

Beginni

ngs IX

A PUBLICATION OF ADULT STUDENT WRITING OF THE

Ohio Writers' Conference

OHIO LITERACY RESOURCE CENTER



Foreword

Welcome to *Beginnings IX*, the annual publication of original and inspirational works created by Ohio ABLE students and sponsored by the Ohio Literacy Resource Center. This year over 430 entries were submitted to the OLRC and judged using a rubric that includes such writing qualities as creativity, reader engagement, and style. The submissions comprised a wide array of poetic thoughts, reflective essays, and entertaining stories.

In addition, we are proud to share the artistic talents of ABLE students in two of the Great Oaks ABLE programs. The front cover art was created by Gumerindo Lopez of the Scarlet Oaks program, and the back cover art was created by Aaron Willoughby of the Live Oaks program. Their creative renditions reflect the wide variety of multicultural, ethnic writing selections that are included in this issue of *Beginnings*.

The authors of *Beginnings IX* and their teachers were honored on May 12, 2006, during the 9th Annual Ohio Writers' Conference in Columbus, Ohio. As the kickoff to our 9th Annual Writers' Conference, Lyn Ford, nationally renowned storyteller, engaged the participants in a storytelling interactive welcome.

Next, the day-long conference featured keynote speaker, Eileen Moushey, of Kent, Ohio. Eileen is a freelance writer/director. She founded an acting group in 1986 that performs interactive mystery stories throughout the Midwest. Also, hundreds of theaters, colleges, and high schools around the world have performed "Mysteries by Moushey." In addition to her plays, Ms. Moushey has written and directed commercials, video scripts, and educational programs. In

1999, Eileen Moushey won a regional Emmy Award for a children's series written for PBS/WNEO/WEAO. Following her keynote, Ms. Moushey engaged the audience in an interactive session that invited the participants to work with dialogue as a writing style.

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 submit their original work next year.

We thank the Ohio Department of Education's Adult Basic and Literacy Education Office – for the continued support it has provided for this successful project. We also thank the many reviewers and judges for the dedicated hours they committed to the Ohio Writers' Conference and this publication. And we offer a special thanks to the ABLE teachers throughout Ohio for the encouragement and support they provide to their students!

So, sit back, relax and enjoy *Beginnings IX* ! We hope you find yourself thoughtfully engaged as you read about topics that include: *Tapestry of Culture, Woven Memories, Mending & Alterations, Threads of Family Life, Patchwork, New Patterns for Learning, and Fabric of Love.*

Chris McKean
2006 Conference Organizer

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*Tapestry of
Culture*



IT WAS SCARY HOW I SURVIVED

In my childhood, when I was 10 years old, my family lived in a little village near a big river, which was called Shable. Usually my family fetched water from the river to water the animals. The river had many crocodiles living in it. The crocodiles always hunt the people and animals when they approached the water.

One day I went with my older brother who kept after the cattle. When we approached the water, the cattle started to enter the water and begin drinking the water. I was standing at the back of the cattle very close to the river. Usually the crocodile hides himself in the water and approaches by jumping and catching the animal. The crocodile jumped over a cow, the one I was standing behind, and caught it with his mouth, and hit me with his long tail. He jumped back and took the cow in the water. I fell back and was so scared I couldn't stand.

Then my brother came to me and caught my shoulder to help me stand. He took me to our home. When we got home he told what happened to my mother. She cried and scolded him about why he took me to the river. Anyhow, I survived, but we missed our loved cow.

Adan Ibrahim

BEFORE AND AFTER

When WWII started, my family was living in the village of Voshod, Bylorusse [Belarus]. There was a big forest around the village, and in front of the forest was a marsh. In the marsh I liked to catch eels with a basket. In November and December, we picked cranberries.

When the German soldiers arrived, they banned walking in the forest and the marsh. They got all the people in the four villages around the forest together and said, "You mustn't hide in the forest. Whoever is caught in the forest will be shot down in place." Then an infantry officer said, "We will help you get everything that you want out of your houses. Hide them underground anywhere you want. After us, a special commanding group, the S.S., will arrive. They are going to spray gas over your houses and burn them out." When the S.S. group arrived, they sprayed gas on our houses and burned them – all four villages – Voshod, Pobeditel, Progress and Gromica. But none of us were hurt or killed.

When our houses were burned out, we built dugouts to live in. They were holes in the earth. The depth was about 7 feet. The walls of the hole and ceiling were built from wood. Over the ceiling was greensward (sod). A furnace was built for heating the building. My mother, my sister, and I lived there because my father died on the front. We lived there for about a year.

I arrived in America with my wife and son on New Year's Eve, 1996. There wasn't any snow. It was sunny and all of nature was beautiful. When we arrived in Cleveland, our son-in-law organized a trip to the beach in the lake area. It was a wonderful and unforgettable time with no snow and green grass around us. The lake wasn't frozen. We had a good time and we started a cheerful New Year.

In the U.S., the first year was very difficult for my family. My wife and I didn't know one word of English. We also didn't know American customs and culture. Assimilation is a very protracted, complex, difficult and painful process. We had to learn many things. The first time we walked in the street in our neighborhood, we were surprised because we met no people, only cars. I understood at once that I had no choice. I needed my own transportation. I had never driven a car.

The exam for the road test wasn't easy for me. I passed it after the second try. However, I was happy. When they took the picture for my license, they asked me to smile, but I couldn't. Imagine. It was only three months after I had come to the United States. I was irritated that people around me were constantly smiling. I thought they were just pretending to be happy. But later I understood. This is a great custom to smile. You must not show your bad mood! I respect people who smile regardless of their troubles. Now when I meet somebody's smiling face, I am smiling, too. I had many problems: bad English, no job, age 58, etc. Can I assimilate? It's a big question, but I smile!

Nikolay Koptev

IT'S A STREET FAIR!

Every year my granddaughter's school has a "Multicultural Fair." Last year, when she was in Kindergarten at Riverview Elementary School, her mother took her to be part of that fair. There were at least eight different countries represented from all around the world. There was music, food and laughter.

It was a night of celebrating and showing how the United States became a nation of different cultures working together. We found out what all of us have in common as well as what we can learn from each other.

There was no charge for this event. Each child had a passport to be stamped at each country's booth. Representing our family, we made an exhibit from Indonesia because we are originally from Indonesia. There was Batik material, money, pictures, Indonesian songs from a CD player, a flag and a map.

The name of the money is *Rupiah*. The pictures were of Balinese dances and Javanese dances. The traditional hat from Java is named *Blankon*. The puppet show from Java is called *Wayang*. There are two kinds of *Wayang* – one made from wood and the other one made from leather.

We had fun attending this "Multicultural Fair" at Riverview Elementary School in 2005. We look forward to being a part of the next one.

Kin Wijasa

CELEBRATING THE LUNAR NEW YEAR IN KOREA

When I was young I always enjoyed the Lunar New Year celebration. Lunar New Year was my favorite holiday. On this holiday we had a family get together. We ate a lot of food, and we got new outfits.

When my family got together we played games all night and laughed. Usually, we played Korean cards. I really didn't like to play because I never won. When we played games, we collected everyone's money. Then whoever the loser was, that person had to go out and buy snacks. Nobody wanted to go out in the cold and dark. Sometimes when we lost a game, we would get slapped on the wrist with two fingers. I remember that my older brother was a big cheater. We always watched him, and when we caught him cheating we laughed.

I will never forget all the tasty foods that are associated with this holiday. As soon as I walked in the house I could smell sweet, delicious and unique Korean rice cakes. Steam from my mom's special rice cakes permeated the air and made the house feel warm, full and welcoming. When my mom made a lot of rice cakes, we would share with the neighbors. I remember we delivered cakes to the whole town. The neighbors made their own cakes too. Then they also exchanged food with each other. We would have a chance to taste every kind of rice cake and candy. My favorite food was Korean dumplings. We call them *mon du*. My mom made this dish, and it was her specialty. *Mon du* was the most delicious dish I ever had. Since my mother's death, no one has been able to duplicate her recipe.

On the last day of the year I could not wait for the next day. My mom always bought new outfits for us during this season. Korean superstition was that with the New Year old sins

were cleaned and finished, and it was a time for fresh starts. We even got new socks and underwear. New Year's meant I could wear my new clothes.

The Lunar New Year has always remained my favorite holiday because it holds so many special traditions and fond memories. The Korean food we served and our new outfits added to the festivities. I miss those days so much. The closeness of the family and friends as we celebrated this day hold a special place in my heart.

Kilcha Canfield

HOLIDAYS AT HOME IN MEXICO

Since I was a little girl my favorite holiday has been Christmas. Holidays at home in Mexico were traditionally a time to be with your family. Christmas was the happiest and most exciting time. The family celebration of Christmas lasted two weeks from December 24th to January 6th. Everyone was on vacation during this time.

My mama started putting out the nativity set one week before Christmas. I remember that every afternoon she played Christmas records. The night before Christmas Eve, December 23rd, my mama started cooking for Christmas Eve dinner. She always made tamales. The only time all year that my mama made tamales was Christmas and January 6. It was a lot of work, and my sisters and I all helped her.

On Christmas Eve my aunts, uncles, and cousins came to our home to help because mama made a big meal. It was really fun for me as it was the start of a big party with some dancing and singing. In the kitchen the older girls were helping and telling jokes and laughing. My mama always cooked the tamales outside on the patio over a wood fire. Now, every time I smell wood burning, I remember the smell of tamales. All of the music was Christmas songs. There were a lot of people everywhere in the house. It was a full house.

On the night of Christmas Eve, we started with the praying of the rosary at my uncle's house. My uncle lived next door. After the rosary all the children received a little bag with candies, fruit, and nuts. After we prayed the rosary at home, we had tamales with *atole*. *Atole* is a drink that is made with corn flour and chocolate. Later we would go to my aunt's house a few blocks away, and we would do almost the same thing. We saw different friends, and everyone was happy. At midnight we opened the presents and continued the party.

Christmas Day everyone slept late, except for the children. They were excited about all the toys and clothes that they received for Christmas. Christmas Day was when everyone showed off and wore what they received including clothes, toys, and everything else. Everybody had something new, and they were anxious to use it. On Christmas Day most people visited friends or family members who they had not seen during the year. They exchanged food, which most of the time was tamales and a little present. For me, this was the time to forgive and forget all the bad things that happened during the year and to enjoy the company of the people I cared about.

For New Year's Eve we always had a very simple dinner, which was only for our family. On this day my mama cooked *bunuelos*. *Bunuelos* are made with flour like tortillas but they are sweet and fried. Dinner was always turkey or pork. Our New Year's Eve was our Thanksgiving because it was always a day for giving thanks for all we had received during the year. It was also a time to remember the people who passed away during the year.

Before dinner we went to Mass. This was a happy tradition because we walked to the church, which was two miles away. During this walk we saw all the beautiful Christmas ornaments in the stores and the dazzling Christmas lights on the streets. We also saw friends and relatives as they were walking too. We always met people we hadn't seen in a long time. On one side of the square stood the Plaza de Armas, the Casino, which had a very special dance hall where only members could go. These members were considered "high society." They were dressed very elegantly.

At midnight we had a tradition that by the time the clock played the twelve bells we must eat twelve grapes for good luck. Some people set off fireworks at midnight. On the first day of the New Year we got up late and ate leftovers all day,

or we ate out. Almost no one cooked because they had been so busy the day before.

The final part of Christmas is January 6th. This is the day the three kings arrived to see baby Jesus. On this day we received toys from the three kings. At night we prayed the rosary followed by dinner which was tamales, again. On the night of January 6, we had *Rosca de Reyes* for dessert. *Rosca de Reyes* is a big round cake with dried fruit all around and inside of it. There was also a tiny toy and baby doll cooked into it. Whoever had the baby in their piece of cake would have to give a party on February 2nd with tamales and a piñata. This tradition of the *Rosca de Reyes* is done by everyone even in offices, schools, and homes. It was a lot of fun. Some people make the *Rosca de Reyes*, but most go to the bakery to buy the cake as they are not very expensive. It was fun and exciting to cut the cake, as most people didn't want to get the little baby. They hid the baby, so if they got it they wouldn't have to host the party.

These traditions from my childhood in Mexico leave me with good memories and wonderful feelings. The holidays were a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus with family and friends in a unique and joyful way.

Maria Allgood

HOW I MET COSMONAUT LEONOV

Leonov was the cosmonaut who first went out in open space from a spaceship. This event took place in 1965.

Between July 15-21, 1975, Alekseje Leonov had a second space trip. On this trip his spaceship was to connect with the American spaceship "Apollo."

We watched this connection on TV. It was very exciting. I was a 9-year-old girl who grew up with information about spaceships and space trips. But it was the first TV cast where I could watch how our cosmonauts worked. It was a long process, but for more than one hour we sat and watched without a break. We watched how our cosmonauts and American astronauts were meeting aboard "Soyus."

It was during the summer, and we were on a summer vacation from school. Sometimes we had meetings at school with my classmates and my teacher. Sometimes we went to the park, sometimes we went to the cinema, sometimes we went to an entertainment center.

It was July 24, 1975. That morning we went to the entertainment center to see the theater production. When we came to the theater room (where the performance was to take place) and took a seat, one woman came on stage and said that our cosmonauts had landed near Karaganda (this is the city where I am from). And after a rest, they were to be invited to another area in our city. At this time cosmonaut Leonov was coming to the entertainment center. And if we wanted to meet with him, we should applaud. The entire hall exploded with applause.

Later as Alekseje Leonov was coming onto the stage, we applauded for a long time. He told us about his space trip. There were many problems because everything behaves differently in space, and he told us how they corrected the problems. They did need to have ingenuity, patience, knowledge, and a sense of humor to make decisions. He told

us that they had a lot of training before they embarked on the space trip. He told us also about his first space trip, how he went out to open space and how he felt, how his space suit swelled up and he couldn't go into the spaceship, and how his friend pulled him from the "transitive room" into the spaceship.

It is very dangerous to be in "transitive room"; you must wear a special suit. But his friend Pavel Beljaev hadn't such a suit, yet he came into the "transitive room" in a simple *scaphandr* and saved Leonov's life. He said, "It was 12 minutes, 9 seconds only, but every second I will remember all my life."

This meeting lasted about 2 hours. I remember this meeting very well even today.

Nataly Johnson

LOVE KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES

In June of 2003 I was living in my hometown of Basingstoke, which is in the south of England. I had a great job as a manager and the love of my then 5-year-old daughter.

I had recently gotten a computer and was chatting to friends on the Internet when I noticed an American on the site I was on. We started chatting, exchanging information about our countries. Within weeks we were talking on the phone, and it was then that we knew we wanted to meet. Within 6 weeks of our talking, I was arranging to fly to New York. (My friends thought I was crazy!) I was scared but excited about this, as I had never flown out of England on my own before; let alone flown 4000 miles to meet a stranger!

However, as soon as we met, we both knew it was the start of something neither of us had experienced before. I stayed for 2 weeks with him in Grove City; the hardest part was leaving at the end of my stay. Neither of us wanted for me to go home, but I had a daughter and a life back in England. We stayed in contact, and 6 weeks later I flew back with my daughter so she could meet him...and...never went home. We married in December 2003 and began the process of immigration.

At first living in the U.S. was easy. I was really happy and had the family I had always wanted; but then I started to miss home. Silly little things would make me home sick, like chocolate. British candy is some of the best in the world. I'd miss my friends, my TV programs, my job, and the health system. I had never had to worry about how I was going to pay a doctor's bill before. We have the National Health System in England, so all medical treatment is free.

In England I was not rich, but I had money to pay my bills, extras for treats, and wanted for nothing. Here, in the beginning, we struggled for money and couldn't pay our bills (utility bills are so high here). In England my gas bill ran

around \$10 a week. Cost of living is very high in America. Because of immigration I cannot work here until I have been approved to work. I find this very hard, as I have always worked. Sitting at home doing nothing but housework was something new that I had to get used to as well.

My daughter has adapted very well to the changes thrown upon her. At school she is an honor student; her grades are all A's and one B. She has friends and does not remember England. I am still under Immigration 2 ½ years later. We are still struggling; however, my husband and I are very happy. My only frustrations are not being able to work, finding my independence again, and making new friends.

Under Immigration I feel like a second-class citizen. The other day my daughter was sent home from school with a letter from a scholarship program inviting her to attend a program in Louisiana because of her high grades and her being on the Honor Roll. She does not have her Social Security number yet, so she can not attend. I feel this is completely unfair to a child who has worked so hard. We have been through so much in the last 2 years (mostly hardships) that when my immigration is finally approved, we will be able to get back on our feet, live a normal happy life, and enjoy being together rather than worrying about getting split up through Immigration.

Everyday we worry I will be asked to leave the U.S., but if that happens I know my husband will move to England with me. For us it is not about where we live; it's about us being together. A friend of mine recently asked me if I have any regrets about moving to America. My answer is and always will be, "No." Love holds no boundaries whether it is because of the land I was not born in or anything else. We will be together.

Vicki Dennison

SINCERE OR INSINCERE – THAT IS THE QUESTION

I am an immigrant to the United States from China. I came here fifteen months ago. I work full time as a waitress but manage to go twice a week in the evenings to English Second Language class. I remember in the fall when I began studying, our teacher gave us a reading passage which she hoped would encourage a discussion about some of the misunderstandings that occur when new immigrants come here and don't understand the customs and the language. The story was about a young man who had come to an American university to study. He had not wanted to leave his homeland, but his father had insisted. At first he was impressed at how polite and friendly Americans were. Even total strangers came up to him and asked him how he was. After a short time however, he noticed that these same people didn't even wait for him to answer. They responded quickly, "That's nice. Have a nice day."

