very well as a tourist down there. The country is so poor; they need American tourist dollars. We saw women washing clothes down at the rivers there. No wonder the people want to come to the U.S. to better their lives, to work. The lucky ones do make it here!

After living in California 14 years, I moved back to Ohio. Wow, what a difference! Back to Mayberry! It was neat to see green fields of wheat, corn, beans, and farmland after living in the big city. It was nice to have a slower pace in life. You could tell that you were in the Bible Belt. This seemed

like a good place to raise children! Camping, swimming, chasing lightning bugs, snow skiing—it was good to be able to do these things. No lightning bugs in California!

Having actually lived in these different parts of the country has been an education I feel you can't get out of a book. Having been around such a diverse group of people, from all over the world, living in those coastal cities, Santa Cruz, Carmel, Monterey, Burlingame, Seaside, San Francisco, all these places with their cultures are something I believe everyone should experience and see at least once in life.

Teddy Thompson

PALM TREE LEAF

There was a house on the hill in a small town in South Korea. My grandma lived in that house. After my uncle went to the Vietnam War, I visited her very often. She would pray every night for his safe return. She would go into the mountain valley to get clean spring water. Then she would pour the water in a white bowl, set it on a rock, and pray and pray for her son's safe return home.

She would get a letter from my uncle once in awhile, but not often. One day she got a special letter; it had a palm tree leaf inside. The leaf was brown and partly dry, but still somewhat soft. The letter said, "Mom, I kissed and touched this leaf with my hands. Whenever you miss me, just touch the leaf and think of it as touching my hands." After that day, I saw my grandma touching the leaf all the time. She would touch the leaf very gently as though it were my uncle's hands. She would put it on her face gently as though it were my uncle's hands touching her face.

It went on for days, months, and years. Then one day I saw him. I saw my uncle coming up the hill. Oh! My hero! As he got closer, I could see his shiny black boots and olive green uniform; he looked so handsome in that uniform. When he got right in front of me, he said, "Hi!" with a big smile, putting his hand on my shoulder. I wanted to say something, but nothing came out of my mouth. There was something inside of me that wanted to put my arms around his neck and cry aloud until my lungs burst, but nothing came. I couldn't move; I was frozen, standing there motionless. He asked, "Where's Grandma? Is she in the house?" Then I saw him running into the house calling, "Mom, Mom, I'm home!"

Jin Hui Dulle

MY FAVORITE PLACE

My favorite place is out in the woods
To hear the birds sing
The wind blowing in the trees
The trees standing tall with leaves so green
Fresh air to breathe
To see chipmunks running around on the ground
To hear my children laughing
I can find a spot to seat myself
Clear my thoughts of the day
To focus on the sounds I hear in the woods
To say, "Hi Jesus, it's me in my favorite place"
To ask to be refreshed
To be filled and to give my worries away
To be on a hill so high
To look on miles and miles of trees
The wind blowing on my face is my favorite place

Jami Stover

MY HOME

My home sits way back off the road. I like it like that. We have ten acres with a 1500-foot driveway. It has beautiful woods on three sides. At night, you can listen to the screech owls and the frogs. My personal favorite is our lake in the front yard, which we put in ourselves.

We have four bedrooms and three baths. We have an open family room with a fireplace. There's a kitchen with a breakfast nook and a formal dining room. We have a formal living room for special occasions. It also has a laundry room.

Sometimes it smells like different scented candles. Sometimes it smells like garlic if my wife is cooking pasta. You can taste it in the air. My home always feels like a warm, loving place to me. I love to just walk around in the yard.

Dale Hudec

FROM SUDAN, AFRICA TO CLEVELAND, OHIO
IN 20 YEARS

My name is Isaac Dhal. I am a hard-working student and janitor. I am 25 years old.

I came to the U.S.A. in 2001. Prior to my arrival, I was embroiled in an African civil war between Christians and Muslims. More than two million people were killed.

I was in a bad situation for more than two decades. I wandered the country with other young boys. Many of my friends died from hunger, dehydration, and animal attacks.

There were thousands of us. Over half of my Sudanese brothers drowned or were eaten by crocodiles when we tried to cross the river. It was a miserable life.

We were so happy when Americans came to our rescue. We were shocked at first because there were so many things we had never seen or done.

I enjoy my GED studies. I have already passed many parts of the exam. I will be going to the community college next year. As a full-time janitor, I can pay my own way and even send money back home to my family. American money goes a long way in Sudan.

My friends and I were very excited when we heard a peace deal was made in Nairobi and Kenya.

Thank you to all Americans for allowing me to come to the U.S.A.. I now have a life worth living. I promise to make the most of it.

Isaac Dahl

HOW CAN OUR MARRIAGE CUSTOM WORK?

Marriage is important to our culture. We are Hindu. A Hindu marriage is a life-long commitment of one wife and one husband. It is the strongest social bond that takes place between a man and a woman.

Our wedding ceremony is colorful and unique. My parents corresponded with my friends about marriage for me. Eventually my husband's family heard about it. My husband was already related to me. He was my second cousin. An astrologer who declared us to be highly compatible duly compared our horoscopes, which had been prepared and are based on the precious moment of birth. So, my husband and I were brought together. We knew a little about each other as we had had a few telephone conversations. We wrote some letters. In these we shared our feelings.

Our wedding was arranged. Both our parents arranged our wedding. We didn't sleep the day before the wedding. Instead our relatives and friends talked, laughed, worked, and did lots of other fun things. Early in the morning of the wedding we each took a shower and didn't eat anything. I got dressed in a beautiful red colored sari all covered with gold embroidery. I wore lots of jewelry and I put lots of flowers in my hair. My husband wore a suit called "vestdi." It is made of silk. After he was dressed my brother went to my husband's house and brought him to the wedding hall. When my husband entered the hall, my brother washed my husband's feet. Then my husband gave him a gold ring. After that our Hindu priest did some religious pooja.

On our wedding day the main part of the ceremony is called, "thali." The thali is made with gold and looks like a necklace. At a special time during the wedding ceremony my

husband put the thali on my neck. The day after the wedding was the first time that we were alone together. It was the first time that we could hold one another. I could feel his touch next to mine.

Meanwhile, a beautiful relationship started developing between us, a relationship of love and dependency and possession. I was married in France where I was living at that time. When my French friends listened to my story they gasped in amazement. How could two people, who had never even spoken face-to-face consent to getting married? "It's simple," I said. Love develops in its own sweet and natural way, and when the couple is married they solve their problems and differences in a compromising and understanding manner.

Generally, the beginning of marriage is a period of transition. It is a time when two people commit themselves and make promises to each other. I think only an honest, loving, understanding marriage could last forever. I wish everyone in the world could have a loving marriage. This is the way our Hindu marriage custom works.

Geetha Lingan

THE DAY I CAME TO UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

My family waits for me.

Today is May 21 of 2003. It's 4:00 o'clock a.m. Today is the day that I have been waiting so long for – time to join my family. I won't sleep tonight because I was working very late at my office, and after that, I went to my apartment to prepare my luggage (and now in this moment it's not ready). In one hour Francisco, my nephew, will arrive to transport me to the airport. I have to finish everything pending, quickly. The time for the departure of the airplane to Cincinnati (USA) is near. My heart is beating very fast; right now I'm thinking, "Lina, my daughter, is waiting for me!!!"

After that, we pick up my best friend, Jorge Hernan on the way to the airport. He is flying with me. I see the road; it's different, rare. These streets of my dear Bogotá City are colder than ever, maybe they know that I'm not going to be here for a long time. No one knows what's going to happen. Now I don't know why I feel so sad, but maybe I'll remember that all of my relatives and friends are staying here, all my life happened here, all of my memories were born and lived here, in this city in this country. There are more than fifty years of life, work, happiness, sadness, love for my family, love for my country and today I've got to go where my wife and my kids are. Away from their native country, only because a few delinquents want to destroy this beautiful country, my COLOMBIA. And now it is my turn to leave. I don't want to lose my life. That's why almost no one knows what's happening in this moment, that I'm going to abandon my country. What a melancholy, but my wife, Carlos Jr., Diego Alejandro, and Lina Paola, are waiting for me.

The journey is normal, for every person on the airplane, but today for me it is not the same. I'm sad for

everything that I've got to give up. But I'm happy. Today I will start a new life, in one country, where I know that I'll be able to be at peace with my family. My family won't have to wait for me anymore.

Finally, I'm here in The United States of America, at the International Airport of Cincinnati, walking very fast to where my family is waiting for my arrival. Now I can see them; there they are. Yes, this is my family. We have the best hug in my life. I'm between my wife and my kids. This is my new home sweet home.

**GOD BLESS AMERICA AND SAVE MY COUNTRY
FROM THE DARK.**

Carlos Lopez

PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY SCENIC DRIVE

Spring and summer are the most popular times of the year to drive on the Pacific Coast Highway, as Southern California locals do. This is one of the most scenic, breathtaking sights in the state. On one side you have mountains and canyons, and on the other side you view the Pacific Ocean. Take your time driving; the highway is narrow and winding. Remember to have a camera. There are several areas where it is easy to stop, walk out, and view the Pacific Ocean. Most of the time the shining sun gives you breathtaking sights of the ocean glistening, waves pounding into the rocky coves, mist of saltwater lightly spraying your skin. As you turn around you see mountains and canyons filled with wildflowers swaying in the breeze.

As you continue on you're now approaching one of the most popular beaches, Zuma Beach. This is one of the best beaches to park your vehicle, sit on the sand, take a walk along the beautiful shoreline, watch surfers, and perhaps see dolphins jumping in and out of the water. Some enjoy challenging the surfers. Being on this popular beach also gives a panoramic view of the California Pacific Coast Highway. It is a spectacular drive. The way to end such a beautiful drive is the California sunset – the sky and the blue Pacific Ocean change to a golden color.

If ever you're in the southern coast of California, this is the drive of a lifetime, a memory you will never forget.

Tonya Chadwick



Thoughts of Fiction



TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE
A Fable

This is a story that takes place in Jacksonville, Florida, one summer day.

One day, Mr. June Bug was out for a little sightseeing when he saw his friend Mr. Dirt-Dable building a new home for himself.

“What are you doing?” said Mr. June Bug to Mr. Dirt-Dable.

“I’m building a better home,” answered Mr. Dirt-Dable, and he flew away to get more dirt.

Mr. June Bug was watching Mr. Dirt-Dable work as he was building his new home.

Mr. June Bug said, “My very good friend, you are building your home wrong.”

Mr. Dirt-Dable looked at his friend and flew away singing, “I know, I know, I know.”

As Mr. Dirt-Dable returned with more and more dirt, Mr. June Bug said “My friend, listen to me.”

But Mr. Dirt-Dable went on singing his song, “I know, I know, I know.”

At the end of the day Mr. Dirt-Dable was finished building his home and tried to enter, for he was tired after working so long. Mr. June Bug was looking on to see what would happen. Mr. Dirt-Dable went to the front of his home, then to the back of his home.

Mr. June Bug said, “Do you have a door, my good friend?”

Mr. Dirt Dable said, “No, I don’t have a door to the front or the back. I’m sorry I didn’t listen to you, my dear old friend.”

The lesson of this story is it is better to stop and listen sometimes. You see – two heads are better than one.

Mittie Walker

ABOUT DOG

Can you guess who I am? I am a mammal, but I am not a human being. I am a female Beagle, which is a kind of dog. I was born in 2001 in Ohio. I am 4 years old now, but I would be a teenager if I were human. My family adopted me last July because I lost my owner at that time and was looking for my new family. My former family was American and, of course, they spoke English. My new family is Japanese, and at first, I didn't understand Japanese when they spoke to me. However, dogs can feel and guess their owner's mind, and so, I didn't care whether they spoke English or not. I love my family and they take good care of me, but they sometimes scold me when I chew on something. In addition, when I don't obey their order "Come," they seem to be upset. I can't hear anything while I am sniffing something because I love to sniff more than anything. I know that I have to obey my owner. My family has been looking for a solution to my behavior.

I have two human sisters and one human brother. My elder sister, who is a sixth-grader, often borrows a book about dogs from the school library. She reads it and studies about dogs like me. My mom also reads a Japanese language book about dog training. Reading Japanese is easier than reading English for her. They frequently talk about dogs. I sometimes listen to their conversation while I am lying on the floor. I guess that they want me to obey their orders. I said it before, didn't I? I can obey their orders sometimes, but I can't sometimes. When they say "Sit," I always sit. Then they praise me and say, "Good girl." When they say "Stay," I can stay most of the time. When they say "House," I go into my cage. However, I can't do one thing. That is "Come." If they say "come" inside the house, I can almost always go to them. I think that they are satisfied with it. If they say "Come" outside, I occasionally go to them. I guess that they

hope for me to come every time, but I don't. Why can't I come to them anytime? I have been thinking about it.

One day, I was in the backyard alone and I sniffed everywhere. I am crazy about sniffing. I found the scent of small animals, such as squirrels, rabbits, and chipmunks. Suddenly, the door was opened and Mom called me, "Come!" I looked back at her, but I ignored her and continued sniffing. She looked disappointed. Regrettably, smelling was more tempting than her.

Spring was coming. It was in March, but it was still chilly outside. My sister and Mom started to train me outside. Of course, they started with "Come." They stood at each end of the backyard and they prepared some treats, which they gave to me when I would obey their order "Come." When my sister called me, "Come," I wondered a little at first, then I remembered what I should do. Next, Mom called me, and I went to her. They gave me a treat each time, so I did it. I knew that they hooked me like a fish, but I did it anyway. When I obeyed their order, they smiled at me. It made me happy. I wanted to get the smiles and treats, so I decided to follow them.