He felt their concern was insincere. He decided to do an experiment. When people asked how he was he told them he felt terrible. He wanted to see if they would still answer in the same way. His test worked just as he had expected. They answered with the same meaningless words. They had not really cared about what he was saying. He became convinced that Americans were not sincere. All those smiles and wishes to have a nice day were just phony. When we finished the story, the teacher asked how we felt about Americans when we first arrived here. Many students in the class agreed with the character in the reading. I did not. I understood why the young man felt as he did, but I thought he was too quick to judge all Americans. I have had a very different experience here.

I had been in the United States just six days when my sister took me to Tower City Mall. When we got on the

bus, there was no place to sit. We had to hang onto the handrails at the back of the bus. We are both very short and it was quite a difficult task. To our surprise, two young men got up simultaneously. One of them came over and asked us politely if we would like to take their empty seats. That same day, other unusual incidents occurred that made me feel that Americans were very kind. Men held open the heavy glass doors of the mall and even moved out of the way to let us go ahead. Women greeted us with smiles. I was surprised at all this politeness and felt like a baby being pampered by its mother. I had never experienced such gentle behavior in China.

When I returned home, I raced inside to tell my dad. He had been living in the United States for eleven years already. I excitedly explained all the nice things that had happened that day. I guess he could sense that I felt surprised by these expressions of kindness. He told me that this was quite common. He explained that women, children and the elderly are treated with great respect here even more so than in China. This was interesting for me because I knew that our culture is known for being polite and respectful to our elders.

I don't know if every person who comes here from China would agree with my dad's opinion about Americans but on that day and even today after spending time working and studying here, my first impression has stayed with me. When I was a new waitress my customers saw that I was a bit nervous and told me not to worry. My co-workers were tolerant when I couldn't remember all the "daily specials." When families came with babies, they would grab the high chair and set it up for me. At the end of the evening they went quickly to put the chairs up thinking that I was too small to do this heavy work. Some of my customers even offered advice about going to school and looking for jobs. I am convinced that all these acts are signs of sincere caring.

These people are not just pretending to be nice. My judgment is that most Americans are motivated to do acts of kindness from the goodness of their hearts. I believe that I can show other immigrants this same kindness now that I am an American too.

Ruo Yun Liu

TRANSITIONS

I was born and lived in Moscow, Russia. Before I was seven years old, my life was happy and interesting. I was born in a friendly family. My father was a handsome and smart man. He was a specialist in the history of western countries. He worked at the Institute of History and Economics. He was an independent man. He had his own view of events and politics in the country. In the time of Stalin's dictatorship, it was not a permissible behavior. At that time political independence was a straight road to prison.

When I was seven years old, my dad was arrested and shot down. I didn't understand anything. Father disappeared. Mother told me nothing and sometimes I saw that she cried. The happiness went out of our family. We lost previous acquaintances not only because they were afraid to meet with us but because my mother tried not to show who my father's friends were. At that time, to be friends with an enemy was to be an enemy. We were isolated. From a happy, cheerful girl, I became quiet, modest, diffident and insecure of the future.

Inessa Tarkhanova

ETHIOPIA

I was born on April 21, 1934, to a well-to-do and well-respected family. My mother was a daughter of a clergy; my father was a minister of communications during Emperor Haile Selassie's early years. My grandfather was a first President of the Parliament. My uncles on my father's side were very prominent government officials. One of them served the country as the minister of information; another one was the Crown Advisor to the Emperor until the end of the monarchy. He and my grandfather wrote most of the original Constitution of Ethiopia. My uncle wrote most of the textbooks for the ministry of Education in Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia.

My father died when I was three years old and my sister was only two. I also had another sister from my father's previous marriage. While most of the men in the family were educated, my aunts on both sides of my family were homemakers and women in high society. It was a tradition for the women including myself to visit the Emperor for tea in the palace every other Tuesday until he was deposed in 1974.

After the passing of my father, my grandfather took my sister and I so we could live with him and go to school in the capital city of Ethiopia. When we were old enough to attend school, my sister and I were boarded at a missionary school. We were both brought back to our grandfather because of small misunderstandings. The school decided to send our necklaces and gold crosses home because of fear of being stolen. My grandfather thought the school was planning to convert our religion. We then were taken out of the school that we enjoyed very much. My dream in life was to be a nurse. That was the end of my European education in Ethiopia. Instead a deacon was hired to teach us the Bible and to read and write in Amharic. While we were home

schooled for the language, we also received training in cooking, knitting and sewing.

I continued to take classes on this after I got married to the father of my nine children. My husband was a son of a governor of one Ethiopian province. I met my husband when he came to visit his aunt who was married to my grandfather. He was a Colonel, commander of the second brigade during Haile Selassie. Through our marriage we were blessed by the births of five sons and four daughters. In 1974 he was able to retire from his 30 years of military service. That is when I used my skills of home economics. I took a position to teach in a school that was close to my house. I taught boys and girls cooking, personal hygiene, sewing, and knitting. I did this until 1982. My husband passed away in 1982 at the age of 59. Two years after his death, I came to visit my three children who were residing in the United States. I brought one of my daughters with me, leaving the others at home.

After I left Ethiopia my other children moved to Nairobi, Kenya and Khartoum, Sudan. After so many years of struggle they came to reside with us in Oberlin, Ohio. Two of my daughters live in Lorain County. One of my sons lives in Cleveland, Ohio. One of my daughters lives in New York. Four of my boys and one daughter live in San Jose, California. My six-month visit turned into almost 20 years of a new life. I now have three granddaughters and two grandsons. I live with one of my daughters and her two children in Lorain, Ohio. While I miss my home and relatives and friends in Ethiopia, I have made Ohio as my second home and enjoy the friendships I have been making with the people in the area. I enjoy learning English and traveling with my classmates to places in Ohio.

Tiruwork Tadesse

LIFE IS...

Life is like a book full of colors, pictures and adventures.

Life is just like a cake named “pork skin,” Vietnamese cake. If you just eat a little then you feel it tastes good, but if you eat too much then you feel sick.

Life is like a burning candle. At the time when you light the wick, it was the time when you were born. All of your life will end like a candle when it runs out of wax. The matter is...a candle can make a little light, a little warmth and it's useful. How about you?

Life is like a box...”WOW” full pieces of a puzzle. Each piece is what has happened or what will happen. When you place correctly all of the pieces, you'll have a beautiful picture. It's a picture of your own life.

Life is a fight. You fight with others for something, or you fight with yourself to make yourself be better than in the past...

Life is like a wheel of motions always moving toward. Always look forward to do better. Life is everything you think about...

Vy Khanh Bui

ISLAM (RELIGION OF PEACE)

I am Hayfa Ali originally from Yemen. I have lived in America for 6 years with my husband and my two children. I love my family so much. My husband works in his business, and the two children go to Boardman High School and Glenwood Middle School.

I am happy in America and have many friends. The people are nice and friendly, but they do not know much about Islam (my religion). Islam stands for peace but some people think of the hijacked planes on 9-11-2001, but they have nothing to do with Islam.

Islam says if you kill one person for no reason you have committed a crime as if you have killed the whole humanity. Islam calls for peace, love, support and help and has nothing to do with terror.

It hurts to see and hear on TV or read in the newspaper about Islam terrorism. Islam is good. It speaks of love not terrorism. My God is Allah and the Koran says not to kill anybody, Muslims or people who aren't Muslim. Islam is peaceful. I want people to know my religion isn't like what they think.

I hope everybody or any organization who commits terrorism and says they are Muslim will not be connected with the Islam religion, because that is not what it is about.

Thanks to my husband. Thanks to my teacher.
Thanks to America. Thanks to Allah (my God).

Hayfa Ali Saleh

A LITTLE ABOUT ME

I am from Colombia South America. Colombia, as you know, is known for coffee and for its violence and drug production. But did you know that it is also known for cut flowers, emeralds, and pre-Colombian gold?

My name is Eunice McCoy, and I am presently attending ESL classes twice a week in the evenings at Campbell Memorial High School. Back in 1994 I met my husband Tom, a native of Campbell, and we were married in 1996. We have 4 children, 3 of whom are attending school at the Campbell elementary and middle schools.

Our family lives and works in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia in South America as missionaries with New Tribes Mission. We work to share the gospel with tribal people by training Colombians with the Biblical and technical skills necessary so that they can get involved in a cross cultural ministry with the tribal people of Colombia and throughout the world. There are some 65 tribal groups in Colombia. My family presently resides in Campbell, Ohio, but plan to travel back to Colombia in June of 2006 to return to our ministry there. We will work for the next 4 years there before returning again to the US.

I took the citizenship test on December 12, 2005, in Cleveland and passed it with red, white and blue colors! I didn't make a single mistake, and it took me only 20 minutes to complete! The swearing in ceremony took place on January 12 in Youngstown, Ohio. The neat thing is that I now am a dual citizen of both the USA and Colombia, making it easier for me and my family to travel back and forth between the two countries.

Eunise McCoy

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS (DAY OF THE DEAD)

Dia de Los Muertos is a special time for Catholic Hispanic Latinos from Mexico, South America, and even in the United States. We believe that on these days, November first and November second, the deceased are given consent to visit with their relatives and friends on earth. Both children and adults welcome the souls of their relatives who return home at this time of year to make sure all is well and that they have not been forgotten.

An *ofrenda* (offering) or altar is made in their home or gravesite. Flowers are used to decorate the altar and gravesite. Special Day of the Dead bread (*pan de muerto*) is baked in skull shapes, and children receive gifts, toys, and candy sugar skulls with their names on them. The skeleton and skull are in a happy, not scary, theme, and the colors are black, white, pink, yellow, and gold.

Special foods are placed on the altar or gravesite, foods that were the favorite of their loved ones. Candles are lit and poems called *Calacas* (skulls) are said.

November first is the day the souls of children, called *los angelitos* (little angels), is celebrated. November second is the day adults' souls return home. Both days are celebrated together: All Saints and All Souls Day.

A lot of people think that Halloween is the same as *Dia de Los Muertos*, but it isn't. Halloween is Satan and witches and all terror. All is negative. *Dia de Los Muertos* is to show love and respect for ancestors by celebrating the continuance of life, family relationship, and to find humor after death. All is positive. It's great fun!

Rebecca A. Ramos

SUPERSTITIONS

Hispanic people have a lot of superstitions and beliefs. Here are just a few.

1. When a storm is brewing, one takes a large knife and makes the sign of the cross in the air as if cutting the clouds. The cloud is divided. It works!
2. If one takes the matter from the eyes of a dog or cat and puts it in your eyes, one will see the devil or the dead. Don't do it!
3. If a baby gets the hiccups, one places a small red string on the baby's forehead and the hiccups stop.
4. When someone is frightened due to an accident or something scary, one drinks a glass of water with a spoon of sugar in it. You'll feel better.
5. We believe in the evil eye. This means that if someone sees a child or a person who has pretty eyes or pretty hair or something about that person is beautiful, you must touch the eyes or the hair of that someone or that person will get sick.
6. They will take the ill child or person to a *curandera* (spiritualist) who will take a raw egg and pass the egg over the body while saying a prayer. The egg is then broken into a clear glass dish and placed under the head of the bed of the ill person. The next day the dish is removed and the person is well. It really works!
7. Never sit your purse on the floor. It's bad luck, your money won't grow. I never place my purse on the floor.
8. If you're unhappy with your neighbor and would like for that neighbor to leave, get three peppercorns in your mouth and spit them at the door stop where the neighbor will step on them. Within two to three months your neighbor will move. You can also use this on a business. I'm not sure about this!

9. To have abundance and sweetness in your home, every Friday take a small amount of sugar and rice in equal amounts and mix together. Throw this mixture on the outside of doors so that when stepped on some of this mixture is carried on the soles of the shoes. Yes, it works.
10. If you dislike someone, I mean really hate them, you go to a cemetery and you get some dirt from a grave of someone who has had a violent death. You then throw this dirt on this person's yard. This person supposedly will always have bad luck. Scary!
11. To avoid the police stopping you or from having an accident, place a whole garlic in the trunk or under the seat of your car. It works; you don't even notice the odor!
12. Don't ever look into a mirror in a dark room or you will see the devil. Don't try this.
13. When it's very hot and there is no wind, not even a breeze, one calls the wind by saying, "*Barbas de Oro*," "*Barbas de Oro*," "*Barbas de Oro*," three times. This means golden beards. It really works.
14. Some people believe that witches turn into a large black bird called "*Lecusa*." I've never seen one!

Rebecca A. Ramos



Woven Memories



THE UNREAD LETTERS

Five years ago I sometimes helped my husband clean out the mobile home rentals that he owned after the people had moved out. One day my husband told me there was an empty trailer to clean, so I went there. I was surprised when I went in and saw that almost everything was still there. People usually leave things everywhere in piles like trash. In this one some clothes were on the floor, but the place looked almost clean. It seemed to me that the people who used to live there took their important things and just left. Who had lived here—a man or a woman? I continued my inspection in the bedroom. There were all kinds of baby dolls and different sorts of toys for baby girls. I started feeling sorry for them because everything I saw appeared to be placed there with love.

That day I did not move anything. I just left the place and went to find my husband to ask him about it. He said that the girl had just called him and said that she and her husband were through and that she had to go to her father's house to live.

My husband hired someone to take everything out of the house and burn it. But before it happened, I went back. I still had the same sad feeling as I had the first time I was there. I decided to take the baby dolls with me. As I was leaving, I saw some letters with different dates on them. I assumed she had written them, but I was unable to read them because I didn't know English very well at that time. I took them with me, too, because I thought somebody might come back for them, and I could return them. But nobody ever came.

During the next three years I went to Hocking College and took two quarters of English. After that I went to the ABLE class in New Lexington, learned more English and passed the

GED test. This past summer I took a two-month break, so that gave me the opportunity to do a thorough house cleaning. When I was cleaning the basement, I found the big bag with the baby dolls in it. The letters were there, too.

Immediately the memories came back to me of the day I had that sad feeling in the mobile home. I picked up the letters, now able to read them. One by one I read them and cried because I could picture myself in those letters. My own past was there. I remembered being married to my first husband and my struggle as a young bride and mother. This girl was so deeply in love with her husband that everything she did was for him and her family. She used to write him letters, as I used to write in my diary and say the same romantic, silly words. She had two girls, and I had two boys. It was amazing to me that we were struggling with the same feelings. I had no way of knowing those many years ago when I was looking through my window waiting for my husband to come home, that in another time and another place a young woman would feel the same way. Cultures view romance in different ways, but love is universal and the fear of losing love is the same the world over.

I really don't know what happened to this family. I wish them the best wherever they are. But one thing I know is that I will make some dresses for the baby dolls and find a little girl who will be a mother to them.

Emily Nutter

JAVIER

December 23, 1979, a gorgeous baby boy was born. His name is Javier G. Lara Jr. He has two older sisters, and a brother, from a previous marriage on his mom's side. The mother that gave birth to him didn't go to the hospital, like most people do. She stayed at home to have the whole family there for this blessing. She was full of grace and joy to see her baby boy. The Father that was there to see the whole thing come into light says that he wants to give his son his name.

Years have passed and now Javier Jr. has three younger sisters, all as beautiful as he. He has grown into a handsome man, a father, an uncle, and a FRIEND.

Javier had his hobbies. He loved to go fishing and loved to listen to music. He even loved spending time with his children.

Unfortunately, life takes its toll on all good people. On May 18, 2005, I received a phone call from my sister. She told me the bad news that our baby brother had been murdered. Just weeks after my birthday and the day before, my oldest daughter had a miscarriage. The day we buried my brother was the day that my cousin had died, just two years before.

Now this December will be a sad one. No Javier to celebrate his birthday, no Javier to celebrate Christmas, or all those joys of being a DAD.

All gone in a split second. No one knows how short life is until you lose one of your own.

Don't take life for granted, spend time with the ones you love, tell the ones you love that you love them, and most of all, pray for the ones you love dearly.

Merry Christmas and Happy Birthday
In Loving Memory of
Javier G. Lara

Tomas Nuñez

THANKSGIVING...MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY

Thanksgiving with my family is the best holiday for me because the food is wonderful and my three sisters and I do all of the cooking. My mother once cooked everything but now she enjoys sitting back and letting us do all of the cooking, which is just fine for us! The kids are running around and having a good time wondering if it is time to eat yet. We reply, "It's almost ready. It will be ready when Aunt Sherri and her family show up!" She's always late for everything and does not cook!

Lo and behold, there's Sherri and her family coming in the door. When we see her we say, "Come on everyone; it's time to pray over the food and give thanks." Our family has a tradition. We have everyone say what they're thankful for.

All the kids are really into giving thanks. They love it when it's their turn. The kids say things like, "I am thankful for my mother, father, sisters and brothers." It is really cute. The adults give their thanks. Then my father says a prayer over the food, and it's time to eat.

We always have different kinds of meat: turkey, ham, chicken, and roast beef. These are some of the sides: macaroni and cheese, greens, sweet potatoes and green bean casserole. The list goes on and on. An hour later everyone is full of food and can hardly move. Then it's time for games like...Family Feud, Name that Tune and Dancing Off. Then all the kids form a line in front of each other. The first two dance and go to the end of the line. The second two dance and it just goes on and on. It's a blast!

So, last but not least, guess what time it is now? "It's cleanup time in the kitchen." I yell out who gets the cleanup duties. My sister who doesn't cook doesn't clean up either. So it

usually will be me and my mother. This is why this is my favorite holiday to spend time with my family and have lots of fun.

Tina Wagner

THE BIG COUNTDOWN

As a child when summer time came around, I would come home from school for summer break, and my father would have the camper packed and ready to go. I would run to the house jumping over toys, bicycles, and anything I needed to in order to reach the door of the house. From outside I could hear my father yell, "Hurry up! Let's go!" I would run to my bedroom and grab my sleeping bag, fishing pole, and tent.

Loading it on the camper, I could imagine the smell of the wood burning in the campfire, although I was still over twenty miles away. Rushing my father to start the truck so we could go, I'd hold my breath as he turned the switch and we were off. I was so excited to get there, it seemed like it took days.

Over halfway there I would count down the miles, starting at fifteen. Climbing over my sister and mother to the passenger door, I could see the river. We were almost there! Counting down to ten miles, we passed little streams with fish, crawfish, and crystal clear water. At five miles, I could see the smoke in the air from hundreds of campfires. At three miles, we were beginning to see signs that would say "Blue Rock State Park." As we were pulling up, looking to the right I could see over the campgrounds, where all the kids were playing in the streams. Some were my friends.

As soon as we reached the campsite where we set up the camper every year, I jumped out of the truck and grabbed my fishing pole and took off for the lake. As I was running down the road I would hear my mother say, "Be back in one hour for supper." Popping over the hill and reaching the lake, I could see people to the left swimming at the beach. To my right there were people fishing, scattered out across the lake. I usually didn't catch anything, but it was fun. As I headed back to the campsite, I walked the creek, splashing through the water and climbing rocks along side the creek.

Back at the campsite, I played in the creek behind the camper. I grabbed big rocks and placed them in a circle about three feet wide in the water so I could keep my catches fresh until we cooked them.

I played at the park, in the creeks, at the beach and went to the movies day after day. Every Friday night the camp ranger would set up his equipment to play a movie for the kids. The movie always had something to do with wild animals. I remember being there every week because I love the wild.

It went on for weeks, and then we would pack up the camper and head home. As we drove away, I'd have my eyes glued to the window, saddened because we were leaving. I would cheer myself up by saying, "There's always next summer."

Steven McCord

THE OLD DOGTOWN SCHOOLHOUSE

When I was a young girl, I heard my dad tell my sister and brother about things the older boys would do to their teacher when he attended the Old Dogtown Schoolhouse. The school had eight classes in one room. My dad was in the first grade when all this happened. His two brothers and one sister were also attending the school. My dad told us that there were 5-6 children in each class.

Here are some things that those older boys did. They would take the rope from the belfry, so the teacher couldn't ring the bell for them to come in to class. One time those boys put a snake in the teacher's car. The teacher had to stay at school all night.

Another time something funny happened was when my aunt (his sister) rode a pony to school. At recess, the boys put the pony in the belfry. My aunt couldn't get the pony down. Those boys really got into trouble for that.

One time those older boys told my dad to run from the teacher and jump in the ditch across the road. He did, and he landed right in water. He had to put on other clothes. When he got home, both grandpa and grandma gave him trouble. The next day grandma went to school and told the teacher what those older boys put my dad up to. The year was 1921.

As the years passed, dad finished school and married my mom. They had two boys and one girl. I came in 1950. In 1951, my parents bought the old schoolhouse. They remodeled it in 1957 by adding two bedrooms and a garage. Then my dad added a basement under the building. At first, he started with a spoon, then a pick and shovel. It took a long time to dig out the basement, but we finally had a basement. My dad let me help him with the digging. I liked to help.

Our home, the Old Dogtown Schoolhouse, was where my dad went to school. He had many memories of the school and the trouble some kids got into.

Carol Adams

MY TABLE

My table used to be full of laughter.
My table used to be for homework, eating meals,
making school projects.

My table used to be where we sat and talked and laughed
about the day or what was going on for the weekend.
My table used to be where we ate our Thanksgiving,
Christmas and Easter dinners.

My table used to be for repairing scrapes and cuts
of the children of the neighborhood, to patch up the wounds
and make the tears go away.

My table used to be for happy birthday parties where
everybody would stand around and sing the birthday song.
My table used to be used for coloring books and drawing
pictures, to make Valentine boxes and cards, and to make
things like Christmas cookies or popcorn balls for Halloween.

That is how my table was used.

Now that they have all grown up, my table is used
for setting things on or just for writing letters.
Once in a while my table is used for my grandchildren,
and I listen to them chatter away.
It brings back memories of the good old days.

Brenda Carroll

BERRY PICKING

I can remember berry picking on the open country road as if it were yesterday. Dad and I would go berry picking every summer in late June. I could hardly wait to get there. I would have the white five-gallon buckets ready. Dad and I would hop into the old blue truck, which had a strong aroma of nicotine and dust. The floorboards of the truck were rusty and gritty sounding. Down the road we would go. I was Daddy's girl, and there was nothing more special than to be right beside him.

We would get out of the truck, grab our buckets, and dart down the side of the dusty, gravel road. I can remember cars coming by and the thick cloud of dust whirling through the air, leaving a gritty taste in my mouth, but I never once complained. Dust was the least of my worries. Berries upon berries were always growing everywhere along both sides of the road and on the fences. We picked for hours and usually filled both five-gallon buckets. I always seemed to get my fingers poked and my legs scratched up, but I never noticed it until I got home.

When we got home, I would pour the berries into the sink and wash them. By the time I was finished, my fingers were wrinkled from being in the water and had a sticky feeling in between them with a purple stain on them that lasted for a few days. My brother and sisters would help bag them and put them into the freezer. We would always leave out enough so Mom could make a blackberry cobbler. As she would boil the berries you could smell the sweet aroma from them. She would put all her love and care in that cobbler, and that's what made it so darn delicious.

Sara Fox

TICKLE ME GAME

One evening I was sitting on the couch with my son and his five-year-old, my grandson. My grandson was lying beside me with his head on my lap, and we started playing a little game called the Tickle Me Game.

“Let me see your underarm. I won’t touch it; I just want to look at it. I won’t tickle it,” I said. I would slowly try to raise his arm with him holding it tight to his side, so I couldn’t lift it up. Then he would slowly start lifting his arm while laughing so hard that it made us all laugh.

He would say, “Don’t tickle it. Just look at it.”

I would repeat myself and say, “I won’t tickle it; I just want to look at it.” Finally while trying to get him to raise his arm, he lifted it up, and I tickled him. He laughed and laughed and laughed. We laughed until our bellies hurt.

While playing this little game with my grandson, my son reminded me of a time when I would play the same game with him when he was a little boy. I couldn’t believe that he remembered it. He had never mentioned it to me before. It was like going back in time and playing that same little game with him, my son, who is now a grown man. It was like a memory had been awakened. Maybe someday when my little grandson is grown up and has a child of his own, he may play the same game with him. I felt joy in my heart that day because my son had remembered a time when he was small and we had played the Tickle Me Game together.

Linda Darlene Nelson

PETE AND HIS BEST FRIEND BOB

Once upon a time there was a boy named Pete who had a best friend named Bob. Bob and Pete would spend all their time together everyday, except when Pete had to attend school during the day. Pete loved school, but he couldn't always keep his mind on what he was told to do by his teacher. Pete didn't have many friends in school, so he spent a lot of his time thinking about Bob.

One day when school was almost over, the teacher told everyone in the class to bring something in for Show and Tell the next day. Pete got very excited! The first thing Pete thought was, "I can bring my best friend Bob in for Show and Tell."

The next day, Pete and Bob got dressed, rushed down stairs to eat, and caught the bus for school. Bob was so excited; he was finally going to school with Pete. Since Pete brought his best friend in, the teacher told him to start Show and Tell first. Pete walked his best friend around the room for the whole class to see. Then he told the class how he and Bob play different kinds of games after school. Pete told them that they often pretend to go on safari hunts in the African desert. They also go fishing at the creek behind their house and camp out at night in their back yard.

The whole class was so excited that they all wanted to play with Pete and Bob after school. Pete had finally made friends at school. Sometimes his new friends would ask him to come to their house and play. He would always say, "Yes, but only if Bob can come too!"

He told all his friends that his dog, Bob, goes everywhere with him because Bob was always his friend when nobody wanted to play with him.

Margaret Ison

LOST AND FOUND

In the town where I live, I was very fortunate to find a nice place to live. We are surrounded by families with lots of children running around. It seems that almost everyone has a pet of one kind or another. I have lived there for two and a half years, and I think because of the location, it is an excellent dumping ground for misfit animals. I use the word misfit because the ones I have seen running around here lately are looking pretty rough. I have already taken in three cats and a dog. One cold night in December one of my neighbors decided they were tired of the puppy they had gotten and just threw her out like yesterday's trash. A couple of neighbors helped out with making her up a bed in the breezeway, and we gave her some food so her belly was good and full for the night.

The next morning, when I came home from class, our grounds keeper was in the courtyard trying to sweep up some trash on the sidewalk and she was jumping around and he spoke up and said, "You need a puppy!" I laughed at him and said, I bet my cats would really love it. So I told him I would take her in and give her a bath and clean her up good, but that was about it. I really did like her but my apartment was filling up fast. Well, the longer I kept her the more I was getting used to having a dog again. I started taking her out to potty and before I knew it we had a routine.

She is 5 months old now. She has turned out to be the best dog. Now, keep in mind that I already have all these cats running around, and by the way they love the dog.

I got a knock on the door one afternoon. It was the maintenance man, telling me they need to see me at the office. I got over there, and the first thing I saw was a box on the floor. His son was out cleaning the grounds and when he was loading the dumpster with trash, he heard whining coming from inside. He got up in there and moved boxes around and sure enough someone had put a baby kitten in

the bottom of the dumpster. He dug her out and of course, I was the first person he came looking for. As you can see, I can't say no.

My animals are very healthy. They just look sort of funny. You see, both my new puppy and the kitty from the dumpster had broken tails. We now call this my home for misfit animals. They are the best pets on the planet. All they needed was some TLC.

Susan Crabbe

HONEYMOON NIGHTMARES

This is a story about a honeymoon which started out happy but before long, turned into a nightmare.

On June 25, 1954, Don and I were married. We had a small wedding. The next day, we got up early to go on a tour of the northwest states and to visit his sister in Wyoming. The car was a nineteen-year-old Pontiac Ferrio. We drove until 11:00 PM, then stopped to get something to eat. After eating, we thought we would drive a little longer. Wrong! The car died. So now what?

We were in no man's land with no motel in sight. There was, however, a garage. We saw a man there. Don asked him about the car, and he said, "We'll check it out tomorrow." Now to find a place to stay.

The one motel was full. The desk clerk called a few places in Atlantic, Iowa. He found us a room at the Hawkeye Motel. We asked about a taxi or some way to get there. The man said he would take us. It was a 15-mile ride.

The ride was very interesting. It was in the back of a pickup truck with some chickens, tools, and dirty rags, but it was better than walking.

We got up the next morning to see the town a little better. It had a small shopping center and a McDonald's. Meanwhile, the man called from the garage to tell us about the car. It would take a few days to get the parts, so we walked to McDonald's for some breakfast, then later, for lunch and dinner. Also, I could tell you all about the K-Mart there (in the shopping center).

Finally, after five days, the car was ready. Don asked me, "Are we going to go back home?" I said, "Yes," and he was happy about that.

So we were on the road again. We were in Indiana on the interstate. Guess what happened? You got it. The car broke down again around 10:00 PM. A nice highway patrolman stopped and called a tow truck for us. Now we

worried about how much this was going to cost, plus finding a place to stay. We were running out of money. So I had to phone home and ask my kids for money. Daughter Patti said she would get us \$500.00 and send it Western Union. So we got the money, got the car fixed, and started again.

Finally, back in Ohio, I said, "If it dies again, I will call someone to come after me, take a bus, or walk home." Later that evening, we arrived back home. I was so glad, I almost kissed the ground. Oh, by the way, we no longer have that car.

Nancy Johansen

REMEMBERING AMY

Amy and I grew up together in Vinton, Louisiana. We were the best of friends. Every weekend through junior high and the first years of high school we were at each other's houses. When we were in the tenth grade, she moved to Galveston, Texas. She had a boyfriend who lived there, so she decided to move closer to his family. I was sad, of course, but we wrote and talked often.

A year later she moved back home. We went out every weekend to the clubs. And then, a year after that, I moved to Macon, Georgia, with my boyfriend, and we had to say goodbye again. We talked and wrote quite often, and when I moved back home, we had a lot to catch up on. We got jobs together working at Boudin Kitchen in Louisiana. That was the most fun I ever had working. We worked from 11:00 A.M. until 7:00 P.M. After work we always did the same thing – get into the car, crank up the radio, light a cigarette, and go home by the back country roads. There was nothing better in life than that particular place and time. There was nothing that we didn't do, and we always did it together.

During that time I had a boyfriend and ended up pregnant. Three weeks after I told him, he decided it wasn't his. I was living with my dad, and Amy was living with her mom and brother. We were both twenty-one and full of energy. She would pick me up for work every day. We worked six days a week. Amy was my rock when I was down. It was pretty hard being pregnant and trying to accept that the father was not going to be in the picture. I tried hard to get him back, but nothing seemed to work.

Around my seventh month, Amy found a boyfriend. They got close real fast. In my eighth month I went on maternity leave. Amy and I didn't get to spend a lot of time together. But

when she wanted to go out drinking, I would drive her, pregnant and all, going to the clubs. I would have done anything for her, and I did. I had my first child (Hayden) on February 5, 1997, and shortly after, Amy got pregnant. I had my own apartment, and so did she and Aaron. After her daughter Alannah was a year old, they split up, and Hayden and I moved in with her to help out on bills for both of us. We were both waitresses.

Amy liked to drink margaritas, and she drank a lot. I usually worked graveyard shift. One evening she came into my restaurant with a friend after she got off work. She had a margarita in her hand. She told me it was her first. I asked her what she was going to do that night. She told me our friend Chris was taking her home to rest, so I didn't need to worry about it. Around 2:30 that morning some guy came into the restaurant out of breath and asked if anyone knew Amy Laughlin. Of course I said, "Yes, that's my best friend." He said she had been in a wreck. I decided to go check on her. By the time I got there, the ambulance had already rushed her to the nearest hospital. When I got there, her mom and sister were there and said they needed to put her in a better hospital, but didn't even know if she would make it there. They ended up flying her to Lake Charles Hospital where she stayed on life support for a week. The first time I saw her, I brought a picture of Alannah with me. This would be the day that would change my life forever.

I walked in and all I saw were tubes running every which way. As I held Alannah's picture close to my chest clutching it tightly as though I was fixing to fall off a building, I walked slowly to her bed. It seemed like it took an eternity to get there. Her skin was a pale, yellowish color. Her eyes were somewhat open, but not responsive to movement. The left side of her long, flowing, beautiful hair was shaved off. All I could see were staples upon staples on her beautiful head. She had a tube running out of her mouth on her lifeless

bottom lip. I was told that her left side was paralyzed, and that if she did pull through without life support, she would be a vegetable for the rest of her life. It never hit me at that particular time that I was going to say goodbye just hours later. Everyone had said she had been unresponsive for a week. I sat next to her bed and started talking to her about bringing a picture of her baby girl. I held it up and showed her, and then I put the picture on her chest. I grabbed her hand and told her how much I loved her, and how she was going to come home, and we would get through this together. When I looked up at her quiet face, to my surprise, a single teardrop rolled down the left side of her cheek. Maybe that was her way of telling me goodbye and that she was going home, only it wasn't the home I would ever have expected.

Three hours later they made the decision to take her off life support. The feelings that came across me were overwhelming, so much so that I couldn't cry and I couldn't talk. I felt like I had no heart because I couldn't cry. My body was in shock. My thoughts were, "What will I do without Amy? Why did God have to take such a beautiful young girl who had a baby to raise? Who's going to tell her 'Mommy's not coming home—ever'?" I learned that we should never ask why. God just needed another angel to help pour out the rain. I found it unusual because just two weeks before she passed away, we had sat on the porch and these were her exact words: "Only the good die young. We will live forever." I guess she spoke too soon. She had sat there after that and told me exactly what she wanted to be buried in. She wanted to be comfortable – hair in a ponytail, blue jeans and a T-shirt. She never wore dresses and hadn't planned to wear one when she was gone. Needless to say, her mom wouldn't listen to me and buried her in a dress and put this bright-ass red lipstick on her. Hello! Amy never wore red lipstick!

The cause of her death was drinking and driving. She hadn't stayed home. Chris brought her there, but she had left shortly after. That had been her second margarita, not her first, and there were double shots of tequila in them. She had gone to a restaurant where she used to work and drank some more. Well, then she had started annoying everyone, so they had asked her to leave. She was very intoxicated at this point and couldn't find her key. Guess who had helped her? The Vinton Police Department. The keys had been in her truck and the police, who happened to be in the restaurant eating, let her drive home. I know Amy Joe so well that I know she had been mad because she had to leave, so she was coming to meet me at work which was about five miles away. She almost made it, but ended up falling asleep at the wheel. She lost control, hit a culvert, and flew out the window. Somehow she had made it to the road before she collapsed.

It's been almost six years since Amy's death. I now have moved on and live in Ohio. Alannah is six and currently living with her father, Aaron. I sometimes wonder and hope that he tells his daughter what a wonderful and outspoken woman her mother was. I haven't seen Alannah since Amy's death, but I'm sure she is the spitting image of her mother.

Sara Fox

*Mending &
Alterations*

SOBRIETY

After one year...
Of sobriety and a relapse
Of sobriety and strength
Of sobriety and just a different route

After one year of sobriety and honesty,
I know where I stand.