In April, I got a new friend who was a stray kitten. Actually, my sister didn't want me to play with that kitten. She complained, "If he has fleas or some kind of sickness, you will get sick! Don't play with him!" She drove him off, but he sometimes visited me. One day, when I played with that kitten, Mom called me from the kitchen door. I turned around and went to her immediately. I did it! It seemed automatic. She was surprised because she thought that I wouldn't come when I played with my friend. Mom gave me a big smile and repeated "Good girl." After this event, Mom has still continued to train me, sometimes with treats and sometimes without them.

One beautiful morning in April, I played with my friend named Jordan. He is a one-year-old Rat Terrier. He and his sister, who is a human being, visited our house. Jordan and I enjoyed chasing each other, playing tug-of-war, and wrestling in my backyard. When we went inside the house for a drink of water, the garage door was opened suddenly. I thought that I could go outside without a leash, but my sister gave me an order, "Stay," so I stayed there and waited. When Jordan started to move and went outside, I was tempted to move with him, and I was not able to stop and I ran and ran. I heard my sister's voice, but I ignored it. Jordan's sister also called him. He stopped running and returned to his sister, but I didn't. I ran across the street and went into the woods. I sniffed everywhere and felt happy. However, I soon remembered my family. Meanwhile, Dad came and found me. He gently called me. I automatically went to him and he smiled at me and leashed me. I went back home with him. Dad told my family that I obeyed his order in the woods. My sister and Mom were surprised, but they smiled at me and praised me again and again.

Now, my family has been training me constantly. I have realized that they love me so much and I can depend on them. I think my behavior has improved. I believe that any dog can learn. The important things are the owner's love and the appropriate method.

Keiko Nakasuji

IZZABELLA AND THE BEHOLDERS

Izzabella, the tall, wide-eyed child with long brown curly hair, sat in her room doing her homework like she does everyday at 4:00 during the school year. She put down her pen and let her mind drift back to school. "Why don't I get along with kids my own age?" she thought as she sat back in her chair. Izzabella was never the popular child but yearned for that kind of attention from her classmates, teachers, and even her own parents who let her be lost somewhere in the midst of five children. She thought about Nikki, the skinny freckled faced girl with long flowing blond hair and pale blue eyes who always got all the attention from the other kids at school. "How can I be more like Nikki?" she thought to herself as she was chewing on her pen cap. Finding a way to be popular was her goal.

The next day, she went through her clothes, looking for something that would separate her from the other children. She found a blue jean skirt with plaid ruffles and a white short sleeved blouse with plaid trim around the neckline and around the short sleeves. She slipped on her white stockings and black dress shoes, hoping she would discover a new Izzabella. As she looked in the mirror, all she could see was the same girl who didn't fit in with the other more popular children.

Izzabella went to school on the bus like normal, sitting by herself. When she got to her class, she sat at her table wondering how to make an impression on the rest of her classmates. She watched Nikki talking loud, playing with her hair, and showing off her new Nike Air Max to other children. Izzabella knew her parents would never spend that kind of money on her; with five kids there was just no extra money for nice things like expensive shoes. She pulled her attention away from the shoes and noticed her behavior

some more. Nikki was always so loud and bubbly; she was never afraid to speak her mind to anyone. Maybe changing her shy, low-key personality was the issue at hand.

During her English class, Mrs. Smith was going over sentence structure when Izzabella thought she could try out her new theory. Nikki got a lot of her attention from getting on the teacher's nerves. Izzabella went into her school bag and got out a piece of gum she was saving for after school. She quickly chewed it up and then blew the biggest bubble she could. "Izzabella," the teacher screamed, "spit that gum this very second!" Izzabella got up, spit out her gum, and went back to her seat. Then the boy behind her asked for a piece of gum. "I don't have none!" Izzabella said in a high whisper. "Yes, you do and give me a piece," the boy demanded. "Would you leave me alone? I don't have any more gum for you!" The teacher looked over with wondering eyes, "Izzabella, I don't know what has come over you this morning! You are disturbing my class. Now stand outside."

Izzabella was outside, sitting on the hard ceramic floor, wondering if Mrs. Smith was going to call her parents. "I want to be popular, but I can't get in trouble. My mother will kill me." At that moment tears rolled down her cheeks as she let out small cries to herself. The classroom door swung open, and the little girl looked up at Mrs. Smith and her short red hair that came around her face softly. "Izzabella, what is wrong with you today? You are always so quiet".

"Nothing!" Izzabella cried as the tears came down harder.

"Something is wrong or those tears wouldn't be falling from your eyes. You know, Izzabella, I can keep a secret, and I bet you will feel a weight come off your chest if

you tell me.” She squatted her short legs down to see Izzabella’s eyes more clearly.

“None of the kids like me! I don’t have Air Max or money to buy those things. My hair is curly and dark. My eyes make me look half cat! Everyone thinks I’m a freak because cool people won’t hang out with me! I just want to be like Nikki.” Isabelle’s cries started to get louder. The teacher pulled her close to her, wrapping her arms around her.

“Now Dear, do you know how boring the world would be if everyone was like Nikki? There would be no variety, everyone would look and act just like her! That just wouldn’t be right. You, on the other hand, are beautiful and if you just hang in there, in a couple more years, you will have your turn,” the teacher said calmly stroking Izzabella’s long, thick curly hair. “Just be you, Izzabella. Not everyone will like you, but you just show those people who you are and I bet they will change their minds. If not, well, they don’t deserve to know this special, beautiful girl who just might someday come back to her high school reunion and see the popular kids in a whole new light.” Izzabella stopped crying.

“Do you think so, Mrs. Smith? I just want to feel like I belong,” Izzabella said quietly.

“Baby, you do belong and you just remember that! Now, are you ready to go back to class and be the Izzabella I know?”

“Yes ma’am,” Izzabella got up and went about her day as Izzabella and no one else.

Izzabella grew up with Mrs. Smith’s words close to her heart. She went to her high school reunion wearing a short black cocktail dress with thin stripes that fell beautifully

over her womanly curves. As she wandered into the high school in her stiletto shoes, she saw Nikki for the first time in ten years. Nikki's hair was cut in a boyish style, she was extremely obese, and her high-heeled boots weren't even zipped all the way up because of the fat around her legs. She was standing in the corner being ignored by the men who were once the boys that flirted around her on a daily basis. "Izzabella, time has been good to you." She turned around and saw the boy who bothered her for that piece of gum so long ago."

She stood smiling over what Mrs. Smith said to her in that hallway. She knew it was her time to shine.

"Would you like to dance?" the man asked.

"Yes, I'd love to!" Izzabella said with a beautiful smile that could have lasted a lifetime.

Rebecca Sablosky

THE MEDIEVAL NECKLACE

A little girl playing in a meadow in India found an old medieval beaded necklace. She saw something colorful yet dull with age. Thinking it just a stone, she bent down to pick it up and to her surprise, a complete strand of beads came out of the ground.

Some of the beads were small and some were large. Some were shiny and some were dull. It was a necklace of many colors. All the stones were smooth to touch. It looked like it hadn't been worn for hundreds of years.

The little girl took the beads to her very wise great grandmother. The old woman told the little girl that a woman had once been kidnapped wearing those very same beads. While she was struggling, the necklace had fallen to the ground, and she had hoped it would give a clue to her husband so he would find her. She knew it would have to work as he had made the necklace for her and it was the only one of its kind.

As he was out searching for her, he found the necklace and looked around where he was standing. He saw a barn, then he heard a woman yelling for help. He dropped the necklace and ran toward her. He found his wife tied up in the barn. He lifted her up and took her home, never thinking to pick up the necklace.

The great grandmother smiled and shed a tear. She thanked the little girl and was very grateful the little girl had found her mother's necklace.

Lisa Ewert

IT DOESN'T MATTER

Dedicated to all in this country who truly believe it doesn't matter if you're black or white.

My name is X-211-one million. I'm two hundred eleven out of a million clones. My crew, which is made up of clones also, and I were on our way back to our home galaxy when we came across a very primeval electromagnetic wave.

"Shall we investigate?" asked one of five hundred, my first officer. "I've been into this sector of space before. There are no intelligent life forms here. That was over a million years ago, two hundred eleven of a million."

"Yes, you're right. Plot a flight plan." So we headed for the third planet from a very small, yellow star. It was a beautiful world with blue skies and vast oceans.

"We better make the ship invisible. There is no way of knowing how these beings will react with a star ship in orbit above their world."

He was right of course. Our ship was Brobdingnagian, over five hundred miles long, and twice as high. "Let's have a look at them," I said. Two of five hundred turned on the view screen.

"Stone and glass architectural structures," remarked six of five hundred.

"What kind of beings are we dealing with here? Magnify." So, we got our first look at the beings on this out-of-the-way planet.

“What strange creatures,” observed one of five hundred. He was right. These creatures had four limbs that were attached to a large torso. On top of this torso was a round. . . I didn’t know what it was. It had five openings and two wet-looking, round objects—I could only guess what they were used for.

“What are they?” asked two of five hundred.

“The intelligent life forms of this world.”

“Impossible! How can such things have lordship over intelligence?”

“Nevertheless, they do.”

“I’m not going down on that world. I would get nauseated just being next to one.” Eight of five hundred wasn’t the only one who didn’t want to visit this world. It seemed no one on our entire ship wanted to sojourn to this new world.

“You better take on the shape of one of them,” he said. This wasn’t too difficult due to the fact we could take on any shape just by thinking about it.

“I’m going to be sick,” remarked ten of five hundred.

“I don’t know. Once you get used to the shape, it’s not so bad.”

“Why did you take on the shape of a pale one?”

“What does it matter? You want me to take on the color of a darker one?” I answered.

“It would be nice,” commented ten of five hundred. So, I became a darker one.

“Are you going to take over their world?”

“I’m not sure. Besides, I haven’t taken over a world in ten million years.”

“If there’s any trouble from them, I’m destroying the entire star system,” five of a hundred said.

“I’m sure I can handle a planet of primitive beings such as these. I am the captain of this ship,” I replied with a little anger.

“That you are, sir!” The next second, I willed myself on the surface of the planet. I was in a place called Mississippi, and I was lost. I had no idea how these beings lived or what their language was. I had to touch one of them, so I could understand. I had to draw off knowledge directly from one of their minds, if they had minds. I went into a small building.

“Hey, boy, have you lost your mind? This here place is for white men only. The colored people eat in the back, next to the hogs.” I had no idea what he was talking about. “Are you from out of town?” I just stood there.

“Maybe I can help you out, Billy Bob. You got that rope in the back of your truck?” The others in the room began to laugh.

“Let him be. Can’t you see he’s light in the head?”

“That’s the only thing about him that is light—the rest of him is dark!” More laughter. I grabbed hold of this creature that was standing next to me.

“Did you see that?” one of the beings yelled out.
“He touched a white woman!”

With that one touch, I understood the language and the limited knowledge that this life form had. “I’m sorry. I’m new here. I don’t want any trouble.”

“Boy, you just found a whole lot of it!”

“I only want something to eat.”

“It’s in the back. I’ll show you,” said this being whose name was Ruth Ann.

“You better tell him he’s in Mississippi now, Ruth Ann. Not up north somewhere. Down here our coloreds know their place.”

“I’ll tell him. Just leave him be.” So this being named Ruth Ann takes me out back. “Are you plumb crazy going in there like that? Where are you from?”

“Far away,” I said.

“It must be far away for you to do a fool thing like that.”

I began looking around. “This is a pulchritudinous planet.”

“A what? Don’t go using those big city words on me!”

“Oh, I’m sorry. This is a beautiful world.”

Ruth Ann looked up at the sky and smiled. "That it is," she said.

"Tell me," I asked, "What are all these signs? 'White only.' 'Colored only.' What do they mean?"

"Boy, you really are from far away."

"Really, Ruth Ann, what do they mean?"

"They mean colored people like you and white people like me live in separate communities."

"Why?"

"They ensure white people social, legal, and political domination over the coloreds like you."

"Is there a difference between you and me?"

"Are you making fun of me?"

"No, I'm not."

"The difference is our skin color."

I held out my arm and examined it. "Are you telling me just because my skin is dark that we're two distinct beings? Astonishing!"

"Who are you really? What's your name?"

"My name is Michael."

"I don't understand you, Michael. One minute you're talking like a college professor. The next minute you talk all idiotic."

“I’m sorry. It’s just that I don’t comprehend a lot of things on this world.”

“Stop right there!” yelled Ruth Ann. “What do you mean ‘on this world?’”

“I’m not from this planet.”

“What are you then? A spaceman? If you’re a spaceman, where is your spaceship?”

I pointed to the sky. “Right above us.”

Ruth Ann looked up into the sky. “Where? I don’t see anything.”

“That’s because it’s invisible right now.”

“Look, Michael, it’s been fun talking to you, but I have things to do.” Ruth Ann started to walk away.

“Wait. I’ll prove it to you.”

“How? By making your invisible ship visible?”

“I’ll show you where I live.”

“By taking me up to your invisible spaceship? You are one crazy colored man.”

I formed a three-dimensional image of my home star system above the palm of my hand, with its many bright, radiant stars. All the while, this small image of my galaxy was spinning on its axis. “It’s, it’s. . . magnificent. . . beautiful,” uttered Ruth Ann with tears in her eyes. “Show me more.”

“Not here. Can we go somewhere to be alone?”