Ebony Pierce

TOUGH QUESTIONS

People, do you ever wonder, "Why the hell am I here?"
Never knowing the answer to that's my big fear.
Ask yourself how am I here to be me;
Was it from apes or Eve touching the tree?
I ask myself this type of stuff all the time –
Shit like, "Will I work or get paid by crime?"
I look back and wish there were more good times than bad,
But it's not good to dwell when things make you sad.
Sometimes it's best to leave all behind
'Cause things and people can twist your mind.
Is it because I partied too hard?
Was it from eating shrooms and pills or crushing up shard?
Here I am pushing smoke in my soon-to-be-only lung,
And I wonder why I have to write 'cause words get twisted in
my tongue.
It's almost like a test; who's winning this game?
It's not just getting by; it's all money and that's a shame.
Don't get me wrong; I can blow money on a bunch of shit.
That's until I get home and see I can't afford or really need it.
Do we really need everything we have to stay here and
survive?
You could take it all away, and I'm sure I'd still be alive.
Look back at the cavemen who didn't go far.
Today instead of walking most people drive a car.
I'd like to take people out of civilization for about a week.
By the time you put them back, they wouldn't be able to
speak.
Do we all have a match, or are we just on our own,
Constantly reaching for people either by US mail or a phone?
My head's getting dizzy, as these questions I ask myself.
Should I put this in a book and set it on the shelf?

Candice VanSickle

IF

If you continue to think
As you have always thought,
You will continue to be
What you have always been.
If you continue to feel
What you have always felt,
You will continue to become
What you already are.
If you continue to believe
What you have always believed,
You will continue to hope
For what you have always hoped.
If you continue to do
What you have always done,
You will continue to have
What you have already have.
If you continue to will
What you have always willed,
You will continue to live
As you have always lived.

BELIEVE THAT!

Roger D. Wade

THE JOURNEY OF A WOMAN

From the moment she is born into this world, a woman is on an ever-lasting journey to discover who she is. Born to take on her father's last name, her identity not her own.

She is then groomed to grow up to become someone's wife, mother, and grandmother. She has dreams of being a dancer, a singer, a world traveler, all the while expected to be what her father, boyfriend, or husband wants her to be.

The little girl, happy, smiling and innocent is all too soon replaced with a negative, confused and guarded teen, due to the almost constant verbal, physical, mental attack upon her from men in various forms, be it in movies, videos, songs, internet, male relatives. This is when she learns to suppress her emotions in order to survive becoming a woman.

Taught to always put others' needs before her own, she's prone to depression and anger or pressure to be the "perfect" woman. She mentally blocks out all that she has felt she could become. All but a small ember of herself (which burns deep inside) is pushed out of her. Crying on the inside, she shifts her pain to a place not to be looked at until she's in her thirties. That seems to be the age that her mind has matured enough to handle and process and "let go" and let God guide her on her journey's path.

She encounters spiritual sisters (some may not know that's what they are) that offer guidance through talking or deeds. Helping her to trust her own judgments in her life decisions. Spiritual sisters teach her to stand her ground and to be heard. They teach her that she does have something important to say and that she is worth listening to. That small ember begins to flame.

Through that process of discovery she finds that she can choose which way her path will lead her. Her power is

the power of choice. Her choice is change through the love of God and positive thoughts, which become her shield of honor for life.

When faced with negativity, now in this stage of her life, she has armed herself with determination and courage not to accept “no” when it comes to anything she’s passionate about.

Willing to step out on faith and to see past her human frailty, she discovers that she is the daughter of Christ Jesus and that her journey until the end of her days has been pre-ordained to be in his service.

Henrietta Young

MY BROTHER'S ANGEL

Do people really have Guardian Angels? My brother Lucas is living proof that they do. Several times a Guardian Angel has had Lucas's hand. The first time was a story that Mom told me. I was about seven years old, and Lucas was about three years old. My cousins and I were playing in the woods, and the adults were in the yard having a cookout. I came back to the house to use the bathroom, and I saw Lucas inside the neighbors' underground pool, which was about a half of a football field away. The pool had no ladders or any way out. I ran and told my mom. She just froze. Everybody else ran to the pool while my mom stood there in shock thinking of her baby boy underwater. To everybody's amazement that Guardian Angel was with him and lifted him to safety. He was sitting there on the deck just as unconcerned as could be. Are there really Guardian Angels?

Another time was about two years ago. Lucas was seventeen years old. I was living at my grandma's at the time. My parents were out of town that weekend, so Lucas was home alone and decided that he was going to sleep on the couch. Thankfully that was the decision that he made because he woke up to the noise of the neighbors yelling at him from outside the trailer. He opened his eyes and saw that the trailer was on fire. He woke up just in time to get on his hands and knees and crawl out the door, which was right beside the couch. He went out into the bitter cold of winter in his underwear. When he got outside, he didn't know what was going on or even where he was for about ten minutes. The smoke must have gotten to him. My son and I were supposed to stay that weekend. Thankfully, it didn't work out that way because we would have been sleeping in the back bedroom. Once again, in what could have been Lucas's last surviving moments, the Guardian Angel had a hold of him. Are there really Guardian Angels?

Just this past summer, the Guardian Angel wasn't only with him but also with my son Cory. I lived in Newark at the time. Lucas came down to visit us and, when he was leaving, Cory wanted to go home with him. I went ahead and let Cory go. Lucas had to bring him back at 6:30 A.M. He was driving down Rte. 13 to Newark, and somewhere in Thornville a deer ran in front of him. He cut the wheel real sharp and rolled over a bank. The car flipped about five or six times. Cory wasn't in his seatbelt. Lucas said that all he did was look back at Cory in the back seat and could see him going up and down as the car flipped. When the car landed, it landed on the wheels. Lucas grabbed Cory, held him tight, and drove the car all the way from Thornville to Newark (about ten miles) with him in his arms. When they arrived at my apartment, I was in bed. I got up to let them in, and Lucas kept walking from the living room to the kitchen saying, "I'm sorry" over and over. At this time I didn't know what was wrong. I was trying to get Cory to put him back in bed because it was 6:00 A.M., but Lucas would not let go of him. He was still in such shock that he couldn't get out the words to tell me what had happened. He just kept saying that he was sorry.

Finally, I looked out the door and I couldn't believe what I saw. The car was about half its size. Every window in it was shattered out. The tires were all bent and the roof of the car was almost touching the seats. By the looks of that car, you would never be able to picture anyone walking away from that accident. Thankfully, Lucas and Cory both were all right and had not a scratch on them. He was finally calmed down a bit and was all right. He was just so in shock at first, and that was totally understandable. When I laid eyes on that car, I was a little shocked also, but thank heavens that Guardian Angel was by their side protecting them from harm.

There's no doubt in all of our minds that Lucas feels blessed and fortunate that he has been watched over. For

anyone who doubts or does not believe that there are Guardian Angels watching over us, maybe this will strengthen your faith.

I believe in Guardian Angels. Do you?

Monica Ruddock

RESTORATION

Leery I loomed,
My soul consumed,
With a fiery hate my fate is doomed,
I care too much,
And my drugs are my crutch,
In the days of old I didn't think much,
Believed what I heard and not what I touched,

And though I'm tired of the things that I see,
I know it's a result of me
Not being where I want to be,
Refined and declined
For the third time askin' god to restore sight to the blind,
And now I'm hopin',
To see my dreams accomplished with my third eye open,
It's a way to relieve stress, a way of copin',
With a pencil and pad, I define my emotion.

William Norman

MIXED EMOTIONS

I sometimes think, "Why was I born on this earth?"
Sometimes I don't know how much life is worth.
 My mind is completely gone
I sometimes don't know what's going on.
 I just don't know who to trust.
I have a lot of anger that is about to bust.
The voices in my head are driving me insane,
 But they sometimes are not to blame.
It's hard to know who really loves me
 Or who's really my enemy.
 If I was to die
I would wonder who would cry.
 Life is so worthless to me
There's no reason for me to be free.

Jasmin Barham

JUST A GIRL

I am a girl who has fear in her eyes,
I am a girl in a world full of lies,
I am a girl who needs a vacation,
I am a girl who gets in bad situations,
I am a girl without a dad,
I am a girl who gets really sad,
I am a girl searching for love,
I am a girl trying to rise above
expectations to always do what's right,
I am a girl who cries herself to sleep at night,
I am a girl waiting for the dawn of a new day,
I am a girl wishing someone would tell me
that it will all be okay.

Evelyn Bedo

IF I COULD DO IT ALL OVER!

If I could do it all over again,
I would pay better attention to the world around me.
I would focus more on who I could be, instead of who I
would be.
I would familiarize myself with the more important things in
life.
I would empower myself with the necessary knowledge to be
better.
You see, I am only human, and that I could never change.
I make mistakes like anyone else; I've done it in the past.
No doubt I will continue to make mistakes in the future.
I have no control over that; it's an unchangeable ability
For me and for all of us; but nevertheless, I can still improve.

If I could do it all over again
I would work harder to overcome the fears that wrap
themselves
Inside of me like an embryo, crippling me from head to toe.
I would dig deeper to seek out a better plan for the future.
I would search longer for the most important answer of my
life
As if I were on a lifesaving journey, and not give up so easily.
I promise myself to remember all the bad experiences I've
suffered
To give thanks for the special gifts I received throughout my
experiences.
I am not rich in power or in knowledge, but through it all I
continue to grow.

You see, if I could do it all over again
I would be smarter, wiser, and brighter.
I would love me, whoever I am, for what I am.
I would reject not who I am, nor who I was meant to be.
I would not be fearful of the jungle around me, called world.

I would claim my place in the universe and not let it swallow
me up.

I would not give up on my dreams, my life, or my desires.

I would not commit myself to a mental coma willingly.

I would not stop living, only to pretend to exist.

I would have better control over my heart and those I give it
to.

I would be invisible to no one, especially myself.

I would respect and know the power that I possess as a
human.

Finally, I only hope that I can do it all over, before it's too
late.

Maria G. Thomas

LIFE OF A FEMALE HUSTLER

Hustlin' day and night
Trying to get my money right
Staying up late so my children ate
Selling pills so the users
Could get their thrill

While my pockets
Were getting fatter
My mind filled with laughter

Selling them crack, then turning my back
So I could smile by the way they act
And my pockets were still getting fat

Living large and going to fancy bars
Driving the finest cars
Trying to live like a self-made diva
Thinking life would be easier
Selling the world my dream
Only to wake up to an infrared beam

It scared me so bad
It felt like Freddy was in my dream

I was a diva in distress
Trying to make sense of all this mess,
It was a nightmare on Diva Street
I knew I couldn't compete

"Check mate" that's what was said
As the blast just missed my head
I rolled under my bed
At that point I thought I was dead
Losing everything that made me who I am

I looked up and said
DAMN,
“The Lord let me live another day”
At that point I began to pray

Keeva Long

THE RUMOR

I was born in Gary, Indiana, and lived there for two years. Then my parents got a divorce, and we all moved to Kentucky. My sister and I lived with my mom. My dad remarried when I was three to a woman named Lora Neighbors who had a two-year-old son. His name was Aaron. Aaron and I were close in age. We became best of friends.

Aaron was a middle child, as was I. We shared a lot of common interests such as music, art, friends, movies, and so much more. My dad didn't like our choice of friends, and we would sneak out to see them, go to parties, or just hang out. We would sneak into each other's rooms at night to smoke cigarettes, talk half of the night away, and help each other with our problems. Sometimes we drew on each other's skin until there wasn't any place on us that was bare.

We both struggled with our fathers, family, and school. My dad was a drug addict, an alcoholic, and very abusive. His father was never there.

A lot of people disliked Aaron, but they didn't know him, and they had no clue what his life was like or what he'd been through. I would always stick up for him when people would put him down, and I still do.

I would visit my dad on the weekends and all summer. But when I was seventeen, my dad moved to Tennessee, and I only got to go back there on summer vacation. But Aaron and I remained best friends.

When Aaron was fifteen or sixteen, he started doing drugs, such as marijuana, white crosses, and acid. People then thought even worse of him, but I couldn't. It did worry me. I

was afraid he would turn out like my dad, but it didn't change our relationship. I knew what his life was like and why.

I didn't start doing drugs until I was nineteen. Then we did them together, smoking pot and white crosses. We stayed high all the time because the drugs were free to us. My dad and his wife (Aaron's mom) and our friends supplied them all.

When Aaron was seventeen, he got married. He and his wife Michelle lived with my dad. They had three beautiful children, Aric, Alex, and Alyssa. I moved in with my dad shortly after Aric was born. A year later I moved back to Ohio with my mom. A couple years later Aaron and Michelle separated. Aaron moved to Oregon. Michelle and the kids moved to Kentucky. Aaron and I saw each other once or twice before he moved to Oregon. But we didn't see each other for three years after that.

Aaron moved back to Kentucky in 1996. He wanted to fight for custody of his kids. He met a girl named Tabitha. They started dating. She had an older sister, Falcia, who was jealous of their relationship. She started a rumor, saying she (Falcia) was pregnant by my stepbrother Aaron.

Falcia also had a boyfriend whose name was Isaac. He began to hear the rumor and became very jealous. Aaron and Isaac started drinking one evening, and Isaac started questioning Aaron about his relationship with Falcia. My brother was not one to fight. He started to leave when Isaac called him back and told him Tabitha and Falcia's mom wanted him. Aaron started walking back to the trailer. Isaac came up from behind and hit Aaron with a pair of brass knuckles in the back of the head. Then he stabbed Aaron in the chest twice with a knife. Aaron's girlfriend (Tabitha) ran to Aaron, sat down, and held him. Aaron was gasping for air and trying to talk. Ten minutes later Aaron died. He had drowned to death on

his own blood. They caught Isaac and his girlfriend thirty minutes later. She was taking him home.

Isaac was charged with first-degree murder. He came up for parole in December 2005. Aaron died December 22, 1997. Falcia was not even pregnant.

I never got to tell my brother good-bye or that I loved him with all my heart. Now I tell the people I love every day how I feel. Life is too short to take for granted. People die when you least expect it.

Ladonna D. Pharis

JEALOUSY BRUISES

This is what the dictionary says about “jealous”: “demand complete devotion and to feel mean resentment toward a rival or competitor.” I know first-hand what it’s like. I lived it for two years. I loved the guy dearly, but he controlled my life and everything I did or said.

When we first got married, life was great. We did everything together. Then one day it started. At first it was calling work to make sure I was there. Then, he was scanning my phone calls. I couldn’t see my friends or family. Once he snapped, the beatings started. I would have bruises on my arms and face. I would tell my family I fell or walked into something, so no one really knew what I was going through. Then the mood changed. He would get so mad if the house wasn’t cleaned, if there was more mileage on the car than he thought there should be, or if I didn’t come home on time. I could never go anywhere by myself. Every day I would wonder what was going to happen next. He always acted like there was nothing wrong, and everything was fine.

My children didn’t know what was going on until they came home early from school one day and saw him mad and angry, beating on me. The next day the school called me and asked me what was going on because one of the kids told them that Daddy was beating on Mommy. As always, I told them it was not true because I knew if I said something, it would happen all over again.

A few days later we were planning a cookout with the neighbors. That’s when everything came out in the open. I forgot to light the grill, and he started to scream and yell. The neighbor told him not to worry about it since we had all day. Well, needless to say, the cookout didn’t happen. The neighbors went home and we fought half the day behind

closed doors. My children finally called 911. The police showed up, and I told them about the beating and showed them the bruises. They took him off to jail that night but told me they couldn't keep him long. The police took the kids and me to a domestic shelter to stay, and they helped me get a restraining order so he couldn't come around us.

I felt like my whole world had crashed. I was watching everything I did. My children and I moved out of the shelter into our own home. He found out where we lived and came to the house and harassed me. The police would take him away, but he always came back. A year later we were divorced, and I haven't seen him since then. I heard that he remarried, but is now going through another divorce and living in a town close by me. But after five years without him, my life has been good. My children and I have been through lots of counseling, but we have put the past behind us. We have settled down in our hometown and struggled for a year. But we are closer now than we ever were and living a happier life.

Patty Boring

FROM STREET LIFE TO G.E.D.

I was born in 1963, and at the age of three years I lost my mom. She passed away from chest pain in her lovely heart. My dad and grandmother took care of my three brothers, one sister, and me until I was six years old. Soon after my mother passed away, my dad's drinking problem got worse until it was so bad, he couldn't raise five children alone. My grandmother got tired of my dad lying to her and using her by putting pressure on her to raise his kids.

A year had passed since my mom died, and we lost our home because of past due property taxes. My oldest brother Ricky moved out to my uncle's house, and the rest of us moved in with my aunt. Now I was living in a place where I really didn't want to live. When my dad asked me if I wanted to live with my aunt, I said no. But I didn't have a choice.

That was the last time I was in contact with my dad. From the age of seven until the age of sixteen, I had not heard from nor seen my dad. Even though we both live here in Lorain, Ohio, just a fifteen-minute car drive away from each other, he never even stopped by to tell me, "I love you," or to see how I was doing.

Years went by, and I became a freshman in high school needing the material things in life. I was a decent student and a promising athlete with my name well known in high school sports.

I could play the sports, but I was a bitter child. I was full of anger, and I had trouble making my grades. I felt left out because all my friends and classmates went home to their family and had hot meals, while I went home to a hope and a prayer that there would be someone home with food on the table. One September day, our gas was turned off because my aunt had a serious gambling problem and had spent all of our money on the numbers game. She received a total of \$1,465.00 a month from Social Security. That money should

have been spent for the support of my brothers and sisters and me. There is no good reason why we shouldn't have had gas or food in our home.

One day, my neighbor who was a numbers man, a pimp, and a drug dealer came to me and asked me, "Do you need money?" I said "Yes." He told me, "Come to my house to cut my grass." I was there on the spot whenever he asked me. After I cut the grass, he told me to come inside to get something to drink. He asked me if I needed an after school job. I said, "Yes," but asked what type of job it was. He replied, "You can handle yourself in the streets because you have street smarts. I want you to run numbers and sell drugs for me." I said, "I can sell the drugs." My aunt had a problem with the numbers, so I didn't want to be the one to be selling numbers to my aunt! I couldn't do that. My aunt might have killed me. I told him that I would sell the drugs. Believe me, the power you receive from drug dealing is amazing. You have so much power and control over people. Unfortunately, I also got addicted to the power and control, and I left home.

When I was eighteen, I dropped out of high school because I couldn't make the grade. I couldn't play sports, so I had no more interest in high school. Now I had everyone looking for me and calling for me, and I felt like a king.

I enjoyed that feeling and needed the money because my oldest child and only daughter entered the world. I didn't realize my children would see me doing things that I shouldn't have been doing, or that doing those things would take me away from my family and friends. Soon I would be separated from them because I was heading toward prison. I was convicted of drug trafficking and did a total of two years.

I did my time, got back out, and went right back to doing the same things for the next twenty plus years. During that time, I drank the best wine, ate the best food, and saw the biggest stars from the east to the west coasts. By the time I was thirty-five years old, my oldest son was stealing and selling drugs, following in his dad's footsteps. Instead of

getting upset with him, I admired him and did not realize that he was heading for failure in life just like his dad. I felt like I had to sell drugs to support my family, so nothing else mattered to me at that time. Working a regular job was out of the question for me because I was getting money the easy way to support my kids. What I really was doing was causing a problem for Lorain and Lorain County, and I still feel responsible for a lot of gang activity today.

After my last stay in prison, I came out and became a part of the well known M.O.B. gang, which was featured in a gangster rap song popular at that time. You couldn't stand on the street corner and sell drugs without being in someone's gang. You either had to be a member or carry a pistol, so I chose the gang. There I was, back on the street for thirteen years, selling drugs, abusing people, and poisoning the neighborhood.

Years passed, and suddenly it was 2006. I was still on the streets, selling drugs and standing on city corners with the young dealers, watching them skip school to sell drugs to earn money. Somehow, I missed being a man and a positive figure in life. I ended up working with a group of young M.O.B. gang members. At one time, my two sons and 30 cousins were in this gang. Today, I am proud to say that both of my sons have left the gang.

I wanted to make a change and end the shooting and killing. It had to stop. It started to get too close to home for me, but my lifestyle was so fast. I didn't know what to do. I never had parents in my life to guide me and prevent all of this from happening.

I became a parent at the age of 12 to my baby brother and that thought kept me wanting the fast life and the easy money. For me to stop the drug dealing and to live a reduced lifestyle was very hard. Then, in November of 2005, there was a drive-by shooting. The retaliation was supposed to be on us but was directed on the wrong house. I finally said, "Enough is enough." I was finished with gang life, so I had a talk with my cousins and son and told them it was time

for a change. Now, I had to walk the walk and not just talk about it to show them the way. I cashed in all my chips and set a new goal in life. I told my 16-year-old son, "I am going back to school." He was living with his mom before he moved here from Phoenix, Arizona, to get away from the gangs there. We both were ready to change our lives. I had always bought his love with material things. But I didn't need to do that anymore. I had his love and did not know it. I told him, "Son, it's going to be a different life now!" He said, "Dad, you can replace material things, but we can't replace you." My throat got wet and lumpy. I fought the tears back.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services helped me. They listened to my story and signed me up. They gave me a learning test and put me in school to receive my G.E.D. Now, my sons and the rest of the gang look at me in a different way. These boys are looking up to me and asking, "How can I get my G.E.D.?"

It's been two and a half months since I started studying. I have changed, and five other young men are making changes too. That's what motivates me to get my G.E.D. I want to keep on changing lives in the streets where changes need to be made! I want to continue to lead my sons and cousins down the path of a legitimate life. I want to continue to set an example that they can be proud to follow.

Andre Thomas

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

To whom it may concern,
I have nothing to gain, for I have nothing to lose,
I'm ready to die,
I have paid my dues.

To whom it may concern,
I feel no pain,
I will tell you one more time,
As I write this poem with shame.

To whom it may concern,
I live a life full of sin,
I wish this were the end.

To whom it may concern,
This poem is over,
So, I will cry inside,
And my heart will grow cold.

To whom it may concern,
I have changed my ways,
I'm tired of my criminal ways,
I now have a reason for change.

To whom it may concern,
I found out that I'm the one to blame,
I will no longer write this poem with shame.

To whom it may concern,
This poem is now at the end,
I'm no longer full of sin,
I believe my heart is whole again.

Joshua Bourne

AWOKEN TRUTH

I have been a long time behind bars
Surrounded by all these felony superstars
Everything has been stripped but my pride
Lord knows it's been rough on the inside.
 I have not had a single letter come in
 Not a single word from my kin
 Maybe it's because I've done them wrong
 In this hell is where I belong.

I have no end to this time in my sight
But shouldn't I suffer for not doing right
I do what I can, and that is my best
This prison I'm in has put me to the test.
 With each day in here, it seems longer
 My will to be violent, grows stronger
 I fight to stay alive each day
 Back into the hole I must stay.

I have nothing left of my past
This prison from hell has made an evil cast
With all this violence in my eye
The guards have come to take me to die.
 Being led to the gas chamber, wherein I must go
 Where the fumes of death can take me real slow
 Poison fills my lungs, and I start to choke
 Alone in my bed is where I awoke.

I looked around, was this just a dream,
Or part of my God's successful scheme?
I think if I do not change my way
This will be my life someday.

Kenneth Grubb

LIFE ON THE INSIDE

As a kid, I was always in trouble with my home life and the law. At the age of 16, I was court ordered out of school and was thrown out of my house by my family.

Nobody around would help me, and I felt so alone. I walked from state to state, went from shelter to shelter trying to find a place where I fit in, where I belonged.

I made my way back to Ohio in 1999. I bought a room for a week. There, I met a girl named Helen who I fell directly in love with. We got married in one month. Later, we had our son. We lived in a shelter.

The people at the shelter kept saying Helen's parents were going to take our son. I panicked and stole a car. We took my son to my mom's house for safekeeping. Then we drove the car from Washington Court House to Canton, Ohio. There, I was apprehended by the law.

At that moment, I lost everything again; I lost my son and my wife. Helen and I divorced shortly after that day. I was sentenced to 24 months in prison. My first time behind bars. I was terrified!

Prison is a scary place. There you are sleeping in an open area with strange men, you are always watching your back, you are always being yelled at by the guards as to when to eat, sleep, and smoke. But what really hurt was that I had no one to visit me, no one to write to. It was like being back on the streets again, except that I was behind barbed fence.

In prison, I found God. He stayed by my side the whole way and walked me through the days and nights. I don't think I would have survived without Him. Like they say, "He is there for those who take the time and want Him there."

I really hope young people will read this and give God a chance because, if you ever feel like I did, He is always there for you.

Shawn Wycuff

MY ADDICTION – INSANITY

When the shaking starts and the sweat pours off my chest and I'm freezing and the crawling things come up my arms, my legs, and in my ears, I scream for help. I scream and scream and tear at my arms and legs and no one hears, no one comes.

Then my brain is on fire – no, not my brain, it goes much, much deeper than that. I don't have a name for it, this place that is being consumed from the inside out. My soul, perhaps, or whatever is the very essence of me, the core of me, the private, hidden place.

Pain is not a word that can describe this. This every kind of physical and mental anguish that can possibly be experienced, and it's all concentrated on me. On Mike. Every excruciating, blowtorch breath I pray is the last. But I am beyond prayer, beyond help. Beyond, beyond. I cannot come back from this. I can't breathe. I'm suffocating.

Mike Paynter

RETURN TO HEALTH

Your health. Don't take it for granted. We think it will be there always!

That evening I went to sleep as usual, not knowing what was afoot in my body. As morning light came, my mind and eyes slowly took in whole a new day. A shock was in store for me. As my eyes began to focus in the mirror, I wondered who was looking back at me. There was this large, hot thing, almost like a quarter sized football pressed to the right side of my neck. Then panic struck me. The first thing that came to mind was the dreaded "C" word. My heart stopped. I knew I could not feel it beating. But as scared as I was, my mind muddled up with thought, I went to work, telling myself to ignore it, that it would go away.

No it won't just go away.

After I put my thoughts together, I called my family doctor to see him as soon as possible. I had just been there for my blood pressure check up, so when he walked into the room he jokingly said, "What's happened now?" Dr. Neidies and I could always kid one another. We had built a rapport over the years. He came around to stand in front of me. As I showed him my neck, his eyes shot wide open.

"Wow! What bit you?" he asked.

I said I did not believe that it was a bite of any kind. I was scared because I felt that it was cancer. He asked me when the swelling had appeared on my neck. I said it was there Friday morning when I woke. At that point, he told me that cancer just didn't pop up that quickly without some other type of warning signs. He said it looked as if I had the

mumps, took a measurement of it, gave me something to take and said, "Let's see how it looks next week."

A week later it was bigger.

I told doc that until he could prove to me that it was – without a doubt – NOT cancer we were going to look at it as if it were! I was sent upstairs to see the ear, nose and throat doctor. He took a needle biopsy, but also made an appointment at the Cleveland Clinic with Doctor Wood, a specialist.

If you are ever in the same situation, I would suggest you bring along a member of your family. I was glad I had. You need more ears to remember what is said to you. I did, because as he starts to check you over you are not thinking of what he is saying. Trust me, all you're listening for him to say is that you're all right. You do not hear the rest of what he says. As Dr. Wood probed his finger down my throat, it stopped on the back, right side of my tongue. That's when I became aware of what he was saying. Yes, there was a tumor and he was going to take a biopsy of it. He then told me that if I did exactly what the doctors who were going to take care of me said, there was a 95% chance of cure, which was good news.

Even though I felt confident in what Dr. Wood had told me, I couldn't help looking back to a friend of mine from work. Every now and again a group of us stopped after work at the local pub just to blow off steam, shoot some pool, and just get together. One of the people that quit coming to the pub was Jim. We lost contact with him – as we often do – and didn't think anything of it until several months later, when Jim came back to work. He was a big man; he stood out. This was how I recognized him, but as my eyes focused on Jim's face I could see something wasn't right. The left side of his face was gone. As our eyes met, at first I was just as

uncomfortable as he seemed to be. You have to understand how hard it was not to just stare at the void in his face. But as hard as it was for Jim to speak, he was gracious enough to tell me what had happened. He had had jaw cancer. That's the first time I had ever heard of this kind of cancer, so you might imagine now, what I had running through my mind the whole time Dr. Wood was examining me.

I felt it was possible I might lose part of my face like Jim had. Even with Dr. Wood's reassurance, I was still filled with doubt about the outcome of the treatment I was going to have to go through. But thank God for the early warning sign, Doctor Wood, the fine staff at the Clinic, and also to my Doctor Neidies for hearing what I said to him. It was caught in time. Because of the radiation to my neck and mouth area I was having a rough time eating and swallowing anything, even water. The results were my losing 70 pounds and becoming weak. Dr. Adlestien, one of the doctors treating me, said if I couldn't swallow, he'd insert a feeding tube into my stomach. I said, "NO, you will not!" If they could find a way to treat my tumor, they could find a way to get food and water down my throat. He said I was TENACIOUS but wished all his patients had this kind of fight.

I'm now 2 years 6 months in recovery. I had my follow-up CAT scan December 12th, 2005, and heard from Doc Wood that it all looks clear. Now my appointments won't have to be as often through the year. It was a hard treatment to go through, but I'd do it again if I had to – just to hear those words "YOU'RE ALL CLEAR." It's a feeling like no other I know of.

Today, people are more beautiful, and the flowers smell so much better. My point is this – if you feel something is wrong with you, don't just think it will go away. It won't. See your doctor, but take control of your body and the signs it gives

you. DO NOT HESITATE. At the very least, you will come away feeling good to know one way or the other.

TAKE CARE OF YOU AND HAVE A GREAT LIFE!

Robert F. Rojc Sr.

MY SECRET SHINING STAR

It all started when an innocent, young woman discovers she's going to become a mother, such a strong role for an inexperienced person to carry. It's a tender and innocent, yet stern process for mothers to go through. To be a mother you must possess a unique, demanding, and patient character. This is a common and true story that needs to be heard. A 12-year-old girl gets raped. Instantly, her whole innocence and sense of beauty is robbed from her little body. Suddenly, she becomes curious of the whole carnal act, so that's what she pursues blindly.

Another circumstance has her move half way across the U.S., and she falls into love at the age of fourteen. It is simply puppy love. Everything is so brand new and exciting. Puberty is in full effect. I believe it was summertime, almost fall, when this young girl gets the news that her mother's fiancé is ordered to go overseas. Her mother has mixed feelings.

Meanwhile, the confused girl tells her "puppy love" that she and her family are moving. They decide to have a baby and marry so she can possibly stay in the U.S.A. The plan goes through, unexpectedly, and the girl's mother is in emotional turmoil, but she gives her daughter permission to get married. Twelve days after the daughter's wedding, her mother's husband is sent away overseas. She must wait to get her orders to go join her husband.

Time goes by, and the young girl delivers her baby. The girl is now fifteen. She's scared and misses her mother. Her mother left to go overseas exactly one week prior to the birth of her first granddaughter. A month later this hopeful, but sad girl, finds out that her newlywed husband has been unfaithful. She is forgiving and has high morals to stick to her vows and determination to live happily ever after. The girl naively allows her husband to talk her into having a bigger family in hopes of strengthening their rocky marriage.

Eventually, they get their wish and she discovers she's about to endure the special gift of motherhood once again. By this time she is 16 years old having her second child, yet she is still clueless about life. Her first child is only 1 month old, and she is pregnant with her second child.

Around her fourth month of pregnancy, she goes to her first prenatal care appointment and has her ultrasound. The doctor finds something very unusual about the ultrasound. He determines she's carrying a child with gastroschisis. This is medical terminology meaning a child's intestines are outside of his stomach. The doctor tells the young and confused couple that it happens in 1 out of 1,000 pregnancies and can be fixed upon the child's arrival with surgery. In this particular city where they live, the doctors don't have the knowledge or experience to provide proper treatment for the mother and her child. She travels 30 minutes away for prenatal care. During these visits, the worried young couple goes to church frequently and prays hard.

With all the stress, their marriage is weakened and the girl packs up her 9-month-old daughter and moves west where all of her family is. She delivers a beautiful baby boy right before summer. The precious bundle of joy has his intestines put back in slowly and has a scar where his naval would have been. The girl considers this a miracle since the doctors in another state said it would be in her best interest to have an abortion due to the health risk of having a child with this condition.

Nevertheless, faith brings her around. Amongst her profound happiness, her husband is begging and anticipating that his family will be back together again. After plenty of persuading, she finally gives in once again, believing in her vows and staying true to them. The frustrated, now 16 1/2-year-old young lady arrives at the airport with a 1 1/2-year-old daughter and her newborn son. The weather is sultry, and the girl is sweaty and tired. There is no sign of her husband. When she finally arrives at her husband's location, with her

babies, she's eye to eye with him. The infinitely smarter young girl feels infidelity floating around the room but stays cool until there is solid proof. She is fed up at this point but is afraid to tear apart her family and keep the children away from their father. The young couple made a vow to raise their children together because they weren't raised by their biological fathers, and they wanted their family to be whole. With this in mind, she stays.

She starts going to school full-time and works part-time. Her husband works as a night manager. Her family is, finally, joyful and full of good spirit. Christmas Day is only 4 days away, and presents are under the Christmas tree. The tired young lady is exhausted from tests all day at school, working and playing with her children.

When the sleepy babies finally go to sleep, the young mother doses off on the couch. Suddenly, as though there was a mental alarm clock on, she instantly makes her son's bottle. She has an overwhelming feeling of panic, so she immediately runs to her son's room. She starts to feel a million different meanings of the word shock. The poor young lady looks in horror and finds her 7-month-old baby literally stuck in his crib. His face is smashed between the mattresses and bars limply. The mother calls 9-1-1. They arrive and pronounce her precious, courageous baby boy is dead.

The devastated young girl feels like she has lost her mind. Not only is she dealing with the painful fact that her precious son is gone forever, she has to deal with investigators searching her home and her husband blaming her for their son's death. Not to mention that all of her family is spread across the country, and the girl's mother is 8 months pregnant in Germany and can't make the funeral.

The emotionally distraught young girl loses her mind. The devastated young couple buries their son on Christmas Eve, and their lives are completely turned upside down. The girl can't eat, sleep, think, or even concentrate. She has a nervous breakdown.

After all this pain and suffering this young lady has had to endure, she is strengthened from the situation. She learns that God has his reason for everything and feels blessed to have enjoyed 7 months of his life. She sees everything in a brand new light and decides to leave her husband for good and is on her journey to a promising future. Every time she sees a star, it could be a million stars in the sky, she knows the brightest one is her son smiling down on her.

Now, when I hear this story I feel a sense of a young woman learning from her experiences and being a survivor. This is what we all are, survivors. It also reinforces the reality of what is going on in this world. Young mothers subject themselves and their children to unnecessary grief from their children's fathers. So many mothers are living single and having their children around negativity because they can't cope with the stresses of motherhood. There are also mothers who are so caught up in their own personal lives or are never at home to be with their children and end up watching themselves. They're never home to raise them or give them the love and attention they deserve.

On the positive side, there are strong, determined, mothers who are trying to work hard to make a better living for their children. To all mothers with children, think of this true story about this young girl and what she had to go through with her son, just to lose him so quickly. Now she cherishes every precious moment with her children.

They're not kids forever and they need our guidance, attention, support, love, nurturing, discipline, and understanding. With all these tools they will grow up to be productive adults and appreciate you as a parent and a person.