“Yes, in the woods right down the street.” She grabbed my hand, not caring who saw her holding a colored man’s hand, and we ran into the woods behind the small town.

“Slow down,” I said. “You’ll make yourself sick.”

“I don’t care,” responded Ruth Ann, gasping for air. “Show me more.”

“OK, but I’ll have to talk loudly because of all this music.

“What music? I don’t hear anything.”

“You can’t hear the music? Why, it’s all around us!”

Ruth Ann looked around. “I don’t see anyone playing any music.”

“It’s not a person. It’s the trees, the wind, and the sunlight.”

“They’re singing? Making music?” Ruth Ann began laughing. “What does it sound like?”

“In your language, like a symphony orchestra, a harmony of sounds.”

“I can’t believe it! I can’t believe it! You really aren’t from this world!”

Just then, two small birds landed on my head. They began chirping away. I made two small crumbs of bread in my

hand. The birds took them, chirping very loudly, and then flew away. “What did they say?”

“They said thanks for the bread, and you’re kind of cute for a human.”

“Holy cow! Holy cow! You can understand bird talk!”

“Try to calm down, Ruth Ann. You’re overreacting.”

“Overreacting? You hear nature sing and talk to birds. Oh yeah, you also make bread crumbs out of thin air. How should I act, Michael?”

“I just don’t want you to have a sensory overload. Here, let’s sit down.”

“Michael, I know you look like a colored man now, but I can’t believe you really look human.”

“Does it matter?”

“No, not really. I’ve always believed you shouldn’t dwell too much on outside appearances or skin color, but on what a person is like on the inside, the heart. That’s what really matters.”

“Maybe. But others of your kind don’t think that way.”

“My kind? Oh, you mean white people, or should I say white humans? I’m sorry if you think all white people are evil.”

“What’s evil?”

“Michael, can I have a kiss? I’ve never kissed a man from beyond the stars.”

“What’s a kiss?”

“I’ll show you.” I had been all over the universe, seen things no human will ever hope to see, but this thing that Ruth Ann gave me. . this kiss. . I had never found anything in all my travels to compare to it.

“Well, well, well, if I didn’t see it, I wouldn’t have believed it. A white woman kissing a coon. Grab them, boys!”

“Jeb, no!” beseeched Ruth Ann. “You don’t understand! He’s not like us!”

“You’re darn right! He’s not like us. He’s a darkie.” The others laughed. “What I don’t understand, Ruth Ann, is why you let him kiss you, or should I say, why you kissed him.”

“She’s a coon lover,” said one of Jeb’s friends.

“I reckon so. I guess us poor white men just can’t gratify her.”

“Jeb, please. Let him go! If you want to hurt someone, hurt me.”

“Don’t worry about that, young lady. You’ll be hurt.” Jeb slapped Ruth Ann in the face. Blood dripped from the corner of her mouth. “Billy Bob, run back to the truck and git a rope. No, make that two ropes! And you,” Jeb walked over to Michael, “been in town for such a short time, and already you try to rape a white woman.”

“We were only talking.”

“You got a funny way of talking, boy.” At that point my body erupted with a very unusual sensation. I didn’t like the feeling at all.

“Stop it, Jeb! You’re hurting him!”

“You ain’t seen nothing yet, Ruth Ann. Has she, boys?”

“No, Jeb, she ain’t!”

The next thing I knew, eight humans were beating me. I fell to the ground in a ball, trying to protect myself, but this only made matters worse. I heard Ruth Ann in the background, very faintly, crying and yelling. “Alright, boys, pick him up. Playtime’s over.” I was forcefully picked up.

“Billy Bob, what the hell is taking you so long with them there ropes?”

Billy Bob returned with the ropes. Only it was not really him, but five of a hundred in control of his human body. “How long are you going to let this nonsense go on, Captain? Shall I order the solar system annihilated?”

“No,” I said, “return to the ship. That’s a direct order.”

“Idiot.!”

“Billy Bob, what the hell are you talking about?”

“I don’t know, Jeb.” Replied Billy Bob. “My mind kind of wandered.”

“I’ll say it did, but it don’t matter.”

“Why are you doing this?” I asked with blood dripping from the many cuts on my body.

“Why?” said a shocked Jeb. “I’ll tell you why! First, this is white man’s country. They should have never let you darkies out of slavery.”

“What’s slavery?”

“Don’t be playing dumb with me, boy. You know what slavery is—something your kind still should be in.”

“Jeb, please,” pleaded Ruth Ann. “He’s not human. He’s from another world.”

“You darn right, he’s from another world. Africa!”

“Jeb, let’s just hang the coon.”

“We will, but first I want this boy from another world to see what we do to race traitors. Hang her high, boys.” They put a rope around Ruth Ann’s neck, threw it over a branch, and lifted her off the earth until she was dead, dead, dead. Just like that, she was gone. I could no longer feel her presence—her love for me or that of life.

“Now don’t she just look nice hanging from that tree and all?”

“It’s time to die, boy.” The others laughed as they put a rope around my already bleeding neck.

“Any last words, boy, before you meet that black God of yours?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Then say it. I don’t want to be late for supper.”

“You must understand, when I first touched Ruth Ann back in that restaurant, I instantly knew everything she knew. Her hopes, the things that made her happy, even her favorite color, which was sky blue. Not only that but I could recall every book that she had read. There was this one book that she really loved. I mean really loved with all her being.”

This book also had a creature with a name that I had adopted, so I spoke my last words, “Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord!” Only when I said it, it had an atypical effect on Jeb and the boys. This creature whose image I took from Ruth Ann’s mind was magnificent, yet dreadful. It was huge, much larger than a human, very huge. It had multiple wings, with a luminescence which surrounded its being. The eyes, the eyes were blazing like lightning, and its voice was like the sonorous roar of a mighty ocean. In my hand I held a flaming sword. Humans are such fragile things. Old Jeb and his racist friends just dropped dead right on the spot. By the expression on their faces, they died a detestable death.

I walked over to Ruth Ann’s dead body lying on the ground. This world has so much violence, so much hate, and why? Because some humans have melanin in their skin. It just doesn’t make any sense. Very gently, I laid her head on my lap. Tears fell from my eyes onto her lovely countenance. I yelled; I cried. Never before had I felt such anguish, such sorrow. “I should destroy this world!” I cried out. The entire planet began to tremble, and then I stopped. No, Ruth Ann loved this world. She loved it. I rubbed her face. Her eyes opened.

“Michael. . .What, where am I? I remember. . .uh. . . remember being enveloped in such love. It was like love was a blanket and I had it wrapped around me. I was dead, wasn't I?”

“Yes.”

“Is that possible? Are you God, Michael?”

“You humans are unsophisticated creatures. It took very little of my power to bring you back to life.”

“What about Jeb and the others?”

“You know what happened to them.”

“Yes, I guess I do.”

“How do you feel?” I asked.

“Kind of sleepy.”

“It's not sleep, Ruth Ann.” I looked away from her.

“What is it, Michael? What's wrong?”

“Ruth Ann, as powerful as I am, I can't . . .I can't bring you back from the dead. Not indefinitely.”

“I'm dying?”

“Yes.”

“How long do I have?”

“Maybe seven minutes.” I began to cry.

“Don’t cry, Michael. It’s not your fault. I’m the one who should be sorry.”

“You? Why should you be sorry?”

“Your first visit to our world, and what do we humans show you? Hate, violence, death.” The tears fell from my eyes like miniature waterfalls. “It’s not so bad, dying, I mean.” I said nothing.

“Michael,” said Ruth Ann, yawning, “show me your spaceship.”

“If you like,” I replied. My starship appeared overhead. As I said, it’s massive. It’s so enormous that it blocked the sun-light striking the earth and covered the entire world in total darkness. But my ship had many lights of every color. Ruth Ann began to cry.

“It’s so beautiful, so beautiful.”

“Ruth Ann, listen to me. I can’t stop you from dying in the form you’re in now, but I can change you, change you into something else.”

“Will I be able to go home with you, go aboard your starship?”

“Yes, but the blanket of love, Ruth Ann, it may be a long, long time before you’re wrapped up in it again.”

“It doesn’t matter,” she said, closing her eyes for the last time. “As long as I’m with you.”

“Do you like being a female?”

Ruth Ann smiled. “Did you like the kiss I gave you?”

We departed the earth, but before we did, I changed Ruth Ann into the archangel Michael, only a female archangel, if you can picture that!

Epilogue

I'm filling out my log entries when five of a hundred comes and stands beside me. I let him stand at attention for a few minutes before I begin speaking to him. "You know, five of a hundred," I say, "Calling your commanding officer an idiot—I could bring you up for insubordination."

"Sorry, sir, it will not happen again."

"I hope not," I reply.

"Sir?"

"What now?"

"What are you going to do about that exceedingly barbaric world that we discovered? Surely, you're not going to let them travel into the universe. They'll be like a virus, contaminating whole star systems with their hate, violence, and racism."

I had thought about this. It wouldn't be fair to the other intelligent life forms if I allowed these human beings to roam the starways on their own free will. No other beings think like them. Can you imagine so much evil and hate over skin color? "No, five of a hundred, I'm placing a containment field around their world and its only moon. That's as far as they'll be able to go. . .for now."

"What about the future?"

“If they change their evil ways, we’ll see.”

“Sir,” says five of a hundred, “what’s evil?”

“Never mind,” I retort. “By the way, how far before we reach home?”

“About five hundred quad zillion light-centuries, plus.”

“Good,” I acknowledged, “we’ll be home just in time for supper.”

Joel Reese

MOM, YOU MADE IT

You struggled as a teenager with the loss of your mother
at the age of 13, and
You made it.

You struggled with the loss of your first born
at the age of 17, and
You made it.

You struggled with a cheating spouse, and
You made it.

You struggled with an addiction to cocaine, and
You made it.

You struggled with the loss of your father
at the age of 23, and
You made it.

You struggled with raising four children
in the middle of Cleveland, and
You made it.

You were diagnosed with cancer at the age of 38, and
You made it.

You struggled with depression through life, and
You made it.

You were told eight years ago that you had
two years left, and
Look mom, You made it!

Taiesha Metcalf

PINE CONE STEW

In a small town, way up in the hills of West Virginia, winter came early one year. All the people in the small town gathered all of the food from their land and stored it away. This meant that some people were left with a little, while others had a lot. The snow came and the wind blew. The people of the small town huddled by their fires, eating whatever they had gathered from their fields. For weeks and weeks, no one went outside because the snow was so high.

A month passed and the snow finally melted, but the people would still not come out of their houses. One day a beggar showed up in the middle of the small town. People came out of their houses to see what he was doing there. The beggar asked everyone in the town for some food, but every one told him that they had none to give. Then the beggar asked for a big pot and everything he needed to build a fire. The beggar filled the pot with snow to let it melt. Then he got some pine cones from under a nearby tree and put them into the pot as well. The beggar took a big stick and began to stir the stuff in the pot. The people of the small town came out of their houses to see what was happening. The beggar asked for a spoon so he could taste his pine cone stew. "Hum," he said. "I think it needs some salt and a little pepper." A small voice answered, "I have some of that. Let me go get it."

After putting in the salt and pepper, the beggar tasted the stew again. "Hum," he said. "I think this dish could use something more, maybe some potatoes, a bunch of carrots, and a few onions. I don't know which would be better. I can't choose." Soon the people of the town brought some potatoes, some carrots, and some onions. The beggar put them into the pot. Then he tasted the stew.

Before he could say a word, a man said, “Why not add some beef, celery, and some cabbage?” as he put it in the pot.

As the stew began to cook, the air began to fill with a wonderful smell that caused the town to come together and make a grand meal. As everyone ate and had a good time, the small town finally realized that if they had all stayed together, no one would have gone hungry during that winter. Every winter after that, everyone stuck together and they never forgot the lesson about the beggar and the pine cone stew.

Kathy Boyd

Thoughts of Pleasure



FREEDOM

Freedom is:

A gift that is promised to all who are born in this country

The American flag blowing proudly in the breeze

The privilege to choose what you wear, what you say, and where you worship without fear

The ability to relax and breathe at ease because you know your rights are protected

The right to come and go as you please

Associating with whomever you want

Waking up in the morning and experiencing a sense of peace and contentment

Equal education for all

Guaranteed no matter what your class, age, color, religion, or gender might be

The culmination of what we believe, who we are, and what we live for

A belief that should never be taken for granted because people are dying for it every day

Scarlet Oaks ABLE

<i>Tammy Hardy</i>	<i>Aurelia Johnson</i>	<i>Agness Saduka</i>
<i>Don McVey</i>	<i>Katia Ulysse</i>	<i>Brenda Wiseman</i>

THE LOVE OF THE BAND

As a young person I have fond memories of a band that I was in. It was called Squire's Warren Junior Military Band. Music, music! Play, play! March, march! Twirl, twirl! I started playing French horn when I was eleven years old. When I first began to play, I just played in my grade school band. When I entered into 6th grade I decided to join Squire's Warren Junior Military Band. At first, I just played my French horn; however, one year later I decided to join Flag Line.

Joining this band allowed me to travel to many parts of the United States. Also, I was able to travel to Europe during the summer after my senior year in high school. Traveling enabled me to see the world. We were introduced to other cultures and competed against them. Our competitions included inspection, parade, field show, and concert band.

When I first started out I was last chair; however, through the years I improved and became first chair. This gave me more responsibilities. I had many solos and needed to make sure the people below me could play their music. As a senior member, we represented the "cream of the crop." We oversaw other members of the band. I continued to play the French horn through my first year of college at Baldwin Wallace and then at YSU for another two years.