Gloria Portis

*Threads of
Family Life*



DEPENDS ON HOW YOU SEE LIFE

A night after having a happy and pleasant day in the field, we were meeting in the field of my aunt's house, as was our custom. All cousins and nieces sat near the fire so we could get warm, and we drank coffee or hot chocolate because the weather was very cold. My aunt started to relate terror stories, many invented from her imagination and others invented from the people of the region. We were feeling scared hearing about them, but we wanted to hear them. In the middle of the night we had to leave, to sleep in our field house (more or less a two-mile distance). We all left, cousins and nieces, all holding each others' hands. We were very afraid. The road was very dark. We heard the noise of the livestock and the dogs, and anything would scare us. When we got to the mountain, we saw a big shadow with horns. The closer we got, the bigger our shadow got. We were terrified. Suddenly, we heard a noise and zaz! My niece fell down to the ground in a swoon. In this moment my brother Gerardo, who was the youngest of the group, shouted "Dummies, it's only a horse!" The noise was the neigh of a horse (that we scared with us appearing or with the train that was closer), but the scare was terrible.

When we arrived at the house, we told my mother about our experience. My mother said, "Life is the same depending on the way you see it. You saw with terror and were scared because it is what you wanted to see. If you see people with eyes of terror, you will feel terror. If you see people with distrust, you will feel distrust. With indifference, the same will happen, and if you take precautions against the world, the world will go against you. If you give love, the world will love you".

Each time I think how precise my mother was I cannot avoid the tears in my eyes because I do not have her

anymore. She gave me a lot of her experience. Now I see many things with more clarity.

As humans, we continue to make mistakes. I think that her love taught me to love and fight for my convictions. She always said that when people are sure of what they want, they should fight to get it. Impossible as it looks, it's better to have the satisfaction of having tried it than sadness of not trying it at all. The impossible love can triumph, the sick can recover their health, and miracles appear to those that persist and those who love. Even if you suffer, love will fill you up and satisfy you more than any money in the world.

Never in my life have I felt how I feel now. I am fragile and defenseless. Now is the moment when I should put in practice all of my mother's teachings. I have to see life as beautiful and give thanks to the Almighty for people that are around me. They give me love. Things could be worse and I should not feel that, as it seems, all is as terrible. I give thanks for life and for learning that I can resolve anything I set my mind to.

Doris Molina-Hernandez

RECIPE FOR SINGLE MOTHERHOOD

3 C. Faith and Hope
1 C. Extra Responsibility
5 Tbsp. Acceptance of Two Roles
1 Tsp. Encouragement
2 dashes Daily Work to Improve Life
3 Tsp. Grace
2 C. Love
4 Tsp. Understanding
6 oz. Perseverance
4 Tbsp. Optimism
3 C. Concern
3 Tsp. Flexibility
1 1/2 C. Balance
2 1/2 C. Belief in Yourself
4 C. Determination to Prevail
2 C. Sacrifice
10 C. Devotion to Children
1 C. Pride

Take Faith and Hope and combine with Acceptance and Extra Responsibility. While Stirring in God's Grace and Love, fold in Acceptance of Two Roles to mix with daily work to improve life. Sprinkle in Understanding, Listening, Perseverance, Optimism, Concern and Flexibility along with a Belief in Yourself and Determination to prevail. Sprinkle Balance in with Sacrifice and Devotion to Children. Grow Self and learn to peel back Pride and dish out Encouragement. Bake for a lifetime of fulfillment.

Kum Sun Kim

THAT'S WHAT MOTHERS ARE FOR

Mothers are there from the first day
you open your eyes and look into her face.
Mothers try to protect you
from getting any kind of germs, bites, and bruises.
They shelter you with blankets
so that you won't catch a cold.
Mothers sacrifice and compromise everything and anything
to give their child or children the best of the best.

That's what mothers are for.

Mothers are there to give you advice and bright ideas.
They're there to support you in every choice you make.
Mothers are the most important part of your life.
They give you life; they put you first.

That's what mothers are for.

There is a saying in the Bible that says,
"Honor thy mother and father."
I believe this to be true. The more you do for them,
the more you will be blessed.
Mothers appreciate their child,
never ridicule them or seem selfish.
They share their life stories with you to give you an idea
of how you should live your life to the fullest.
Mothers will always be there for you,
no matter what you go through.
Always remember that special lady in your life,
especially on Mother's Day.

That's what mothers are for.

Shanequa Morrow

JOHN AND JOSEPH, MY TWIN BOYS

After five years of marriage and two miscarriages, I was blessed by God fourteen months ago to give birth to twin boys, John and Joseph. Although they came from the same womb, I discovered in the early hours after their birth that they are different; each one is unique.

John was the first to be born, but according to my native tradition, he should be considered the youngest because in my country of Togo, people believe that Joseph told John, while in the womb, to go first and check out the world before he entered. Therefore, Joseph was truly the oldest.

John is a baby with a graceful figure whose facial appearance looks like mine. He has a flat nose, a tiny mouth, and a laughing eye. Compared to Joseph, John is a precocious baby; he was the first to sit down, to crawl, and finally to walk completely at 10 months. Adorable and smiling all the time, John seems to look for people's company like our friends who can hold him. Even strangers who are unknown to him, like doctors and nurses, he seeks their attention. John is very affectionate and endearing and only cries for real needs: to be changed or to be fed. John is the biggest one, but Joseph is the most active.

Joseph looks like his dad; he has a long face and a tall, skinny body. I can easily recognize his father's smile, which captivates me so much. Unlike John, Joseph is a quiet and reserved baby. Before he makes a move toward a stranger, he takes some observation time. Most of the time, he doesn't like people who are unknown to him. However, he is the master of the house; he knows everything. He can turn on the television, climb the furniture, open doors, and move clothes from the bedroom closet to the living room.

He is someone you cannot underestimate. He has the capacity to discover the whole house and to do some unbelievable things like lift his feet to reach and open doors or simply to lock his brother in the closet. Joseph is someone who needs to be watched incessantly. Joseph will cry for anything to divert your attention from John. He is the one who wants to be the focus of the family all the time. He is very possessive.

Although John and Joseph are different, both of them have characteristics and attributes that make babies so charming and adorable, and my love for them is the same.

Afi Abi DeSouza

FISHING WITH LADYBUG

Everyone has one person in his/her life who makes a significant difference. It may be a stranger or a close loved one. For me that person was my grandpa.

My grandpa was the one person in my childhood who stands out the most. When I was a child, my family moved into my grandparents' house. I remember getting up every morning, and running downstairs to see what Grandpa and I could do that day. At that point in my life I didn't realize that you had to work to make a living. I was disappointed to have Grandpa say, "Not this morning, Ladybug. I have to work." I would sit and wait by the large window in the sitting room for him to return. Around six o'clock, his beat-up blue Dodge would pull in the driveway. I would run outside and meet him by the well. He would be covered from head to foot with coal dust. The only white part left on him were the circles around his eyes where his safety glasses had been. I'd pump the well as Grandpa washed up. We did this every day.

I was always glad to see the weekends come. That meant I got to play with Grandpa all day. Every Saturday we would get up early, put our fishing gear in the truck and head out to the small fishing hole not far from the house. That is one of my fondest memories as a child.

Not too long after my seventh birthday, Grandpa was diagnosed with lung cancer. He had black lung from the coal mines that he had worked so hard in. They tried everything they could, but the cancer was already spreading to other organs. Grandpa made the decision to go into hospice care. He felt it was too much for Grandma to deal with. In the last weeks of Grandpa's life, we were with him every day. I remember going into his room the day he died and sitting on his bed. At that age I didn't understand what was going on. I

remember asking Grandpa why he had to go to heaven. With tears in his eyes he looked at me and said, "I'm just going fishing."

Jess Barnhart

CELEBRATE BOY'S DEPARTURE

There is a young bird
Just about to leave his nest
Faltering, jumping, leading to the twig
Flapping his wings, scattering the leaves
But soon I saw him soar into the high sky
And start to fly circling around his nest
“Fly,” I call to him
You will find the sky is without limits!

Kay Goetz

DENWA

“Do you know what she said?”

“I have no idea.”

“PRAY FOR ME”

“Who said that?”

“A woman with Sarah. She must be Sarah’s attendant.”

“What was Sarah doing?”

“She was on the floor ... kind of sitting, like a frog.”

“You mean, squatting? Where? Which floor?” (Oh, please not in the Principal’s office!)

“Yeah, Sarah was squatting in the hallway all right. Her book bag, books, and notebooks were scattered on the floor.” Sarah should be in her classroom, just like all other kids in their homeroom. I wondered...what was she supposed to be doing first thing in the morning?

When I heard the sound of the *Denwa* ringing (“Denwa” means telephone in Japanese), I was washing the dishes, clearing the room after the war of sending-the-kid-to-school-on-time. It was from my friend. She had dropped her kid off at school and told me she had just seen Sarah. I moved to sit in a kitchen chair and asked her what the attendant looked like.

“She’s kind of skinny and old. She sounds like a nice old lady, an ordinary person, just like the kind you would find in your neighborhood. She just seemed to be at a loss as to what to do with Sarah.”

“Oh, she must be the same substitute that Sarah had a couple of months ago. Remember, I told you about that sub? At the end of the day, she brought Sarah to the van driver, panting and out of breath. She said she hadn’t thought her job was this much hard work. The van driver asked her, ‘What did you expect? Sarah is young and you are old.’ Sarah has special needs. By now, the sub should know how special Sarah is; that’s what she is being paid for. At least that’s what the van driver told me. I bet Sarah challenged her all day long, with her refusal to do school work. The sub probably chased after Sarah all day. No wonder she asked you for additional spiritual help!”

I can’t help but laugh, knowing exactly how she feels. Welcome on board! I do that all the time except without pay. I still remember how Sarah used to run away, hit, kick, bite, and throw things, all while I was guarding a sheet of homework from being ripped out of my hands by her. It took a while to teach Sarah what was expected from her before she actually started doing it — not just listening and repeating after me. She seems to have out grown the stage of the young-Helen-Keller-battling-with-Mrs. Sullivan. Still, she sometimes demonstrates how she is unhappy when she doesn’t get what she wants. She shows her anger everywhere we go, by clenching her fists really tight and roaring like a lion. Or manipulating the situation by sobbing; with big crocodile tears trickling down her cheeks one after another (just to make you feel guilty and miserable — this is THE masterpiece of her tricks that many people fall for!)

I walked to the kitchen counter, holding the receiver between my shoulder and cheek, reaching for a cup of coffee while continuing to talk. I told her how Sarah was excited about going on the 6th grade Chicago trip (every single day she reminded us).

“Who is staying with Sarah for three days? An attendant?”

“Me. I’m going with Sarah. I won’t miss this chance to oversee Sarah’s life skills. It might give me an idea about next year’s IEP goals.”

“You know, parents are not allowed to go. We can’t even be chaperones.”

“I guess NOT in Sarah’s case. When I paid the deposit, I confirmed with the teacher in charge. He assured me that somebody HAD to go with Sarah. How about you? Are you sending your kid to Toronto?”

“He couldn’t make up his mind. Right up to the very morning the deposit was due. Last summer, we lost him for ten minutes at Disney World. When we found him, he thought everybody else had got lost, not him! That’s how these kids’ minds work! (I agreed with her — for this was the case with Sarah too.) My husband said it would be better to wait for him to grow up some more and to gain some more maturity. Besides, the school hasn’t given him an attendant, even if it was written in the IEP! What can I expect from the field trip chaperones? I don’t want my son missing in another country!”

While talking with her, dozens of memories came alive. How I panicked when I thought I lost Sarah (she was about to open the door of a stranger’s house — and it wasn’t for the first time either!); or how I was frozen with fear to see Sarah grabbing and squeezing a four-foot-long slithering snake at Zoo Day; or to spot her hand a few inches away from a big black fuzzy spider (I think it was tarantula) which she was about to grab.

I still remember the perfect spring day under a blue sky, filled with kids’ chattering and cheering, with faint sounds of

passing cars across the street. Sarah's teacher was on the playground, wearing a pearl necklace and a miniskirt. She was talking to the kids, then her voice got louder and louder as she was calling Sarah's name. Sarah just kept trotting away. The teacher's beautiful face turned pale, twitching with a tense expression showing under her perfect make-up. Her high heels clicked the ground as she dashed after Sarah frantically. In the other scene, I was in the school's library, consulting with the parents of Sarah's classmates while stamping the date on a lending slip. I was very concerned about how to deal with certain teachers who Sarah had kicked or slapped in the face.

One after another, the troubled, embarrassing memories were popping up in my head. These pictures of Sarah's escapades made me feel uneasy. In my gut, I could feel anxiety starting to swell and form a black cloud. Its shape got bigger, thicker and darker all the while accompanying the soundtrack to Godzilla.

My thoughts ran through the strategies I needed to use in order to avoid the worst-case scenario of Sarah exploding and melting down in Chicago. How am I going to get through two nights and three days without my husband's help? How can I motivate her without playing our last card? What would be good enough to beat The Computer (or DVD) Time?

Now, should I think seriously about asking? Asking all my friends — no, asking all my friends AND family. . .

“Will you pray for me?”

Fumiko Adair

OUR MOTHERS

Where are they now?
They were always here.
Where did they go?
We kept them so near.
Whatever the problem, we would just call.
It seems like our mothers did know it all.

Whenever we hurt and it seemed no one cared,
Somehow our mothers would be right there.
They knew exactly what to do to make us feel as good as
new.
Where are they now?
Where did they go?

God, it doesn't seem all that long ago.
We gave them a hug or touched their sweet face.
Our eyes search, but we can't see.
We listen intently for voices familiar to you and me.
Where are they now?
They were always here.

Was that touch on our cheek just a tear?
Or were our mothers reaching out from heaven above
To let us know our tears are filled with their love?

Joan Kay Joseph

WHAT IS A DAD?

What is a dad? I always thought I knew what a dad was until one day he went away. I had lost the feeling of what a dad is, and I wondered if I would ever feel that feeling again. I always thought I knew what a dad was. I know that a dad is supposed to love his child, but when I said, "I love you," I got no reply. A dad should always believe in his child, but he never believed in me. A dad should always be there for his child; my "dad" was never there for me. He was always at the bar, meeting other women, and cheating on my mom. When he had another girlfriend, she wouldn't allow him to speak to any of his children, and if he did, there would always be a fight.

I do not speak to the person I used to call my "dad" because now I have a dad, and his name is Tom. He is a person who loves me for me. He believes in me and all that I do. He tells me I can do it and not to give up! He is always there for me. He recently had a long stay in the hospital. He had a five-way bypass, and I had never been so scared in my life. I thought I was going to lose him. I went to the hospital to see my dad. When I walked in the room and saw all the I.V.s and tubes running out of this body, tears began to come from my eyes. I would call my dad every day to check on him to make sure he was okay. My dad is home now and doing well. I wanted to show my love for him, so I drew a picture for him. It is his motorcycle, a 2001 Harley Davidson Softail. I thought it would cheer him up to know that someone loves him. I love you, Dad. I drew this picture for you because you are the dad I never had.

Tonya L. Lay

PRINCESS

The thing that makes me happiest is my daughter, whom I love dearly. She is just a doll, and I adore her. I call her my "Princess," which is also her nickname. I baby her very much. She can get away with just about anything with me as long as she behaves. Her name is Lexus, and even though she feels as if it is really boring being the only child, she knows that it has advantages.

Lexus brightens up my life, especially when she has a terrific day in school. I tell her that school is a way to make your dreams come true. It makes you able to succeed in accomplishing your goals. I often tell her you are never too old to try to finish school. I tell her, "I am still going. I am doing it for you just so you can see what good things we can do together and for each other."

The happiest time I have ever experienced with her was when she received several certificates for making the Honor Roll in school. That showed me that she is smart and that she can take care of business. "That's my Princess!"

Mercedes Garcia

MY LOVING GRANDPARENTS

Two very important people in my life are my Mammaw and Pappaw, grandparents on my mother's side. My own Mom and Dad got caught up in drugs and alcohol. My Dad went to jail and Mom could not take care of me and my brother. I moved in with Mammaw and Pappaw when I was 7 years old and lived with them for about 10 years total.

Even though there was never a lot of money, my grandparents always made sure we had what we needed. They always celebrated our birthdays, and holidays like Christmas, regardless of what was going on. I especially remember my 13th birthday. Pappaw got me a porcelain doll that looked like me. It was the first doll I ever had. After that, he bought me a doll every year for my birthday. I still have them all.

The older we got, the more problems we gave them. I am sure we drove them crazy, but they always stood by us. They seemed to always be paying our bills and bailing us out of trouble. My brother was not that bad, but me, on the other hand, I was always asking for money.

I started skipping school and getting into fights which got me suspended from school. My brother only got suspended once, but by the 9th grade I was out of school more than I was in it. When I was 17, I got pregnant and dropped out of school completely.

When I got pregnant at a young age, I thought Mammaw and Pappaw would kick me out and make me deal with it on my own. But they stood by me again and this time I really needed them. I found out I was having twins and then not long after I lost them. They were stillborn at 21 weeks. I thought that I would die too, but Mammaw and Pappaw were

there for me. They took care of me, let me move back in (again) and assured me everything would be okay.

I am not quite sure why they stuck by us. I guess they figured if they didn't we would have either ended up in a foster home or dead. Maybe it was their way to show us that we didn't have to follow in our parent's footsteps because there was a better life out there. Mammaw and Pappaw taught me to love and to cherish everyone in your family no matter what the situation may be. Love is not just a word you say. It is a feeling you can't hide no matter what mood you are in.

I wish I could pay back all the money they have given me throughout the years. Words will never describe the way I feel about them. I see Mammaw and Pappaw everyday because my grandmother watches my daughter while I work.