I can still hear the band...
Music, music!
Play, play!
March, march!
Twirl, twirl!

Heather Oblinger

 SKIPPER SAILING

	A	
	whale	
	is	
A	feeding	
sail	in the	
upon	distance,	
the open	on his	
seas on a	journey	
cloudless day.	home. Gulls	
The wind is	above are	
catching in her	looking	
sails to carry her	for fish. He's	
away. Gliding thru	left alone. The	
the waters, heading	smell of salty water	
out to sea, there's	dominates the	
no other place that	air. The stress of	
this skipper would	daily living is gone	
rather be.	while he's out there.	

Lurching over ocean waves with water splashing at her sides, with a rocking motion from the evening tides. A peacefulness engulfs him while he spends this time at sea. Yes, there is no other place that this skipper would rather be.

Carol Rudder

ICE CREAM

I
Like
Ice cream
Hot or cold,
It seems very easy to mold
You
Can eat it
In a bowl or dish.
It happens to be my only wish.
Neapolitan
Or Rocky Road,
I only eat ice cream
When it's cold.
If
It melts,
I don't care,
I always have plenty
More to share!

Theresea Roth

OUR KITTY

Our kitty was missing.
We'd looked high and low.
We had no idea where she might go.
Inside the drier, the closets, the washer;
I thought she'd run off and a semi had squashed her.
We set out some food.
We called out in vain.
Still, no cat came running.
Our hearts drowned in pain.
So, at bedtime I tucked my dejected son in,
And told him the next day we'd search again.
Then a mew and some scratching
From right there in the room
Sent a huge ray of light
To guide us through our gloom.
As I opened a drawer under the bed,
First came a whisker then there was her head!
She was finally safe after twenty six hours –
Must've been hot as a tomb.
I know she won't ever get stuck there again
'Cause she won't go near my son's room.

Kandice DeMare



Thoughts of Learning

SCHOOL DAZE

I hit the snooze for a few more winks,
Gotta get up now; change the baby, he stinks!

Have to wake the kids up so they can eat,
As I stumble down the stairs, I realize, man, I'm beat!

Up late doing homework the night before,
I will try to stay awake in class, but I bet I will snore.

We stop at Speedway to fetch some coffee,
She gets what she always gets -- English toffee.

From there it's off to Franklin, West on 73,
Fighting early morning traffic, it's so much fun for me!

We made it, we are finally here.
When the teacher starts talking, it's time to kick it into gear.

See what she has to say, you had better learn,
It's the GED you want to earn.

Kevin L. Izor

AN OPINION I ONCE HELD THAT I HAVE CHANGED

An opinion that I once held was that I was stupid and dumb. All my life I believed this to be true. I believed this to be true because of people telling me that I was stupid or making me feel dumb. If you start to believe this to be true, then you shut yourself off from the world.

For as long as I can remember in school the teachers told me that I was not as smart as the other kids. They put me in a slow learner's class and made me feel that I could never succeed in school. I came to believe that they were right.

My opinion about myself changed when I started a class to get my GED. It helped me to believe in myself. So now I can say I can do this. My GED teachers told me to start a journal and keep a record of all the new things I learned. So, I began a learning journal, but I made it the way I thought would help me the most. When I learned something new, I color-coded it so I could easily refer back to it. For example, I would write down how to do a math problem and color it orange. Then I would put down an example of the math problem and color it yellow. This helped me see it better and I could also find it more quickly when I needed to review.

From my past experiences I know what stupid and dumb are. They are just words that some people say to make themselves feel better about something in their life. We must always remember that we all have the ability to achieve what we want in this life. We just have to find the right path of who we really are.

So, do I believe that our opinions can change? Yes, because I have changed my opinion about myself. My opinion

now is if you believe in yourself, you can do anything you want to do in this world. As long as you believe in yourself the sky is the limit. I recently passed the GED test and received my diploma in the mail. I will start college this fall and I hope to become a teacher to help others like me.

Teresa Leisure

CHOICES

I am writing this short story to express how happy I am for finally getting my GED. It took 20 years to tell myself that I could do it. I could write a thousand excuses why I didn't do it before but the only real excuse was that I didn't have enough confidence in myself, until now.

I was born September 12, 1967 in East Liverpool, Ohio. My parents divorced when I was very young so I moved a lot back and forth between my mother and father. I changed schools a lot also, never really feeling like I fit in anywhere. School seemed hard when I started my eighth grade year. I started hanging around the wrong crowd and getting in trouble. By the time my eighth grade year was over I was smoking cigarettes and marijuana. When I was a freshman in high school, my grades were bad and the drugs and alcohol got worse. It was more important for me to drink and do drugs than it was to go to school, so after a couple of years as a freshman, I quit.

When I was 18 years old, I met a girl who liked what I liked as far as drinking and going out all the time. We moved in together when we were 19. I worked a lot of odd jobs to support our bad habits and to pay bills. I always lied on job applications on the part about having a diploma. Most of the jobs that I had were minimum wage jobs, or I got paid under the table. The jobs that I had were barely good enough to support my girlfriend and myself, and then we had a child.

When my daughter was born I tried to straighten up. I slowed down on the drinking and the drug use, although I did not quit completely. The money was tight, so I applied for better jobs but was never called. I knew it was because of my lack of education. I always blamed other people for not finishing school, or I would tell myself that it was the

employer's loss for not hiring me. The good job I was hoping to get never came, but another child did. I was 24 years old with a son and daughter to take care of. While having the problems that I had with drugs and alcohol, I took a job as a bartender. I thought things were good, and I finally felt like I fit in somewhere. After a couple of years bartending and drinking the whole time, I became very depressed. I felt like a failure and that I let my family down. I felt so overwhelmed with guilt and fear.

I decided it was time to try to turn my life around, and the first thing I would have to do was stop drinking and doing drugs. It was the hardest thing that I've ever done. The first couple of years we really struggled. I had to go to outpatient rehab and avoid the people, places, and things that made me drink. After being sober a while I started thinking about a lot of things about myself that I didn't realize. I realized that I'm not such a bad person and my life is worth more than just being a drunk. I decided that I wanted to help other people and do something good for my community. I want my children to be proud of me.

I joined the fire department in the town that I live in, and I work security in housing projects, but still something was missing. The house projects that I work security for offered me a very good job. I knew that I needed a G.E.D. in order to get the job. This was something that I put off for a long time because I didn't think I was smart enough; then it all hit me. I went to fire school and passed my entire test, and I went to school for private security and graduated at the top of my class. I told myself that I need to do this, not just for the good job, but just to reassure myself that I can do it.

This G.E.D. test is so important to me. It will be one of the best accomplishments that I have done since I got sober. I started going to day and evening classes at a church in the town that I grew up in. My two teachers are very

understanding and helped me work on the things that I needed to work on. They explain things in detail, and they take their time to make sure you're doing things right.

After going to the classes, I feel very confident about taking the G.E.D. test, and a lot of it has to do with my teachers. I shared some things that happened to me in my life and how I got to where I am today. They asked me if I would write a short story of how I got to where I am today, and I felt proud. I'm 37 years old now, but I realize that you're never too old to learn, and you should never think that you're not smart enough to accomplish something.

I'm a proud and confident person today. I've learned that a person can accomplish whatever they set out to do. The only failure that you can have is if you don't try.

Donald Menough

CONTRASTS IN EDUCATION

I came to Cleveland one year ago. At the end of this confusing first year, I can truthfully say that I have gotten used to the way of life here in the United States. I like the people, the customs, and the culture. There have been many interesting moments stored in my memory.

One of my biggest shocks occurred on my regular trips to buy produce at the West Side Market. I became aware of the lack of mathematical ability in the average American. For Chinese people like me, simple operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division are easily done in our heads. I discovered this was not the case here. When I purchased produce worth around three dollars and gave the seller a ten-dollar bill, he was unable to subtract in his head and give me the needed seven dollars change. Instead he took a pile of bills from his pocket and proceeded to count out ten dollars and then take out three and then count out the remaining seven dollars to give to me. The frequency of such events happening astonished me.

On the other hand, I have been amazed at how ingenious Americans are. I base this assessment on the fact that the majority of Nobel Prize winners this year and in past years has been from the United States. I am forced to ask myself why the Chinese people, who have an excellent foundation of knowledge, don't produce this kind of genius. My analysis has produced two main explanations. First, China doesn't offer its scholars an opportunity to do serious research. This is evident in the fact that so many Chinese scholars are pursuing their academic ambitions here in the United States. Secondly, the Chinese educational system is lacking when compared to that of the United States. We emphasize high scores but ignore skill building. We follow a set educational model thereby discouraging the creative

potential of the individual. The Chinese think the basics are essential whereas in the United States students are allowed to pursue pure theoretical research.

There is much that is inconsistent, but there is no doubt in my mind that we Chinese, despite our intellect, have much to learn from the educational system here in the United States.

Danhui Long

TURNING AROUND

It's been six months
And I'm still in school
I went through this once
But I was acting a fool
Now I'm back on track
And ain't no stoppin' me now
Family love it and haters just frown
Sometime in May I'll be walkin' dat stage
With a future of nothin' but g'ttin' paid!

Anthony Jackson

THE INSPIRATION

Becky is a woman of great strength, love, compassion, and intelligence. Because of these characteristics she greatly touches the lives of all she comes in contact with. How do I know this? I'm one of the lives she has touched. I have known Becky for nearly two years, and she has become one of my dearest friends.

Becky has demonstrated great strength of character. She stands up for her beliefs. She supports the clients she serves. She never backs down from a challenge. When things get tough and most people would break, Becky keeps her head held high and continues.

Becky's demonstration of love for others is impeccable. I greatly admire the love and support I've watched her give to the clients. The love and support she's given me alone is unbelievable. When I was at my lowest she was there, hand outstretched to help me back to my feet. I don't know if she'll ever realize what that meant to me.

Becky has great compassion for those around her. I can have my biggest smile on but if something is wrong she can always tell. She gives me the strength to pick myself up, dust myself off, and keep going, even if I don't see it as possible. I think I admire her compassionate nature the most. It reminds me there are still a few good people in this world.

Last, but certainly not least, is Becky's intelligence. She is one of the smartest women I know. She knows just what to say in any situation. She also knows when you just need a silent friend. Someone who will just be there. Not too many people can figure that out. When it comes to friendships Becky is brilliant. I am blessed to have her as a friend. She has made my life a better place to be.

I never thought I'd have someone in my life that I would be willing to do anything for, but I was wrong. I never thought someone could make such an impact on my life. I never knew I would trust anyone again. Then came Becky. Thank you, Becky. You've been an inspiration to me and to all others you've come in contact with.

Tara Vargo

U-TURN

I was born in Puerto Rico and raised by my wonderful dad. He would visit me everyday at school. He did not scream, but instead he talked to me. Although my dad was doing a great job raising me, it was time for me to go live with my mom. At the age of nine my mother came to get me so I could come live with her and my other brothers and sisters in the United States. The cold winter and different culture was new to me. In school I was very scared around the Americans, but it was the beginning of my new life. I have four sisters and two brothers, which helped me out a lot to learn the English language.

At the age of 11, we moved from Cleveland to Lorain and my mother enrolled us in Hawthorn Boone. At this elementary school, I got a lot of help from the bilingual teachers, especially Mr. Garcia. I will never forget him because he gave me very good advice that I really didn't pay attention to. He always reminded me to never give up on my education and also not to let go of my future dreams, which were to improve my English language and to graduate. However, now I know that he was right. He also said to me that without a good education I was going to float from one minimum job to another.

I remember my mother wasn't too expressive, but deep inside I knew she was very proud of me when I passed to Admiral King High School with As, Bs, and one C.

Somehow in 12th grade I became very rebellious with different issues in my life. I left my house and went on the wrong routes. I dropped out of the out of the 12th grade. I started off with two jobs, 10 to 12 hours a day. At the age of 18 and a half, I became pregnant with my first son. I am now 33 years old and have five children.

I have spent 12 years of my life seeing others get their diplomas, college degrees, and good paying jobs. Now it's time to better myself. As I grow I learn from my mistakes. You don't stay 18 forever, and one day I just opened my eyes and realized that I am 33 years old , have 5 children that depend on me, and deserve a better life.

It is time for me to stop looking at what I could have been. It doesn't matter how many years have passed. There is always a chance to make a u-turn in life. That is why I am taking G.E.D. classes. After I am done with my G.E.D., I plan to go to college. I will make a better future for me and my children.

Ivette Hernandez

WRITING A POEM

Needed: A subject
A pen
Some paper
Many words
Several sentences
Rhyme
Much thought

I think I'll write a poem.
I hope to make it rhyme.
Much thought I'll have to give this.
It may take some time.

First I need a subject
That I can write about.
When the right one comes to mind,
I'm sure I'll have no doubt.

Armed with pen and paper,
A must to keep around,
Words that come to mind
I quickly jot them down.

With words I'll make sentences
That I'll switch and move around,
Hoping that the end result
Will have the perfect sound.

Carol Rudder

RECIPE FOR GETTING A GED

1 determined student
1 caring teacher
2 cups positive attitude
5 ½ cups great effort
1 ¾ cups consistency
4 tablespoons hard work
3 ¼ cups study skills
3 cups desire
¾ cup patience
1 ½ cups basic skills
5 cups confidence
5 ¼ cups perseverance
5 ¾ cups belief in yourself
scoop of accomplishment
heap of opportunity

Mix together one determined student, one caring teacher, positive attitude, and great effort. Spread in consistency, hard work, and study skills. Chop in desire and patience. Fold in basic skills and confidence. Stir in perseverance and belief in yourself.

Bake until knowledge is complete. Frost with accomplishment. It will yield opportunities and a better future.

*ABLE Class, Live Oaks
Lety Cornell
Nina Chesser
Missy Franz
Maria Thomas
Tonya Chadwick
Tonya Charles
Michelle Underwood*

THE TWELVE DAYS OF ABLE CLASS

On my first day of ABLE class,
My new friend gave to me
Hope of getting a GED.

On my second day of ABLE class,
My new friend gave to me
Two shots of wisdom,
And hope of getting a GED.

On my third day of ABLE class,
My new friend gave to me
Three questions,
Two shots of wisdom,
And hope of getting a GED.

...Four rays of hope...

...Five learning techniques...

...Six confidence builders...

...Seven students listening...

...Eight pats on the back...

...Nine tutors teaching...

...Ten testers testing

...Eleven students passing...

...Twelve caps and gowns...

ABLE Class, Live Oaks

<i>Jessica Barton</i>	<i>Kelly Bond</i>	<i>Sheila Pittman</i>	<i>Susan Fugett</i>
<i>Tonya Chadwick</i>	<i>Jin Hui Dulle</i>	<i>Dorothy Jones</i>	<i>Art Massengill</i>
<i>Nina Chesser</i>	<i>Kum Sun Kim</i>	<i>Maria Thomas</i>	<i>Lety Cornell</i>
<i>Lisa Smith</i>	<i>Jacob Saylor</i>	<i>Tonya Charles</i>	

PEN TO PAPER

Put your pen to the paper
And you will see
How creative you can be.

Words can take you to exotic places,
And while you're reading a novel
You can paint your character's faces.

Words are such a powerful thing,
For without them there
Would be no music to sing.

So, put your pen to the paper
And you will see
How creative you can be.

Words can be filled with so much emotion,
Those 3 little words, "I love you"
Are always said with devotion.

Words make you happy and glad
Words can also make you angry and sad.

So put your pen to the paper
And you will see
How creative you can be.

Words can put a smile on someone's face
Especially if you do it with style and grace.

Laura Disbro



Thoughts of Perseverance

MY LIFE

Life was hard for me growing up in downtown Cincinnati. I was only nine years old when life as I knew it changed. I was on my way to the store to buy some candy. To get to this store, I had to walk down an alley that wasn't even a full block from my home. I got about halfway down this alley when a man grabbed me and raped me. After that, he started beating me. He banged my face over and over on to the ground. He didn't think I would survive his beating, but I did! The police caught him and they told me I would have to face him in court. I was very scared to see him again, but I knew I had to do this so he couldn't hurt anyone else. In court, he kept looking at me, very hateful, trying to scare me into keeping my mouth closed. But I got up there and told the court what he did to me, and they put him in jail for only six months. In my eyes, this was not long enough.

One year later my father was killed while on his way home. Some man stabbed him to death. When the police showed up at our home, they took my mom outside where us kids couldn't hear. She came in crying and told us dad was dead and how he died. At that point, I knew life couldn't get any harder for me.

As an adult, I fell in love for the first time and got married. I was on cloud nine. We had three wonderful children together. Life was good for awhile until I found out he was cheating on me with another woman. We divorced, and my mother has our children now. I am remarried now to a man that I believe is my soul mate. We have been together for seven years come March 10, 2005.

Life is good to me now. On a personal note, I would like to tell anyone who has ever been raped not to stop living life to the fullest. If you do, then they win because you've

given up on yourself and everything life has to offer. I know God loves me, and I know He has a plan for me in this life. I don't know what it is yet, but I know He will let me know when He's ready.

Dink Bishop

MY LIFE EXPERIENCES

It was early 1988, about the month of April, that I started to experience the difficulties of life when I was 6 years old. The first experience of my life was the attack on our village. During the dawn hours, around 4 a.m. Sudan local time, the attackers opened fire on us, including my parents, my brothers, and my sister. The whole village was on fire.

All of us and our neighbors scattered everywhere looking for where to hide from the enemy. My parents and I ran in different directions. As a result I could not find them. I ran alone and hid myself under the pumpkin that was grown by my parents. From my hiding place I saw the enemy slaughtering people. When the enemy were fighting I heard them saying “amsik-um abidiin dell,” which in Arabic means “catch the slaves and let them show us where the rebels are.” I recognized them as government militia from the north of Sudan because they were wearing the green uniform and carrying guns.

The fires were continuing to burn our houses and the light was everywhere. I saw them coming towards me where I was hiding, but I jumped out and ran away. On my way I saw some people lying on the ground. I was unable to recognize them and didn't know whether my parents were among them.

From there I managed to run away on my own. On the way, I found some people with their families. Some of the boys were the same age as I. They asked me where I came from. I started to tell them and pretended to know what was happening in our country, though I really didn't. They told me they were going to Ethiopia, a safe place and told me to come with them. Ethiopia is three months by foot from Sudan. The only thing I could say was “OK!” even though I

knew nothing about where they were taking me. I had to trust that I would be safe and have the chance to go to school again. I accepted their offer and went with them.

I spent three years in Ethiopia and again we were attacked by the government soldiers. We then ran away to Kenya where we stayed for 12 years. We were found by the American government and brought to the United States. From the time I was separated from my parents, I have never seen them or talked to them again.

Peter Waat

MY SEIZURES

When I was born in 1950, I was placed in an incubator for three days and given blood transfusions. My mother had started hemorrhaging during my birth and I had lots of birth trauma. My doctor told my parents that he didn't think I was going to live. He told them that part of my brain was damaged due to the trauma.

But I survived. However, over the years I have had some troubles. In 1963, at the age of thirteen, I started having seizures, at least 2-3 each year. I started taking seizure medication. My seizures and troubles bothered some of my family members. One aunt told my mother, "Why don't you give her away?" My mother told her, "I had her and I am going to keep her." We went on with life and seizures.

A few years later I had married and started my own family. On a bright summer day, I had three seizures in six hours. It was awful. I told my parents what had happened to me, and they took me to my family doctor. Our doctor told us to go to O.S.U. Hospital to a doctor that helps people who have seizures. I was thoroughly checked out and my reflexes were all right. At that time, he did not change my medication.

In 1995, I started to have more seizures; the medication was not working anymore. My doctor felt that I started going through the change of life and that was affecting my seizures. He had started giving me hormone shots once a month. The combination of seizure medication and hormone shots is keeping the seizures under control.

I feel I am very lucky because I am able to keep the seizures under control and I have a good quality of life. Seizures are no fun; they wear you out. I heard that there

are 20 different kinds of seizures, and some people are not able to have theirs controlled. I imagine their life is extremely difficult.

Carol Adams

MY SECRET

Most of us harbor secrets, some small and others significant. Some are revealed and some are not. I have one that I have harbored inside of me for almost 19 years. It's of much significance, and it is very painful to me.

I got pregnant right before my fifteenth birthday; I was a freshman in high school. My mom did not take it very well at all. She took me to her doctor after I had missed my period. When he told her that I was most definitely pregnant she went off on me to the extreme. When she finished her rampage she insisted that my pregnancy must be kept a secret from everyone including my dad, my brother, and all of our other family members. I was a disgrace in her eyes, and I had sinned. She then told me that I had no choice but to give the baby up at birth. I did not want to give my baby away, but I did not have a say in it. My mom had the authority.

As my baby grew inside of me, my clothes got tighter. I could not wear maternity clothes because my pregnancy had to remain unknown to everyone. Going to school was difficult for me because I had to go to the bathroom quite frequently. I was sick a lot and I could not participate in gym class. I was placed in a study hall only because my mom insisted on the change.

Five months into my pregnancy I began feeling the baby move inside of me. It felt weird. Three weeks later the movement was less frequent as I approached 6 months. My freshman year was almost completed when I began having terrible cramps at school one day. I felt so bad that I went to the nurse so I could lie down for a while. When I was in her office I felt something warm come out of me. That prompted me to go to the restroom. I discovered I was bleeding quite a lot, and I was still in pain.

I told the nurse that I needed my mom and that I could not make it in school that day. She did as I wished and called my mother. She picked me up and took me to the hospital; I was in labor and did not even know it. Three hours later I gave birth. My baby boy was stillborn. He came too soon to live outside of me.

I was asked if I wanted to see him and I chose to. He was perfectly normal, and I will never forget his little face and all wrapped up in a blue blanket. He was so tiny. I put my index finger gently on his cheek. This was the only time I touched my first baby.

I could not give him a burial, so the hospital discarded my baby boy. That still makes me cry to this day. He was placed in the trash like he was garbage. That makes it all the more painful for me.

I remember what my mom said. She said it was for the best. I did not think so then, nor do I now. Only one other person knows my secret, my boyfriend; he is the first person I have told this to. At least I know I can talk to him about it, and he listens because he knows how much it hurts me. It will remain my painful secret to the rest of the world.

Lisa Rutherford

MACHINE OPERATOR

*Clock in ten
Minutes early
Get clipboard,
PAPERWORK
And tool box
Put on hairnet
Collect items for work
White gloves, blue gloves
White coat, blue coat
Calibrate my thermometer
Start PAPERWORK
Every 20 minutes
Probe the meat with thermometer
And check temperature. If it is not right
Red stop sign
Make an adjustment
Correct it
Green sign
PAPERWORK
Every hour
Weigh the product
Raw and cooked
If weight is too low
Red stop sign
It becomes rework
Correct it
Green sign
MORE PAPERWORK
Break
Food and drink
Back to the line
Continue temperature check
Every 20 minutes
Every hour*

Check weights
Low weights
Cooked weights
Sauce weights
MORE PAPERWORK
Constant checking
PAPERWORK
Product finished
Tear down time
Gas turned off
Steam turned off
Turn down Formax
Office visit
ORGANIZE PAPERWORK
Clock out
12:30 – 1:00 A.M.
Go home
Go to bed
DREAM ABOUT PAPERWORK

Geeoun Post

ABUSE

I am a father, grandfather, and a great grandfather. A few years ago, I witnessed an abuse case, which involved my family. My son was married with two kids. I would go and visit them. My daughter-in-law was a good cook. My son was a big drunk. There were many problems in their marriage. Many times my son would get drunk or high on drugs. I couldn't see him this way. This went on for years. My daughter-in-law always worked hard to pay for the bills and took a lot of abuse from my son. All she would do is tell him to look for work and help out, and then the fighting would be on.

One day when I went to their home, I witnessed my daughter-in-law with two black eyes, a busted lip, and marks on her arm, and she still wanted to cook for me. I told her that I was taking my cars to get painted about 50 miles away from Adrian and that I was going to ask my son if he would drive one of the cars for me. While he was getting ready to go with me, my daughter-in-law told me she was going to leave my son. She wanted me to help her get away. I told her I would keep my son out for a few hours. The plan was for her to get to a shelter that night, and the next morning I would take her and the kids to Social Services so they could get out of the state.

Well, that morning when I took them to Social Services, my son's cousin was working there as a Social Worker. She wasn't the one handling my daughter-in-law's case, but she saw us there! What could I do but stand for what I believe in? I loved them, and I wanted to help her get away from my son, and I did. I was thinking if they left for a while my son would straighten out, not drink and do drugs, but that did not happen.

My son's cousin told him that I had taken his wife and kids to Social Services to get some help to get out of state. Yes, they left but the worst was yet to come!

One day after his family left him he got high on drugs and drinking and came looking for me. He confronted me with what I did (helping his wife and kids get away from him). It almost cost me my life. He was hitting me, but I didn't hit back. He was choking me. I turned blue and couldn't breathe. I slowly dropped to the floor. My dad and mom heard the noise so they called one of my nephews in to see what happened. My nephew opened the door and stopped my son from choking me. It was just about too late for me. After awhile, I got breath back. The law did come to take my son away. I've asked why didn't I hit back? I tell people I do not believe in hitting any one or being like them.

This all happened some years back. My grandsons are grown up now. Yes, they got into more trouble and went to prison. My son has not spoken to me in years. My ex-daughter-in-law is doing really good now. She went to school to get an education, started a business of her own, and has more kids. She remarried and is happy now. I went to see her once when I was in Ft. Meyers, Florida. She gave me a big thank you for what I did for her and the kids.

I moved to Ohio in 1990. I've been happy living here. I do pray for my son and always ask about him. One day I am going to see if all my sons will meet me somewhere to have dinner so we can put the past behind us.

Today I am glad that I can write what I have witnessed. Abuse is a big thing today. Maybe someone else will read this and help others.

My mission is to help out.

Rudy Perez

THE ROAD TO FORGIVENESS

Many young people make mistakes in their lives. I made one that affected not only me but also the lives of my daughters. It was the biggest lesson I would ever learn in my life. I was 22 years old and lived in Branson, Missouri, with my three daughters.

Kim was seven years old, Jonnea was five, and Tabitha was three at the time. I had met a man through a mutual friend. We started spending time together and then dated. A few months later, the girls and I moved in with Bill. One night our friend had the girls, so Bill and I could be alone for the night. Bill went to one of his friend's houses and when he came back, my life would be changed forever.

When Bill returned, he sat me down and told me there was something I should know about him. He pulled a very small plastic bag with some white powder in it out of his pocket. He then pulled a syringe out and told me the white powder was an illegal drug called crank and that he "shoots" it into his vein in his arm. He poured some of the crank into a spoon, put a few drops of water in with it, and turned the powder into liquid. He put a very small cotton ball in the liquid, put the needle on the cotton ball, and sucked the liquid up into the syringe.