Mammaw and Pappaw have made me a stronger person. I hope my daughter never has to go through what I did. I know she will have problems in school, with her friends and even with boys but because of Mammaw and Pappaw, she will always have me to depend on and guide her through whatever God throws her way.

I am truly grateful and appreciative to have had Mammaw and Pappaw in my life.

Misty L. Tinker

MEMORY OF MAMAW

When I was a child of ten, our family went again to Hazard, Kentucky, way back in the holler to see my Mamaw Lizzie.

That first night after visiting and eating, it was off to bed. I woke up hearing something moving around downstairs. As I sit here thinking about it now, I had heard someone downstairs before, but I had just turned over those times and had gone back to sleep. I didn't care this time; I went downstairs to investigate.

I came downstairs as quietly as I could, but Mamaw saw me.

"Elizabeth," she said.

"Yes," I answered.

"Okay, young lady since you're up you might as well start learning what goes on when you live on a farm." I'm wondering what on earth Mamaw is talking about.

My eyes were half open as I walked towards her to get hold of her hand; I passed the big clock that stood beside the door. It read four-thirty; it was dark outside.

Mamaw had my hand in hers as we headed towards the chicken coop. Mamaw Lizzie was wearing one of her old dresses with an apron tied around it. I was still in my nightclothes. Mamaw Lizzie said, "We are going to have fried chicken for breakfast."

We reached the chicken coop and Mamaw tried to open the door lightly so it wouldn't wake up the chickens. "Oops!" It did anyway. They all started clucking and pecking at Mamaw's feet. She then opened up the old apron; it was full of feed. Mamaw started tossing the feed out to the chickens to calm them down.

The chickens were pecking away at the ground as Mamaw scanned the bunch for a fat chicken.

She reached down to grab one, but it ran. Then she tried for another and another until she finally caught one.

There I stood watching my mamaw running after those frying chickens; it was a funny sight to see. It was chilly, but watching her made me laugh so hard I forgot about being cold.

Mamaw Lizzie caught a nice looking fryer. She held it up, then started slinging the chicken around and around by its neck until it went limp. My eyes and mouth were wide open by then. Why was my mamaw hurting her frying chicken? All I could think was they laid eggs for us to eat. Later I was told that laying chickens gave us eggs, not frying chickens.

After the chicken was limp enough, she took it over to the far side of the coop where a large flat-sided rock lay. There, hanging on the fence of the coop was a small hatchet. I always knew it was hanging there, but never knew what for –till now!

Mamaw picked up the hatchet off the fence, laid the limp chicken on the flat rock with its body on one side and its neck on the other. Mamaw raised the hatchet and chopped the chicken's head right off! I stood there with her watching the blood drain from the neck.

Next I saw the body of the chicken start dancing around the coop. I was crying and laughing at the same time; meanwhile, Mamaw was trying to catch the dancing chicken. It was so funny.

Once it slowed down, the chicken fell over and died. Mamaw picked up the chicken, took hold of my hand, and we went straight to the porch where we sat down.

Mamaw started plucking the feathers out. When all the plucking was done, mamaw and I went inside to wash and cut up the fryer.

Mamaw said, "This bird now is ready to fry."

That lesson was on how to catch, pluck, clean, and cut up a fryer chicken. She always gave me lessons in the same way about many different things and her wisdom of life, from cooking to housekeeping to relationships, and personal problems. Mamaw always said, "Child, you always learn

better by doing something over and over, never stop trying.”
I miss those lessons.

Elizabeth C. Marinich



Patchwork

LIFE IS A MYSTERY, WHO CAN DENY IT?

Sometimes you wake up and you feel
Like you are drowning
Sometimes you feel like you are
Going to fly to Venus
Every day is different
Every day is funny
Life is a mystery, who can deny it?

I've got a secret and you've got
Some answers
Who taught the birds to fly?
And who taught the fish to swim?

Once there was a second, then
Came the minute, the hour, the day, the week, and the year

Give me a pole and I'll turn
The earth
No! The sun never moves
It only seems to

Life is a mystery, life is a wonder
Who can deny it?
Who can say so?

Patikai Mark Musuka

THE IMPOSSIBLE JOB

I handled the claims at a 15-person insurance agency, and I desperately needed another job. I was 28 years old, and I knew what happened to women when they turned 30. Unless they were total suck asses, the owners would find a pretense to fire them. I'd seen it happen to three women.

Of course it was illegal age discrimination, but in such a small workplace it was almost impossible to prove what everyone there understood to be true. Management could even point to the two suck asses who hadn't been fired. So, I knew I had to get out soon – while I could still get a good recommendation – and before my 30th birthday.

I wanted the security of a union job. For several months, I'd combed the want ads and asked friends about places that might be hiring. As often as I dared, I came in late or took extended lunch hours to put in job applications.

I'd applied at steel mills before. Even after the 1975 consent decree that mandated steel companies make up for past discrimination by hiring women for production and maintenance jobs, I'd never made it past the man at the counter who looked at my application and said, "You wouldn't want to leave an office to work in a steel mill." Despite my protestations that that's exactly what I wanted to do, I knew my application was destined to land in the circular file.

But this time it was different. This time job applicants were given a two-part test. One part was basic math. The other part was a test of one's ability to follow directions precisely – even if they made no sense. By scoring well on these two tests, I by-passed the judgmental clerk and was called in for my pre-employment physical.

I was ordered to report to the Republic Steel employment office on July 12, 1976. At that time, the new hires were given directions to our new departments. There were about 15 of us assigned to the 84" cold mill. When we arrived there, the departmental clerk met us. As he escorted us around the mill, he dropped some people off at each unit.

He gave us a cursory explanation of what each unit did. Our heads swam as we tried to absorb this information and the many unfamiliar terms he bandied about. As we circled around the maze, I began feeling like Hansel and Gretel. Should I have left some sort of trail behind me? How would I find my way back to the parking lot at the end of the day?

Finally, we came to the pickle line foreman's office. That's where I was dropped off with 3 other new hires. Before leaving us, the clerk told us we were to remain there and wait for the pickle line foreman. Like actors waiting for Godot, we sat and waited – and waited – and waited for the foreman who never came.

Jim had worked at Republic for a couple years several years earlier. Since he'd been a good employee, he'd pretty much been guaranteed a job when he reapplied. Trouble was, he'd worked in a completely different part of the mill. He didn't know any more about the pickle line than Dave, Dan, and I. Still, we looked to him for advice.

Should we keep waiting? After all, we'd been told to stay put until a foreman came for us and we'd all passed a test on our ability to follow senseless directions precisely. We had faith that someone would eventually make it to the far off corner where we'd been left.

Or should one of us venture out on our own? If so, where should we go? We knew we didn't belong in any of the units we'd been guided through. The clerk had told us we belonged on the pickle line – a unit we hadn't even seen. We'd also been cautioned about the dangers that lurked in all directions.

As lunchtime approached, our spirits lifted. Certainly the mysterious foreman would come to his office for lunch. When no one appeared and we started to get hungry, we discussed whether we should go to the nearby canteen. We knew we could find it since it was just outside the complex of offices where we'd been abandoned. We decided the safest course was not to venture out, but to do what we'd been told – wait until we saw the pickle line foreman.

A phone sat on the desk. Maybe we should call someone. But who would we call? Again, we decided the safest thing was not to touch anything in the office – just continue to wait for the elusive pickle line foreman.

As we looked at our watches, we saw it was after 2 o'clock. We knew the shift was supposed to end at 3. What should we do? Again, we decided the safest thing was to continue to wait. We discussed what to do at 3. Should we go home and come back the next morning to continue the wait?

Finally, at about 2:15, a man entered the office. He looked at us and said, "Who the hell are you? And what are you doing in my office?" When we explained, he told us he wasn't the foreman we were waiting for. He was the foreman for afternoon turn. He started laughing, telling us it was just like the clerk to leave us somewhere without telling the foreman where we were or even that there would be new hires arriving that day.

Our rescuer called the day turn foreman to the office. He said, "Well, it's too late for you to do anything today. I'll find one of the laborers to show you around and show you where to report tomorrow morning."

As we followed this laborer onto the shop floor, we were struck by the deafening roar of the pickler, a 1/4-mile-long, three-story-high machine that ran steel coils through a hydrochloric acid bath to remove rust and other impurities before sending them on to the next unit for further processing.

I quickly found out that this unit was considered a place where women didn't belong. My co-workers would look at me and express their sympathy, saying since I was obviously trying to learn it was really too bad I'd been assigned to a unit where women couldn't possibly do the job.

I'd ask why women couldn't handle the job. The answer was always the same, "Look at Betty. Betty proves women can't do the job here." Betty was the first woman hired onto the pickler. She hadn't been there that long – maybe a month – but that was more than enough time to convince everyone that she couldn't do the job. And, they were right about Betty. She couldn't do the job.

I always came back with the same retort, "Look at John. If Betty proves women can't do the job, I guess John proves men can't do it either." (John was another recent hire who made Betty look industrious and competent.)

Of course the guys would say, "That's ridiculous. John doesn't prove men can't do the job." There are a lot of men who can do the job. I'd say, "No more ridiculous than saying Betty proves women can't do the job. I'm sure there

are many women who can do the job, and I intend to be one of them.”

There was one other woman on the pickle line – Jane. But Jane didn’t count because she was summer help. As such, no one really expected her to be able to do all that much. Jane was the only female summer help I saw that year. The guys used to get on her father pretty hard about bringing his daughter to work in a steel mill.

Whenever I was given a job for the first time, I would always ask a co-worker to show me what to do. If he started to do it himself, I would stop him immediately, saying I wanted to learn the job. Although most of the laborers still believed a woman couldn’t do the job, it didn’t take long before they started answering all my questions and showing me the tricks to make the job easier.

Several of the oldest men on the unit noticed that I was serious about learning the job. They pulled me aside to assure me that I didn’t have to worry about making it through probation.

I wasn’t assigned to work much with Betty, and I certainly didn’t go out of my way to befriend her. I viewed her laziness and incompetence as an obstacle to being accepted and proving that I did indeed belong in a steel mill and could and would pull my weight there.

The first time I worked with Betty, she was the bander. Since the line was running ship coils, another laborer and I had been assigned to put on the extra bands. When the automatic banding machine ran out of bands, Betty asked me for help. Although it was her job to change the bands, I started to pick up the new roll of bands to put in the machine. Betty stopped me, saying she didn’t expect me to

lift the bands for her. It was just that she didn't know how to change them.

The rolls of bands were heavy. Lifting them up several feet onto the automatic bander was one of the most physically demanding aspects of our job. Given Betty's reputation, I'd assumed she was looking for a way out of doing the work. As she told me she didn't know how to change the bands, I realized she'd never asked anyone to show her how to loop the new roll through the complex series of twists and turns.

The next time I worked with Betty, she was the feeder and I was the feeder helper. When the turn began, she picked up the band cutter to cut the bands. I asked her what she was doing since that was the helper's job. She told me she always did the helper's job, that she'd never worked with anyone who let her do the better feeder's job. I told her since she was older than me, she'd be doing the feeder's job that day. I added that if she had any problems or any coils she couldn't handle, she should let me know and I'd put them on the line for her, but that I wasn't going to take the better job since she was the one who was entitled to it seniority-wise. She thanked me and got through the turn without needing much help.

Again, I realized that Betty had never been properly trained. Rather than ask to be shown how to do the job, she'd allowed others to do it for her.

Shortly after that Betty was fired. She'd made so many people carry her and do her job for her that by the time she finally decided to learn the job, it was too late. No one believed her. No one wanted to help her. Her co-workers all thought it was best that she be fired while she was still on probation.

After a little more than a year on the pickler, I signed a bid for a better job. Before I signed this bid, two other women were also working on the pickler. Today, a number of women work there, and no one thinks that it's a unit where women can't do the job.

Things slowed down after 1976, and it was a number of years before summer help was hired again. When they were, over 25% were female. This showed that the men no longer looked at this as an inappropriate job for their daughters.

Shirley Pasholk

WORDS

Plenty of things I have to say,
A saint tomorrow, a poet today,
Words have a price to pay,
Powerful or weak,
Harsh or meek,
A message they relay,
They can push you down,
Or pull you up out of the pits of hell.
They can make you feel like shit,
or make you feel quite well.
Words can show your ignorance,
Or words can show your class,
But be careful because you never know
which words may be your last.

William Norman

MR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a great and powerful leader. He overcame great odds to make sure black people had the same rights as white people have. He wanted all blacks to be able to dine and sit with whites, attend the same schools, churches, and any other public places, including being put in jail cells with white people.

His wife's name was Coretta Scott. She was born in Alabama in 1929. She then met Mr. King at a music school in Boston, and in 1953 they were married. They had four children. In 1955 he became a leader in the fight to end segregation. On December 5, 1955, all blacks refused to ride a bus until all seats were open to them. This boycott lasted one year.

He was famous for his speech, "I Have a Dream!" He was away one night giving a speech when some white people bombed his house to scare the blacks away. That didn't work. Mr. King still marched forward with his ambitions. Dr. King led a march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965. Blacks and whites would go into public places and ask to be served. They would sit there until they were served or arrested. He was proud to go to jail for what he thought was right. Angry white people would pour sugar, salt and coffee over their heads. Yet all they wanted was for blacks and whites to be treated equally.

Now most things have changed. Blacks are now able to enter the front door of a diner and dine with white people. They don't have to go to the back door to be served. They can go to church together, go to the same schools, and have the right to share a jail cell with a white man. Finally, in 1992, women of all nationalities were elected to the House of Representatives; also in that same year an African American woman was elected to the Senate.

Tragically, on April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King's life was cut short by a man named James Earl Ray who shot and killed him in Memphis, Tennessee. – all because he didn't like black people. People all over the country were shocked by the news of Martin Luther King's assassination.

Martin Luther King Jr. did change the world for the better. Now blacks don't have to go to the back door of a diner and pay for their food and get it. They are now able to walk into a diner with a white man and be seated together instead of separate. Whites and blacks now go to church, school, and do everything as other people, not as people who are separated by skin color. Mr. King ended segregation for most places. There are still some people and places that are very discriminatory and still either separate blacks and whites or become very rude with black people and vice versa. As a great man once said, "I have a dream that one day people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

Jennifer King

PIERRE FOODS
(Tune of *Jingle Bells*)

Refrain:

Pierre Foods
Pierre Foods
Pierre all the way.
Oh what fun it is to cook
In a burger plant each day. HEY!

Verses:

Formulas in their hands; grinders on their way,
Tumblers here I come, to start a brand new day.
Throwing meat and soy, salt and STP,
Oh what fun it is to mix in a meat filled factory. HEY!
(Refrain)

Now it's up to you, Formax do your thing,
Endless patties formed, more tubs to you I'll bring.
Patties dropping down, to the belt they go.
Flames are shooting out, steamed in the JSO. HEY!
(Refrain)

Packers on the line, waiting for the meat,
To pack it up tonight, fr-e-e-zing hands, c-o-l-d feet
Boxes they do fill, counting all the time,
Making friends and concentrating on this busy line. HEY!
(Refrain)

Q.C. on the job, doing what they know,
Making sure the products right, Always on the go.
Checking here and there, perfection is their aim,
That's the only way it will have a Pierre name. HEY!
(Refrain)

Line Leaders on their toes, try to keep things straight.
Are boxes there to fill? Are packers back from break?
Frozen weights and temps, are just to name a few,
Making sure the label's right are things each day they do.
HEY!
(Refrain)

Shipping time is near; truck is on the door.
Boxes neatly stacked and waiting on the floor.
The bills are ready now; the trucker now can load.
With product on the truck, it's time to hit the road. HEY!
(Refrain)

Carol Rudder & Karen Smith

MY DREAM VACATION

The stillness of the air is stifling, the burning sand steaming from the sun as our lonely group of tourists crosses the dunes of the Sahara on camels. It is only an hour past sunrise and already the temperature is hot enough to break the digital thermometer on my watch. I try to sink deeper and deeper into my clothes so my skin does not feel any direct effect from the blazing sun. Heat devils shimmer across the horizon giving the impression that a physical wall of heat will halt anyone traveling too far.

I shake my head to change the focus of my thoughts. Vacationing in the heat is bad enough; no need to obsess about it. As I squint into the piercing glare only our company of travelers is discernable. My attention is drawn to the absolute stillness of the place: no tree branches snapping under our feet, no animals chittering, and no sounds of civilization to reassure us that somewhere close are shelter, people or amenities. The only sound is the methodical swoosh of the camels' hooves. This is what is driving me to madness: the stillness of the desert, the feeling of isolation from any other recognizable semblance of humanity or civilization.

My camel startles me as she barks to the camel behind her. I look to make sure this nemesis is not nipping her flanks again, and I notice he is not. She barks again and this time the other camels respond in kind. This sound is a welcoming relief after living several days without any sustained sounds. The camels stop moving, refusing to go any farther and begin to close in around each other, their braying echoing across the horizon.

Why has my camel suddenly stopped moving? Why isn't the guide telling me anything? I try to answer my questions as I shade my eyes with my hands, risking my skin to direct sun. Off in the distance beyond the shimmering wall

of heat I see another wall. It is a wall of sand, and it is heading this way.

The wind, now the low hum of a railroad locomotive, grows louder and louder and I feel trapped; a chilling fright over takes me as one tied to the tracks with no chance to escape, the train approaching ever so close, the whistle blowing louder and louder with the feeling of doom inevitable. I'm in a cold sweat and yet cannot breathe from the all-engrossing heat. As the stupendous noise of the impending storm shatters the silence and no amount of wet clothes allows me to breathe, all I can think is what on earth possessed me to sign up for an Adventure Unlimited Vacation to the Sahara Desert.