Bill told me if I wanted to be with him, I had to try it one time. Then he said, "I know you'll just love it." He put the needle into my arm and pushed the liquid into my vein. The drug sent me into a whirl, and it was the best feeling I had ever known in my life. He was right; I did love it. That one time was all it took, and I was hooked on him and crank. At first I was okay; the next thing I knew two years had gone by. I was on crank so bad that I had gone from 130 lbs. down

to 80 lbs. in seven months, and I was wearing Kim's clothes. She was nine years old now.

In 1994 we moved to Cuba, Missouri, and my drug problem only got worse. All I cared about was my drugs and myself. Kim had to help me feed the girls, and she had to bathe them and take care of them by herself. I very rarely spent any time with the girls, and by this time, Bill was beating on me. Kim was calling 911 at least once a week for Bill hitting and choking me. The longer this went on, the more I withdrew from the girls and everyone else. Jonnea and Tabitha were totally dependent on Kim by 1997.

I was no good to anyone and so strung out that I was almost totally useless. Then one night in the summer of 1997, Bill beat on me, and I had to go to the hospital. I had several bruised ribs, and my ego and self-esteem were completely shot. That night, when I got home from the hospital, I walked away from Bill and the drugs. That was the longest and hardest five years the girls had ever known. The hatred and resentment from the girls were more than I could bear. Today, I am drug free, healthy, happy, and taking care of my children and two step-children. It has been a tough road to recovery and forgiveness and an even rougher road to make everything right with the girls.

My addiction was a terribly painful lesson for the girls and me. The girls learned just how bad drugs are for people who use them and the people in their lives. I learned about addiction and how a person can lose everything and even die from it. We've gone to counseling and I've been in NA (Narcotics Anonymous). Even after seven years, every day is still a fight to survive. I'll tell my story every day, if I have to, to help people with this kind of problem. Everyone makes mistakes and, even though it takes a lot of time and hard work, we can get better and make things right in the end.

I'm not saying I wish this had never happened. I'm glad it did, because if I had to go through all of this to be able to help even one person the way so many people helped me, I would do it all over again. The only thing I'd change would be that I wasn't there for the girls. I am very lucky and blessed to have them, and they are very proud of where I am today. I could never have gotten this far without them. Their love, support, and most of all, their forgiveness are the reasons I am here today.

Thank you so much girls, and I love you with all my heart; and thank you GOD.

For Kim, Jonnea, and Tabitha! My beautiful little angels!

Shirley Mercer

A PEANUT BUTTER STORY

One of the missions that our church supports is Lifeline Christian Mission. From January to March of each year, we collect 18-ounce jars of peanut butter for the children living in Haiti. In March, a man comes to our church to pick up what we have collected, and it is sent to a storage site in Columbus along with all the peanut butter that other Churches of Christ collect. It is then loaded up and shipped to Haiti. Once there, all the children of the village gather together and each child is given his or her own jar of peanut butter. That is the reason all the jars are 18 ounces – so no child gets a bigger or smaller sized jar. Peanut butter is a major source of protein to the severely undernourished children.

Two years ago, our church collected approximately 200 jars of peanut butter. That is quite good because our congregation averages around 75 people.

Last year I challenged the minister and the two elders of our church. I asked them if we could collect 500 jars of peanut butter, would they get up in front of the congregation on a Sunday morning and sing a special? Of course they agreed to that. However, the rest of the deal was that when they sang, all 3 of them would be wearing a wig – of my choice. They hesitated on that but finally decided it would be for a worthy cause. I also think they never dreamed we would collect 500 jars of peanut butter. Lo and behold, we collected 503 jars of peanut butter, and the men kept their end of the deal. I am married to one of those men. They got up in front – in wigs -- and sang, "I'll Fly Away." There wasn't a dry eye in the church that day. Not tears of sadness, but tears of laughter.

They asked me what I had in mind for this year that could top what they had done last year. I thought and thought on that and here is what I have come up with: If we can collect 1,000 jars of peanut butter by the first of March, I will shave my head totally bald and get up in front of the congregation and sing a solo. Cameras will be permitted. Will we get 1,000 jars? I hope so. Not that I am looking forward to a bald head, but I am looking forward to being able to make a large donation to this worthy cause. It sure is fun being a Christian.

Sharon Russell

DON'T EVER GIVE UP

My one piece of advice about life would be for every teenager to stay in school. If all of our teenagers today knew how important it is to graduate and enjoy their high school years, so many of them would not quit. Maybe they need more encouragement at home from their family and friends.

I really think being a teenager is the best time of your life. You are young and can experience so many great things. High school is always fun, but if you make the wrong choice, it can all be over for you very fast. That's why you should stay in school and do your best at the choices you make.

Once you become an adult, you can't go back. If you quit school like I did, you will always have that regret with you. My wish is for every young person to give themselves that chance in life and they will never have that regret of not graduating. You have your life ahead of you after you graduate to do what you want to do with your life.

I wish someone had encouraged me to stay in school. I quit high school at seventeen. I thought I was mature and knew where I was going in life. I was very wrong. I got married at 18 and thought I knew everything. Once I had my children and was getting older, I regretted not finishing high school. It is really hard to go back to school once you get older. You have a house and family to take care of and no more time for yourself. It's hard to correct the mistakes you've made as a teenager once you are an adult.

I think if our teenagers could see the consequences of quitting school, they would think twice. I strive very hard for my children to understand how important it is to go to school and graduate. If you quit, you will always have that regret. No one should have to live with that regret the rest of his or her life.

Sheila Pittman

WHO AM I? WHERE AM I GOING?

Who am I?

I am small waters tamed by an open sea,
I am the "A" in the alphabet of my family,
I am the wall that builds up organizations,
I am the spark in the plug of civilization,
I am strong, yet I am weak,
I wear many hats but the face is little ol' me,
I am unforgettable,
I am unique,
I dare to dream.
Where am I going?
To the top, you'll see.

Tosha Evans

OBSSESSION OF PERFECTION

So, here you are again, in front of the TV with your closest girlfriends all huddled together engrossed in the latest reality TV model search. Watching along with the rest of the guilty viewers beautiful girls being poked and prodded and picked apart for all to see. Of course, this is their dream so it's not totally degrading. They know what they're risking, what they're subjecting themselves to. Or do they? And you certainly wouldn't judge them since you're drawn, entertained by this madness. At times it's even funny – the pure insanity of it all – but you see their tears, their pain and the brunt of rejection. You have to ask yourself if they, some of the prettiest girls you've seen, don't measure up, then how are you rated? You try to push these thoughts aside, but you can't help but ask why they're being evaluated solely on their physical appearance not their personality, intellect, or spirit. But you just sigh and continue watching this nonsense, even laughing, drinking your diet soda that you just noticed seems to taste terrible.

Everyone at some point has dealt with less than stellar feelings about himself or herself. Feelings of low self esteem, self worth. Maybe you've wished to be thinner, smarter, prettier, even as far as a different ethnicity. The question is at what point do we differentiate what are healthy and unhealthy thoughts? At what point do we take a mature and appropriate look at ourselves and examine ourselves for who we really are? When do we feel content with ourselves yet not give up, striving to be better people overall? There has to be a balance. But there is no simple solution. Everyday, society presents more and more products to enhance our natural state, make us more appealing, better us in some form. And we, the consumers, buy into it. Blindly hoping we'll emerge with more confidence. We're not content with ourselves inside, so obviously we have to

compensate and conceal the outside. We're never enough is what we're saying.

Now, mind you, I am not immune to these behaviors in the slightest. I am just as obsessed with my appearance and status as anyone else, in some ways much more so. I personally, ever since I can remember, have struggled with feelings of inadequacy and the pangs of insecurity. Everyone's struggles differ. Mine has been an insane obsession with beauty. The recognition of beauty is not evil in and of itself. There are a whole multitude of things deemed beautiful and rightly so. But the obsession is that in order to be considered beautiful and acceptable one must be perfect. You have the right body, the right clothes, car, house... the list goes on. I'm a fairly logical person yet I measure myself by the very standards I myself loathe and despise. I know that the pictures of the glamorous women on magazines are airbrushed and much preparation and luxuries are given to them that ordinary women are not provided with. Yet, sometimes, I still long to draw the same breathtaking reaction. This preoccupation is shallow and pointless and deep down I know this. These worries are so petty and trivial in the grand scheme of things and take away my inner peace. But they're there lurking about. It causes me great stress in all of my relationships. My constant desire to be more than what I am makes me doubt the sincerity of those who love me. I push them away by seeking unobtainable things. I'm not a millionaire, a top model, a genius, and I'll never be able to keep up with the ever growing trends in fashion or society's standards.

Whatever the reasons for these feelings, they are not productive or useful to me or anyone in any way! I am tired of apologizing for things about myself I can't change or compromise. For those who feel the same way, I'm sure you are too. So, what do I resolve we do? Give up wearing makeup, never watch TV, shed our clothes, become hermits?!

As long as we're alive and the world keeps going, many of these things will not change. As humans the wish to change something about ourselves won't either. Know that we'll never be what we're intended to be when we're fixated on all the wrong things. I could have plastic surgery, win the lottery, become some sex symbol, but there would probably be something else I would eventually want to change. Another void to fill, another spell of emptiness and insatiable hunger for more...more. I think it will be a lifelong battle, but it isn't as hopeless as it may seem.

It's normal to want to be accepted and desire to be liked, but we don't have to fit some mold in order to do so. Embrace who you are. Know that you have limitations as human beings, strengths and weaknesses, but also your own beauty whether conventional or not. Work more on striving to feed the soul and less on the temporary things. It's not bad to want to look nice or learn more than what we know, but it is terrible to spend your whole life picking apart what you don't like. You can stand in front of that mirror for hours and still see the same reflection. Instead of dreading it, smile and give a sigh of relief that each day is a new chance to love ourselves and love another.

Jessica Merritt

DEPRESSION

Depression is black and grey.

It sounds like gloom and doom.

It smells like burnt leaves.

It tastes like rotten milk.

It looks like cottage cheese.

Depression feels like your whole world just ended.

Maria Thomas

U-MAD

My name is John Lloyd and I am an addict. I have abused prescription pain medication to the point of dependency and beyond. Dependency is just one stage of a vicious cycle known as the stages of addiction.

Most of us were raised with the ideal that drugs and alcohol are bad for us; unfortunately, I had to learn the hard way. Many people have experimented with drugs and/or alcohol. This is the first stage of addiction, better known as the use stage. For many, this is a relatively harmless period of use. For addicts, this is the first step toward something I will call the downward spiral.

At the beginning when I was experimenting, everything seemed wonderful. I loved the way I felt when I was using, and the great part is that there were no real (perceived) consequences. At this point, I escalated my use because everything was great (at least I thought it was).

This led me to the next step (which is when the actual fall begins), misuse. This is where I first felt the negative consequences for my actions. For example, I was arrested for having prescription medications that were not prescribed to me. I spent some time in jail for that, which was not fun, I might add. This was the first tangible consequence I experienced, and I didn't like it at all, but I liked being high more than I didn't like being in jail.

This is where most folks and addicts like me differ in their thinking. Most people would connect the arrest and jail time to the crime and would stop using. Unfortunately for me, my brain's chemical make-up had already started to change. This allowed me to look past the arrest and jail time

and concentrate on getting high again. This is absolute insanity, by the way!

Let me explain that last statement. I really hated being in jail, and I didn't want to come back. On the other hand, I really loved getting high. My brain didn't seem to connect that I got high abusing prescription medication (which tends to upset the police), which is what got me put in jail in the first place. All my brain would think is, "Man that stinks (being in jail). I'll feel a lot better when I get high again." I somehow had failed to connect my actions to the consequences for them. In other words, I expected to do the same things, but expected different results. As the old cliché goes, that's the definition of insanity.

This should give you (and should have given me) an idea just how much power this addiction had over me. After getting out of jail, I was back to taking pills again (after all, it's fun). I started to lie about what I was doing, where I was going, and what I was spending my money on. Even though I had never lied to my wife before (we had a great relationship before all of this), my addiction was more important than our relationship, which destroyed her trust in me. I had started to tell her that I wasn't feeling well, or coming down with the flu, or anything else I thought would suffice as a reason for why I wasn't doing anything or missing a few days of work. I was already going through withdrawal and felt miserable. Of course I couldn't tell my wife that because that would be admitting that I was an addict, which would be admitting I had a problem, which I didn't because I could fix what was wrong with me by using again, right?

This led me to abuse (for labeling purposes, many call it the next step, but to be honest, I was flat on my back and sliding down the spiral I mentioned before). I was put into rehab because I was still using when I had to submit to drug screens, and (big surprise) I failed one. Drugs numbed

my pain and made my problems seem unimportant and distant. If I went without getting high for more than a day or two, my withdrawal symptoms got worse and worse.

Rehab lasted 28 days; the first 8 or 9 were pure hell. By the time I got out, though, I thought I had my addiction beat. That was not the case though. I got out of rehab on January 6, 2004, and was back to using by the first week of March 2004. Despite all I had been through, getting clean, and all I had put my wife through, I went back to abusing pills again. These pills had control of my life.

Welcome To The Wonderful World Of Dependency
All Those Who Care About John Lloyd, Get Ready For A
Bumpy Ride
Not Responsible For Broken Promises, Dreams,
And *Especially* Hearts

Dependency, by the way, is another stage of addiction. This is where the ride isn't really fun, just necessary.

The compulsiveness started to set in; if I was not on my way to pick up more pills, I was looking for them. Even when I had 40 or 50 pills, I was still looking for more. I was terrified I would run out. That mental torture would run through my mind constantly. My addiction had grown to the point that I thought I would die if my supply of pills ran out. Now that I'm clean, I don't want to feel that way ever again.

My tolerance had grown to the point that one dose for me would be enough to kill two normal people. In reality, I would die if there were no intervention.

I failed eight drug tests in a row between March 2004 and August 2004 (two in July and two in August alone). My probation officer gave me all the rope I needed to hang

myself or help myself. Of course, in true addict fashion, I decided the rope felt perfectly fine around my neck, as long as I could get high. My probation officer sent me to the Clermont Recovery Center for placement in a rehab center once again.

While there, I would not abstain from drug use. My last drug test from there reported overdose levels of methadone in my system. My probation was violated on August 9, 2004. I actually went to jail on August 20, 2004, which was my birthday. This is the first day in quite awhile that I went without drugs. At this time, I was in the final stage of addiction: rock bottom.

My life was a mess and so was I. My life was over, as normal people would define life. My life centered on drug use. That's not living; that's just waiting for death. Death or recovery is the end result of addiction.

It may sound strange to some, but I was thankful this happened. As a result of my probation violation, I was sent to Community Correctional Center, where I got my body and head clean. I am thankful that powers greater than myself intervened because I could have never done this on my own. This saved my life.

A lot of people may go through the first or even second stages of addiction (use or misuse). There is no litmus test to determine who will progress into the final stages. However, once an individual hits the abuse stage, the slide down the spiral is pretty fast (and fun, from an addict's point of view), which means it will very likely progress into dependency and beyond. At this point, professional help is needed.

In my personal experiences with stages of addiction, I have come to see them as the quick path to hell. I have

come up with an acronym to describe those who use, misuse, or abuse drugs. U – M.A.D. Here's what it stands for:

Use

Misuse

Abuse

Dependency

John Lloyd

THERE WILL BE A DAY

Growing up was very hard for a person like me. When I was young, my sister and I were taken from our mom. All I know is one day my mom was fine, and then she lost her mind. We had now become foster children, not to a stranger, to some family members. I thought that life would be great, but it was a terrible, terrible shock. When you're with family you think you're safe, but with us that was not the case. My sister was four and I was seven, and all we got were doors slammed in our faces. I remember thinking, "There will be a day."

My sister was young, and I had to stay strong for the both of us. Through the things that went on, I remember having to be tough. I took the blame for a lot of things, even though I was not the one who did them. I just wanted to get in trouble instead of my baby sister. Don't get me wrong, we did have some fun. Growing up we learned to be happy. We played and ran. Those were the things that we really liked to do when we had time. I think we learned a lot because we had so much sadness in our lives. We lost our mother and our brother. All that I remember thinking is, "There will be a day."

When I got a couple of years older, I came in contact with a man that saw the way we were treated and used that to his advantage. He used his charm and played the role, but actually he showed more love to us than our own family. Then one day I got pregnant. Yes, he did what any man would do in that type of situation. Who was going to believe me? Remember I was the one who took the blame for all the trouble. At this point, I was 13, and all I remember thinking is, "There will be a day."

I lived the rest of my days at my family's relatives' home trying to find a way out. Now, I had not only to worry about my sister and I, but also a baby. When I turned 15, I told my sister, "I have to go." As long as I stayed there my days would be so cold. "Don't worry. There will be a day."

I left the home and was on my own with my son. I was now in this cold world with my boy. I had to find a way to take care of him and supply him with some toys. I was in this situation at a young age and could not turn to my family. So, I went to a place where I knew we would be safe and where we would make it. As I grew older the world got colder, but all the things that I promised my little sister I accomplished. I got her out and then we both were fine. I told her, "I told you; there will be a day."

Now I'm much older and life has never been colder, but it still goes on. Now I have other goals to accomplish, and all that I can really say is, "There will be a day."

Blondine Davenport

THE INCURABLE DISEASE

My name is Kelly M. Giffin. I'm a 37-year-old mother of two, and I have Diabetes Type 2. They say that diabetes can be treated, but there is no cure.

I have been living with this disease for 6 years now. I inherited it from my father and two grandmothers. My grandmother on my dad's side lost her left leg just below her knee; then a few years later she passed away. My grandmother on my mom's side started out by losing her toes on her left side. She also lost her eyesight and passed away a few years later. My dad has had four major heart attacks because of diabetes. He is doing fine for now. He will never be able to work again.

As for myself I have neuropathy which means I have no feeling in my feet. My feet burn and sting and are cold to the touch and I'm also losing my eyesight and that has caused me to have headaches for the past eight months.

I have applied for S.S.I and Disability, but the government has said that diabetes is not a disabling disease. It is. The statistics show that there are at least 18.2 million Americans [about 6.3% of the population] with diabetes. It can cause loss of all major organs like kidneys, liver, and heart. It can also cause arthritis. All of these have major impacts on one's quality of life.

The government will give S.S.I. to an alcoholic or a drug addict. According to the government, alcoholism and drug addiction are diseases. Where is our help with our disease? I am concerned about my present and future life, as well as the lives of my children.

The millions of people who have diabetes have to adjust to different ways of dealing with the disease. I can adjust, but I am really worried about the future and what it holds for my family and me. Some people are still able to work without an arm or a leg. Some people are not allowed to work ever again. They are permanently disabled by their disease.

I have a younger sister who almost lost her left foot due to gangrene. She had stepped on a stickpin and her foot became infected. She had surgery on the foot. The doctor saved her foot. She is doing better now. She still has her foot so far.

My husband helps me with my shots. I have to take 150 units of insulin a day. I stick my finger 10 times a day to see how high my sugar levels are, and then I adjust my medications.

If only the government would think about the diabetes problem and help us with this situation by finding a cure! Thank you for hearing my concerns.

Sincerely,

Kelly Giffin

I'M STRONG

While living at home with my parents, I was fighting an addiction I thought I would never beat. But it wasn't until my last trip to the county jail that I finally took hold of my life.

I started cocaine at an early age of sixteen, but shortly after, my addiction took hold of every aspect of my life. At the time I was a junior in high school. I was a so-so student, mostly Bs and Cs with a few Ds. I slowly started to lose any interest I had in school. I started to think that to survive in real life it was all about "the street life." Somehow I managed to pull myself through the 11th grade and start off toward the 12th grade. But first would come the summer break, and my addiction took me to a whole new level.

I began to date one of the town's known drug dealers. I thought I was going to live the life everyone wanted, a life of fast money. I slowly got pulled into the system. I was also getting pulled over, my car searched almost every week. I was beginning to use drugs almost every day. I was slowly starting my trip down to the bottom.

Soon I was bouncing from drug dealer to drug dealer. I was out of control. I had no place to live, no food to eat, and nowhere to take a bath. I was homeless, and I thought I had hit rock bottom, only to find out later I had not.

I decided I had to move back with my parents. I went home, and I had managed to stay sober. I soon found out that I was pregnant. I thought to myself, "Now what am I going to do?" I knew who the father was, so I told him. He denied it and said there was no way he was the father. I knew I had to stay clean for my baby's health, so I did.

It was time to go back to school, and I was doing all right. My grades were good, and I only missed a couple days of school. I was staying sober. On December 20, 2003 I gave birth to my beautiful baby girl. I stayed in the hospital for two days, and then it was time to go home. All of a sudden I lost it; I had the urge to use again. I left home while my daughter was only three days old to begin a binge I would never forget. It lasted for four days.

When I came home my mother was upset; she knew I had relapsed. She told me to pack my things and leave, and she was keeping my daughter. So I left, leaving my daughter behind, where I knew she would be safe. I had also dropped out of school; I was too busy and wrapped up in my addiction to care about anything else. I had lost all contact with my family and friends. I had also stolen a car so the law was after me. I was at my deepest low. I wanted to run home so everything would be all right again. I called my mom and asked her if I could come home, and she said no. She asked me to turn myself into the cops, and I told her I wouldn't do that. But I was out of options and had nowhere to turn, so I finally agreed. She came to pick me up. She told me she was proud of me, because I was finally facing the consequences of my actions.

I went to jail that night. The next day I went to court and the judge ordered me to 90 days in jail. So I started to serve my time. At this point I began to realize how much my life was really worth. I knew it was time to take hold of my situation and do whatever it took to better myself. I didn't know what the fight ahead held for me, but I was willing to commit to it.

I started by making amends to the people I hurt, who really cared about me. I took the time to write letters to express my regrets for how I had hurt them and to ask for

their forgiveness. I was in the deepest state of regret for my past, but I knew all would be ok if I placed it into the hands of God. I had finally found a state of peace I had never felt before. I knew everything would work out as long as I had faith.

After 20 days I was called back into court. The judge released me to my parent's home on house arrest, and I was court ordered to an in-house rehab.

I went home not knowing what life had in store for me. I knew it was up to me and God to decide my fate. I knew this time I was going to do whatever it took to make it work for my life.

I went to rehab where I was taught the steps I needed to begin the process. I went to Narcotics Anonymous meetings, started counseling, found a sponsor, and went to church. I also began my life as a mother. I finally knew what unconditional love felt like. I knew I had to stay strong for my baby girl because her life depended on me. I began to make peace with my past, make amends with the people I could, and let God do the rest. He taught me my life is worth saving. I know everything will be ok if I "LET GO AND LET GOD"!

I've gained the respect for myself that I lost long ago. I will never take for granted what God has given me. There are so many who still suffer from addiction. I am one of the millions blessed to realize that I want more than my past decisions allowed me to have. I don't know what the future holds for me. I will still need the guidance of God and other recovering addicts. I do know I am someone who is willing to look at my past and grow from it, instead of running. Because of that, I'm strong.

Krystal Gibson



Author Biographies

Mona Achkar (p. 47)

I am from Lebanon. I have three children.

Carol Adams (p. 139)

Jessica Barton (p. 130)

Dink Bishop (p. 135)

It was hard to write what I feel inside, but if you write, keep on writing.

Kelly Bond (pp. 15, 43, 130)

Kathy L. Boyd (p. 103)

Kathy Boyd grew up in West Virginia and has spent most of her life caring for people as a nurse's aid. She got her GED in 2002 and is now a student at Rhodes State College working to become a licensed social worker.

Michael Brown (p. 44)

Gary Burnside (p. 43)

Jeffrey R. Carter (p. 60)

Tonya Chadwick (pp. 73, 129, 130)

I am a mother of two boys and one daughter, and I have one granddaughter, and I am pursuing my education.

Tonya Charles (pp. 43, 129, 130)

Nina Chesser (pp. 129, 130)

Stephanie Clark (p. 23)

I wrote this in dedication to my father.

Lety Cornell (pp. 129, 130)**Isaac Dahl** (p. 68)

I am a 25-year-old student and janitor from Sudan. I will be going to college next year.

Blondine Davenport (p. 163)

I have five kids, I'm in the ABLÉ program to reach my goals in life. It's been hard, but it takes time, and I'm going to make it. I want a few things in life and to get them, I now know it starts with me. I have made up my mind that it is also going to end with me getting everything in life that I always wanted—a good life!

Kandice DeMare (pp. 4, 11)

Kandi is the mother of a seven-year-old boy and is currently involved in post-secondary education.

Laura Disbro (p. 131)

I am 43 years old and I have always enjoyed writing. I am a mother of two sons. I am currently working towards my GED, so I can further my education.

Jin Hui Dulle (p. 43, 65, 130)

I came from South Korea about twenty years ago. I'm married and have two sons, and I'm currently taking GED classes.

Tosha Evans (p. 153)

I am a 28 year old high school graduate. I have completed two years of college but I am not a graduate yet. I am currently enrolled in a Health Unit Coordinator class at Health Professions Academy with a program called Project: Search. I am also consuming some extra skills with Cincinnati Public Schools which will assist me in my HUC classes. I am a volunteer at Orion Academy for PTA as well as a mother of two. My goals in life are to be a registered nurse, writer, and social worker.

Lisa Ewert (p. 85)

I have four kids who all love to read. I am interested in writing children's books.

Missy Franz (p. 129)**Susan Fugett** (p. 130)**Krystal Gibson** (p. 167)**Kelly Giffin** (p. 165)**Elizabeth Haddad** (p. 48)

I'm a 23-year-old woman with three children. One of my children has a mental illness called Autism. I'm a recovering drug addict. I'm much happier now in my life. I really hope my letter has helped other drug addicts in this world. I hope to be the best I can in my life. Thank you.

Tammy Hardy-Anya (p. 107)

I'm 41 years old. I attend ABLE classes to assist me in preparation for a LPN examination. I've attended since September 2004.

Ivette Hernandez (p. 126)

Ivette Hernandez is currently enrolled in the Lorain, Ohio ABLE/GED program. She hopes to graduate this year and plans to study English/Spanish translation at Lorain Community College.

Dale Hudec (p. 67)**Kevin L. Izor** (pp. 24, 115)**Anthony Jackson** (p. 123)**Alondra Johnson** (p. 43)**Aurelia Johnson** (p. 107)

I started ABLE classes because I set goals for myself. One of my goals is to get my GED and put it to use. I would like to attend college and become a mortician. I am 47 and I will not give up.

Dorothy Jones (pp. 43, 130)**Kum Sun Kim** (p. 130)**Terry Kimbler** (p. 28)

I'm a twenty-year-old man that is being shown how to fix things the hillbilly style and being shown the back roads of life.

Teresa Marie Leisure (p. 116)

I am 37 and have been married for twenty years to my high school sweetheart who I love very much. I also have a daughter who is nineteen and a son who is sixteen. They are my heart and soul. I would like to take this time to thank my teachers, Maureen and Louise, for all their help and for having confidence in me when I didn't and for ABLE and GED.

Yolanda Lewis (p. 36)

In memory of my mother, Ms. Jane M. Scales Ellington.

Geetha Lingan (p. 69)

I'm 39 years old, and I was born in Sri Lanka. I've been in the U.S. for five years. I want to get my GED and accomplish my dreams, and I want to have a wonderful future with my family.

Live Oaks ABE Class (pp. 43, 129, 130)**John Lloyd** (p. 158)

I am living life just for today and for no other reason than to better myself.

Cathy Loikoc (p. 51)

I am in my late forties and married with three kids who are now adult. I have three grandkids and am trying to get my GED. I would like to go on and help others.

Danhui Long (p. 121)

In China, I am a computer engineer. But one year ago, I came to Cleveland with my husband who is studying at CWRU. I have been studying in the ESL program for about one year. I love this program very much because it is useful, the teachers are lovely, and my classmates are friendly.

Carlos Lopez (p. 71)

I lived in Colombia almost all my life (51 years). I'm father of two boys and one girl. I worked with the Colombian government in national security for 22 years and I was a businessman there for 13 years. I like to read, listen to music and cook for my family and my friends.

Arthur L. Massengill (pp. 26, 43, 130)

Carl McDonald Sr. (p. 11)

My name is Carl McDonald Sr. of Dayton, Ohio. I am a husband, father, and grandfather.

Don N. McVey (p. 107)

I am 59 years of age. I have been attending Scarlet Oaks since September 14, 2004. Returning to school after 42 years is a challenge.

Donald Menough (p. 118)

I live in Southeast Ohio. I am the father of three children ages 16, 13, and 6. I am a security officer for B.M.H.A. I completed GED classes in Bellaire, passed the practice test in January, and will take the official GED test February 11.

Shirley Mercer (pp. 3, 147)

I'm 34 years old and I got my GED in December 2004. I was born and raised in Texas. I have three daughters, one son, and two step-sons who have supported me all the way with my education, along with my husband. I quit school at sixteen, so this is a welcome accomplishment for me. Thank you everyone!!

Jessica Merritt (p. 154)

I'm currently in the process of getting my GED after a long battle with Math. I hope to go to college to pursue English or Theology. My dream is to be published. I hope to inspire others the way I've been inspired.

Taiesha Metcalf (p. 102)

I am a 24-year-old mother of two girls. I go to Canton City Schools Even Start. I plan on going to college for Criminal Justice to become a probation officer.

Gloria Meza (p. 50)

I'm from Peru and I've been in the U.S.A. for one year. I'm one of seven children. I enjoy writing poems, reading and traveling. I'm learning ESOL at the English Center in Youngstown, Ohio.

Keiko Nakasuji (p. 78)

Keiko Nakasuji, an advanced ESOL student, has returned to Japan with her family and very loved dog.

Allena M. Norris (p. 45)

I'm a 23-year-old female trying to honestly make it in this crazy world. I enjoy working hard and meeting all my goals.

Emily Nutter (p. 8)

I was born in Manizales, Colombia, South America. This beautiful city celebrates the Festival of Culture every year. I came from a humble family with good values such as honesty, work, and strong family unity.

Heather Oblinger (p. 108)

Work, work! Go! I feel very enthusiastic about the classes that I am taking at the ABLE Center. It has boosted my self-esteem and above all teaches me to help myself!

Ida E. Osborn (p. 16)

I am a grandmother, also a great-grandmother.

Lynette Overbey (p. 43)**Rudy Perez** (p. 145)

I would like to thank God and the people who made it possible for me to learn to read and write short stories. Thank you supporters at CLC.

Sheila J. Pittman (pp. 43, 130, 152)

I am the mother of two beautiful children. I am working hard on getting my GED.

Jose Plaja (p. 46)**Geeoun Lee Post** (p. 143)

I've lived my life with lots of love, and I'm very happy. I've worked very hard for everything that I have. I married a very generous man, James, and I'm very proud of my son, Kenny. I received my U.S. citizenship in 2003. Life is good.

Joel Reese (p. 86)

I wish to write to help pay for college. I love to write; it's my whole life.

Gina Rodgers (p. 38)**Theresea Roth** (p. 110)

I am 23 years old and I love to go to school to further my education. My interests are computers, education, reading, and writing. I want to be really smart so when I get older, I can pass my intelligence down to the younger generation.

Carol Rudder (pp. 109, 128)

I work at Pierre Foods. I have been there eighteen years. I have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Sharon Russell (p. 150)

I am 56 years old and I live in Newark, Ohio. I am happily married and we have combined eight children. I have twenty grandchildren. This is my second year story. I want to thank my two wonderful teachers, Maureen Gilbert and Louise Rivero for giving me the encouragement to write and for convincing me that I am somebody special.

Lisa Rutherford (p. 141)

I'm a mother of three wonderful kids, and I'm single with a great man in my life. I love to write and I always have. After I get my GED, I would like to go to college and take a writing program. Maybe someday, I'll write for a newspaper or publish books. I'm dreaming of that.

Rebecca Sablosky (p. 81)

I am a student at Cincinnati State. I am studying diagnostic medical sonography. Instructor Marty helps me with my writing.

Agness Saduka (p. 107)

I'm a 29-year-old African woman. I came here to get my GED then I will go to college to get more education. I hope I will change my life.

Rose A. Salyer (p. 25)

I am twenty-one years old. I have a four-year-old son. I live in Columbus, Ohio. I go to Franklin Learning Center to study for my GED.

Sochea Sang (p. 30)

I was in America for 22 years. I have four kids: three boys and one girl. I'm 26 years old, going to school to get my GED, hoping that I pass the test.

Jacob Saylor (p. 130)**Scarlet Oaks ABLE Class** (p. 107)

Debbie Shepherd (pp. 19, 43)

I am now fifty-one years old. I have been attending the Adult Learning Center at Live Oaks for five years. Having been diagnosed with a learning disability, it has been a struggle. I pray every night that when the time comes to take test that I will pass so I can go on. With lots of praying, I think that it will be heard. God bless me.

Andrea Sloter (p. 5)

I have learned about life the hard way and learned to take life one step at a time, and with love, anything can be achieved. I am a mother of three children. I feel I am wiser than my 27 years in many ways.

Karen S. Smith (p. 31)

I am a mother of two girls. I wrote "In My Father's Time" for my children and my nephew, but as I talked with my father, I realized that this story has interesting facts that I wanted to share with the world.

Lisa Smith (pp. 43, 130)**Carrol Starcher** (p. 58)**Jami Stover** (p. 66)

I am a Christian wife and mother of two beautiful boys age 8 and 5. I work and go to GED class at Lancaster Even Start every day. So when they say it can't be done, it can!

Marcela Szipina (p. 57)

I am from Buenos Aires, Argentina. I started in the ESOL program in October 2003 when I came to this country.

Maria Thomas (pp. 43, 129, 130, 157)

Teddy Thompson (p. 62)

I'm a 46-year-old single father of two young sons from West Jefferson.

Katia Ulysse (p. 107)

I'm a 28-year-old woman from Haiti. I decided to come to class to get my GED so I can go to college. I want to go to business school.

Michelle Underwood (p. 129)**Tara Vargo** (p. 124)

Working at Portage Industries has helped me put some meaning into my life. The supervisors have always encouraged me to do my best and to enjoy myself in the process. Becky has inspired my work more than she'll ever know.

Peter Waat (p. 137)

I am writing from Cleveland, Ohio, United States. I am one of the Lost Boys from Sudan. I got the name "Lost Boy" because I lived most of my life without parents. I separated from them when I was six years old by war in Sudan, and I find myself today in the United States.

Mittie Walker (p. 77)

Mittie Walker started Project: Learn in December 2002. Her goal is to earn her GED. Mittie attends small group classes and works with a tutor to help achieve her goal. She is currently in the pre-GED class and is one of the hardest working students.

Brenda Wiseman (p. 107)**Robert Wynn** (p. 6)

Rebecca Zielinski (p. 17)

I have always been a fan of writing and have always worked to improve my own skill. Sharing my work can only help me to improve and, perhaps, to inspire others.

Honorable Mention Authors

Hoda Abdulla	Naoko Chaen
Fumiko Adair	Susan Chambers
Mahiam Ahmad	Tonya Charles
Husn Ahmed	Gwen F. Childs
Melissa Albert	Ashley Christian
Jesus Alfonso-Riveros	Won-Ok Chung
Shamaa Algaradi	Erika Cisneros
Melissa Anderson	Lori Ann Clemons
Tiffany Arnold	Mattie Cobbs
Patricia Arroyo	Karen Cole
Dorrine Bankston	Janet Jean Conkle
Eileen Barnett	Lucy Conner
Jessica Barton	Julie Ann Cook
James Beatty	Erika Cooper
Judy Bennett	Francisco J. Coronel
James Blair	Janet I. Cox
Anna Blyumkina	Nichole Cronenberg
Mykhaylo Boechko	John Crowder
Kimberly Bolton	Janice T. Cupp
Tina Botts	Barbara Currence
Rhonda Brown	Beata Cyranek
Greg Browz	Latonya Daniels
Calvin Bryant	Lynn Davenport
Lawrence Burfitt	Shawna Khristine Davis
Roxanna Burney	Andrea C. Detling
Susan Buslik	Rosael Diaz-Rodriguez
Nancy E. Butts-Fisher	Hua Ding
Kilcha Canfield	Diana Doak
Sheyla Caraballo	Joshua Doughman
Luis Cardemes	Evelyn Doyle
Blanca E. Carrero	Winter S. Drydren
Brenda K. Carroll	Marisela Elias
Amanda Carter	Lou Ann Ellerhorst

Laila Eltawerghi	Vera M. Jackson
Chante Evans	Tiffany Johns
Yawana Feaster	Alondra Johnson
David Ferrell Jr.	Dorothy Ann Jones
Misty Fisher	Jo Ann Karshner
Boris Flider	Stephanie Keeler
Robert Flowers	Jerry Keeton
Laura Fogle	Peter Kelei
Susan Fugett	Samn Khuy
Richard Gabbour	Kum S. Kim
Oleksandr Galanin	Laetitia M. Kingu
Jennifer Gilkey	Auguster Knox
Roberta Gillilan	Yelena Kolb
Tiffany Gordon	Ludmila Koltsova
Angela Gowing	Krzystof Koprowski
Nevada M. Gross	Elizabeth Krause
Jennifer Gunter	Lancaster Even Start
Irma Gutierrez	Karen Lansdale
Ashli Nichole Guzaliak	Ricky A. Lehman
Birma Guzman	Sanda Lup
Connie Hahn	Jennifer Machler
Noriko Hamada	Salamatu M. Mansaray
Karen Hansen	Georgia Marcum
Douglas E. Harman	Teddy Marcum
Edward Hayes	Rosanna Martinez
Seketta Hicks	Cassandra McCelland
Sarah L. Hightower	Christina McCoy
Tabatha Hildinger	Neoma McDowell
Margie Howell	Dora L. McMillan
Fawn Hughey	Ca'Nea Meeks
Ragiye Ibragimova	Migdalia Melendez
Justin Impson	Luba Miktuk
Victor Intoulov	Greg Milam
Junke Isaki	Lisa Miller
Detania Jackson	Melissa Miller
Kelly A. Jackson	Tonya Mitchell
Travis Jackson	Althea Mitchem

Amina Mohamed	Dauida Slates
Jamaal Monroe	Debra Smalley
Beverly Moore	Mariya Smerechinskyy
Johnnie M. Moore	Yaroslav Smerechinskyy
LaRonda J. Moore	Ryan Smith
Madeline Morales	Christine Snuffer
Shannon Morris	Carl Sopovich
Yolanda Murphy	Kelly Spencer
Amadou Ngom	Elaine C. Sperry
Lauren Nitzke	P. Sreelatha
Marice Oakley	Greg Stahl
Juanita Ortiz	Julia Staten
Carla Page	Debra Stewart
Priscilla Page	Dorota Suskiewicz
Susan Parada	Dorothy Swearingen
Felicia Pascu	Hellana Tabessi
Thuy Pham	Darryl Tate
Ravy Pich	Amy Tatum
Shavon Pinkard	N'Kengi Thomas
Tracie Pruitt	Loi Tran
Patricia Puentes	Esterline Trice
Victoria Pwalua	Jose Trimarchi
Gladys Quintas	Klara Trusova
Vanesa Ramos	Joanna Tucker
Jamilah Reed	William Umana
Margie Ricaurte	Holly Vance
Tammula Royal	Milkarin Vega
Antoine Abi Salloum	Fr. Marek Visnovsky
Bobbi Sassen	Miriam Visnovsky
Gabriela Saucedo	Charlene Walker
Elva Scales	Paul J. Ward
Shana Schilling	Kimber West
Hannah Segal	Bill White
Linda Seymour	Terra L. Wilcox
Sherry Shaw	Candice Maynard Wills
Candy Simpson	Donald J. Wilson
Savanna Sims	Kimberly J. Wilson

Derrick Woods
Leah Wray
Pamela Wyman
Daniel Yancey
Kristina Yenny
Yun Zheng