Maybe my friends and family who'd said I had to be out of my ever-loving mind were right. I could be sitting on a beach, drinking Mai Tais; I could be sightseeing in Europe; I could be gambling in Vegas; but no, I am hunkered down next to a camel hoping that she won't be hearing my last words. I can't even call my loved ones to say goodbye – or hear them say, "I told you so." My phone has said, "Out of area" for the last two days. (No cell towers anywhere nearby.) And, to make matters worse, the contract I'd signed clearly stated no refunds. As the wall of sand draws closer and closer, the camels become more and more agitated. Seeing my much more experienced traveling companions so distraught only increases my feeling of impending doom.

My mind goes back to the Westerns I'd seen as a child, recalling Ronald Reagan in *Death Valley Days* when the 20 mule team borax wagons would circle for protection against much smaller storms in a much smaller desert. Then I think of the skulls that littered the desert landscape in these old flicks. If I don't survive this, I wonder if future travelers who find my skull will at least take DNA samples and look for evidence, so that my next of kin will know what really happened.

As the wind brings the swirling mass closer, it feels as though the sand will rend my body to pieces if I don't

suffocate first. My eyes are watering, trying to get the sand particles out. The sand whips harder, blistering my face, and I need to take shelter. I get off the camel and say, "Here we stay, girl. This is it." Going farther against this wall of sand is impossible. The camel instinctively lies down. I lean against her belly and hide my face from the wind.

The weight of the camel against me and my damn fear of storms causes me to feel as though I am falling into some kind of abyss. Like a child going down a slide I find myself falling down a shaft into a cavern. From the loud thud I know the camel falls some distance away from me. I look around. In the dim light I can see objects made of gold and silver. I am rich beyond my dreams.

Is this part of a dream? Have I died and gone to heaven? This isn't the way I pictured it and I reach for one of the gold pieces. Knowing gold, I can tell the real thing when I see it. As I look around the room I notice many personal items; watches, necklaces, bracelets. Are these the possessions of former travelers?

All of a sudden, I feel the cold barrel of a gun behind my head. "Give me your money, your watch, your jewelry, your cell phone and whatever else," says the stuttering voice. I quickly empty my pockets and give the guy a dollar. (That's all I have left after paying for this all-expense-paid vacation.) His voice sounds remarkably like the guide and the travel agent at the mall.

Shivering, from being in the shade after so many days in the desert and from fear, his next words puzzle me. "Cash or credit?" I hear him say. I had already given him all the money I had. Again I hear, "Cash or Credit?" Suddenly, I wake up from my daydream and I am at the travel agency. "Forget the desert," I blurt out, "I'm going to the Bahamas, you crook."

Tony Panza, Shirley Pasholk, Roselle Turner, John A. Yonkof

SNOW

White
Light
Fluffy
Snowmen
Hot chocolate
Children sledding
Dogs playing
Time for resting
Wet
Blowing
Frigid
Boots & parkas
Gloves & scarves
Snow pants
Runny noses
Shoveling driveways
Slippery roads
Time to bundle up
Stay home
Light a fire
Watch the snowflakes fall
ENJOY IT ALL!

Rose Buckner, Kum Sun Kim, Joe Pilot

THE MAGIC PAPER RIDE

It was story time at the local library. All the mothers would bring their small children in to listen to the stories of Miss Lola. Now Miss Lola was not your ordinary librarian type. Oh no! Miss Lola always wore costumes. Every week she had on something different. Long skirts with bright colors and always a head wrap to match. She always wore dangled earrings, and she never wore shoes. Miss Lola had such a soft spoken voice, a voice that could mesmerize anyone, young or old.

The story room at the library was small, so the mothers dropped off their children, and then proceeded upstairs to the main library. This was nice because even grown-ups need a little library adventure.

There was a rug on the floor. Miss Lola had everyone sit in a circle. The rug was made out of rags. The colors were so vibrant. Hues of blue, red, yellow and orange, and every now and then you could see the small crystal beads that were carefully woven in between.

Miss Lola sat in her rocking chair in front of the children. "Good morn' to all of you!" The children replied, "Good morning, Miss Lola!" "Now what adventurous place would you like me to take you to today?" Some of the children wanted to hear Dr. Seuss. One little boy wanted to hear ghost stories, another wanted to read about Big Bird. One little girl raised her hand and said, "Those are the same stories we have heard over and over. Miss Lola, can you take us on a real adventure?" Miss Lola replied, "Come little one, what is your name?" "My name is Amy, and I want to fly high above the clouds." The other children were laughing at her. "Now, now," Miss Lola said. "Why are you all laughing at Amy?" One of the little boys replied, "Everyone knows that you can't fly into the clouds."

Miss Lola looked at Amy and said, "Would you and your friends like to take a magic paper ride?" Amy's eyes got

as big as saucers. She started jumping like a baby kangaroo. All of the other children were now wondering too. "Miss Lola," Amy asked. "Can you really take us on a magic paper ride?" Miss Lola asked, "Do you believe you can?" "Yes, Miss Lola," Amy said. "Well then, let's go."

In the corner of the small room there was indeed a Magic Paper Rug. "Okay everyone! If we are going on the Magic Paper Rug, we need to get our bags of alphabet fairy dust!" "What is alphabet fairy dust?" Amy asked. Miss Lola replied, "When we go on the Magic Paper Rug, we will need our letters so that we can spell words and make sentences. That way, when we return home, we can create our own story about our adventure."

Everyone hopped on to the Magic Paper. "OK, everyone, close your eyes and wish real hard, and say to yourselves, 'dreams really do come true.'"

"Here we are, our first stop is Cloud Central." The children opened their eyes and could not believe that they were really floating in the clouds. "Wow," said Amy. "It looks like we are in a big bag of cotton candy!" The children were in awe of what they were experiencing.

"OK, children," Miss Lola said. "Take out your alphabet dust, and try to make a word out of what you see." All the children opened their bags of alphabet dust and started to make words out of the shapes of the clouds. One little boy thought his cloud looked like a frog. Another little girl said her cloud looked like a pillow. Amy said, "My cloud is the best! It looks like a fairy!" "Why do you think fairies are the best?" Miss Lola asked. "Cuz fairies are like magic. They make all your wishes come true." Amy replied. "Ah, I see, then you will really love our next stop," Miss Lola said.

"All right children, hop back on the Magic Paper Rug. Our next stop will be way above the clouds and into the galaxy of stars." The children closed their eyes once again and wished really hard.

"OK, children, open your eyes. Here we are at Fairy Dust Lane." The children got off the Magic Paper Rug and

started to walk around. With their heads held high, just looking all around, you could see the look of wonderment that they held in their eyes. The stars were shining in the deep blue sky, shining like diamonds....little diamonds in the sky. The moon was the brightest yellow that anyone had ever seen. The children were amazed; it was nothing like they had ever seen.

Miss Lola asked the children once again to open their fairy dust. "This time children," Miss Lola said, "put your hand into the fairy dust and make a wish. Look up in the sky and pick a star. Now close your eyes real tight. Open your hand, and let go of the dust." All the children did what Miss Lola asked of them, but one of the little boys said, "Miss Lola, I don't want to let go of my fairy dust. If I let it go, my wish won't come true." "Ah, my little one, that is not so. You see, when you learn to let the fairy dust go, good things will happen, and your wishes will come true."

The little boy looked at Miss Lola, still a little unsure. He looked at her and said, "I believe you Miss Lola because I never thought we could really fly up into the clouds." He then turned to Amy and said, "I'm sorry for laughing at you. I now believe wishes really do come true." The little boy then closed his eyes, made a wish, opened his hand, and threw his fairy dust into the sky.

"All right children," Miss Lola said. "It's time to go." All the children got back on the Magic Paper Rug so they could begin their journey back home.

When the children got back to the library, Miss Lola parked her Magic Paper Rug back into the corner of the story room. "Miss Lola," Amy asked, "should we take our words that we made out of the alphabet fairy dust?" "No," she replied, "because the words you all made tell a story about our adventure today." The little boy who laughed at Amy said, "Miss Lola, can we come back next week and go on another adventure?" "Come here, my sweet boy. Of course you can come back next week, and this time you can pick our adventure!" Miss Lola asked the little boy, "Sweet child, what

is your name?" The small boy replied, "My name is Thomas, and thank you for making me believe that wishes really can come true!" "You are quite welcome, Thomas. I am looking forward to our next adventure."

The mothers were starting to come down to the story room to pick up their children. Amy ran over to her mother, jumping up and down. She was so excited to tell her mother about their adventure. Thomas went to find his mom. When he found her, he started to tell her about the Magic Paper Rug. He was talking so fast that his mother said, "Thomas, slow down, I can't understand you. You're talking too fast." He went on to explain about flying up into the clouds, going up into the galaxy, and making a wish with fairy dust. "Oh, Thomas," his mother said, "don't be so silly, everyone knows that you can't fly on a magic rug!" He grabbed her hand to take her over to Miss Lola, but she was nowhere. He looked all over the story room. "But mom, we really did fly!"

Thomas went over to the small corner, where Miss Lola parked the Magic Paper Rug. The rug was gone! He went to the window to see if he could find Miss Lola, but she had vanished. Thomas scratched his head and thought maybe he had dreamt what had happened that day.

All of a sudden, a gentle wind kissed his face, and he could hear Miss Lola's dangling earrings ever so faintly. It was then that he knew he was not dreaming.

Amy was across the room with her mother. She looked over to Thomas and gave him a wink. He smiled back to her and whispered to himself, "Dreams and wishes really do come true ... you just have to believe."

In dedication to my mother, Jeanine, who always sprinkled fairy dust in my life.

Laura M. Disbro

LA COCINA CHAOTICA
(THE KITCHEN'S A MESS)

Platos, plates, not washed
Periodicos, magazines outdated, lie disheveled
Vidrios, half-full wine glasses, high piled
Cuchillos, sticky forks, unordered

Una taza y mas tazas, cups, coffee stained
Pasta Mediterranean and shrimp fettuccine blindly mixed
Lana y mas lana, dimes, quarters, nickels scattered
Cacerolas, pan on pan, spaghetti stained

Huevos, fried bacon on eggs, sticky splattered
Pescados, oily fish, sitting, pan cooked
Quesos, cheeses most expensive, half-opened
Vinos, wine bottles, on the floor smashed

Cucharas, spoons drippy, ant crawled
Platos sucios, dirty dishes, sink filled
Grasa, cooking grease, thickly spilled
Libros, books, table topped

Dishes, cleaning, me, no can do
Soy un barracho, *No puedo mas*
Wiped out and totally drunk
I'm a sleepy lazy skunk

John A. Yonkof

COIN COLLECTING

Collecting coins is a very interesting hobby. Collecting can be very profitable as well as satisfying. People collect a lot of things, but collecting coins to me is one of the best hobbies to have.

There are a lot of variations to collecting coins; some people collect only pennies or dimes or dollars. Some only collect for investment and some collect for the fun.

It is a very satisfying feeling to complete a whole set of whatever a person collects, like the state quarters. The state quarters began in 1999 and will end in 2008. Each state has a quarter, and five are printed each year in the order in which the state joined the United States.

I like to collect proof coins. To me, you can never get a more beautiful coin than a proof coin. Proof coins are struck twice and buffed and polished and are never touched by human hands.

Coins can be purchased several different ways. There are over two hundred different private mints. A lot of those mints take advantage of people who are very naïve about what they are buying. Thus they usually lose money on buying coins.

I buy my coins from the United States Mint. There are four different mints. They are Philadelphia, San Francisco, Denver, and West Point. These mints are government mints. It is better to buy from the US mint rather than from one of the private mints.

It is exciting when you find something old in pocket change. I always say, "You can't go wrong collecting money."

Collecting coins is a fun and fascinating hobby and could be profitable. I enjoy it tremendously.

Richard Brought

*New Patterns for
Learning*



I WANT TEACHERS TO KNOW...

I am the student, not worth your time.
Not as smart as your "favorite" that you can make shine.

You go on, about your busy day,
Catering to the high achievers along the way.

You tell me I'm lazy; I do not listen,
I do not follow directions and I don't pay attention.

Yes, you are right about all these things that you say.
So I will throw in the towel and give up today.

I am the student that gave up years ago.
My life has gone nowhere and is at an all-time low.
You made me feel worthless and too stupid to learn,
So I took the easy way out and made a wrong turn.

Now I am a student, sitting in a class today.
Nervous and tense, not knowing what to say.
Is this teacher going to be like you?
Is she going to think I am stupid too?

I am sitting here, feeling so much shame,
But in no time at all, I know you are to blame.

You feel so proud of what your "star" students have
achieved,
And you go ahead and pass the troubled ones and feel
relieved.

Now at age...well that's not important.
I have a teacher that believes in me.
She has taught me that determination is the key.
She has made me feel that I am worthwhile.
She has taught so much because she went the extra mile!

I now want all teachers to know,
that your reactions will determine if students stay or go.
So please go that extra mile;
make your students feel worthwhile.
Give the gift of self-esteem,
and like the "stars" they will gleam!

To my old teacher, I hope you are gone.
I am not stupid; you were wrong!
I want you to know that I am on my way
And I will be a "star" someday!

Lisa Smith

GED CLASS IS LIKE HAVING A BABY

I have been in the GED class for a couple of years. I know this class helps me a lot to improve my English, but I want to finish this class and move on. From time to time, I am very frustrated and upset. I think to myself, "Why can't I be like other people? They are in class a couple of months and pass the GED and move on." I ask myself all the time, "Are you not smart enough, or do you have a brain problem?"

One day I sat on my couch and studied an English paper and smiled to myself. I had never thought about this before, but it gave me an explanation of why I can't be like others. Of course, we are all different. I remembered when I had my first child. I had long hours to wait. When my husband took me to the hospital, I thought I would have my baby soon, but it did not happen as quickly as I wanted. I remember several ladies came and told the doctor, "I am in pain," and they had their babies. I wondered what was going on with me. I was waiting longer than anybody else. I was in pain, frustrated, afraid, and worried that something had happened to the baby. But after a long time, I had a beautiful boy and the most joyful moment I ever had.

When I thought about this moment, I compared it to the GED class. I can't accomplish things as fast as I want, but I can wait. I did wait longer than other ladies, but I had a baby. GED class is like this. I am in pain, frustrated, struggling, and fearful that I can't pass. But, I have a good teaching staff in my GED class. They give me a lot of help, motivation, and encouragement. It was like my baby doctor. He helped me to have a joyous moment.

I was thankful to my doctor for being patient with me. Someday I will say thanks to all my teachers who have helped me. When I finish the GED call, I will look back and see that

I took longer than others, but I will have done it. I believe this day will come and I smile as I sit on the couch. When I think about this comparison, I laugh to myself.

Kilcha Canfield

PLEASE NO CLASS THE WEEK OF CHRISTMAS

Please no class the week of Christmas. We need the week off to prepare for Christmas. We wouldn't be able to keep our minds on our studies. We would really appreciate class after the week off.

Please no class the week of Christmas.

We just don't have the time.
Please let me explain with a rhyme.
Get out the paper, ribbons and bows;
hang up the stockings and mistletoe.
Go out shopping, buy just the right things;
hurry back home, we've carols to sing.
Up with the tree, trim it just right,
stand back now, and turn on the lights.
So much to do, we'll never be done.
Isn't Christmas so much fun?

Please no class the week of Christmas.

We can't keep our minds on essays and angles. We'd rather think of tinsel and our lights in a tangle. We can't think of history, English or math, our minds are now on Santa's path.

Please no class the week of Christmas.

When we come back we'll appreciate it so much more;
I can see us now rushing in the door.
One week would let us see –
that class is something we all really need.

Please no class the week of Christmas. We can avoid all the rush. We'll keep our minds on Christmas day. We'll appreciate the break. What do you say ???

Joan Kay Joseph

MY OBSTACLES

Hello, my name is Ulises, and I'm from Mexico and have been in the USA for three years. I'm a regular person with many dreams and nothing in my pockets. I'm 22 years old, and my life in my country was normal until my family decided to come to the United States. I left my culture, school, friends, city and home where I lived for 18 years and the most important thing in my heart. I have my parents and 2 brothers, and they live in Chicago. I'm living in Ohio because one of my aunts living in Cincinnati told me I might be able to find a job quicker in Cincinnati than in Chicago, so I said, "Yes." But I was blind; I didn't have any idea what was waiting for me. I was without my family, only in the U.S. for a week, no English, but I had a job.

I started to work in a company making air conditioning pipes. I can remember my first weekend in Cincinnati like it was yesterday. I spent Fridays crying for two or three hours – crazy about going back to my country. Not only did I miss my family, but I missed my girlfriend. I told myself that I had to fight any obstacles. Cincinnati was a new word for me and many other words, so I started to learn English in the morning and work at night. It was difficult to have two jobs and study English, but I had to do it for my future. I needed to learn American ways and be able to do everything for myself like going to shop, going to the hospital, taking my driving test, buying food and clothing – everything in English!

My life those days was busy, but I did it for one year and now my life is easier. I'm not afraid to answer the phone and say "hello," but I know this is only the beginning. I started to see more open doors for me, find new friends, and have fewer problems in my job. One of the biggest problems

I have is people understanding my accent, but maybe with time, I can fix it.

Today, I have too many feelings and worries in my head, and there is not room to rest. Now I'm very close to getting one of my biggest dreams and that is to go to school for Heating and Cooling. I'm starting school the first week in February. I plan to get a degree in heating and cooling from Diamond Oaks Career Development Center. I am off to a new life in the USA.

Ulises Perez

YES, I CAN DO IT!

In 2006, I will achieve my GED,
and my children will be proud of me.

Yes, I can do it!

I can and I will work through all the obstacles in my way
to get my GED.

Yes, I can do it!

I will have that good job. Education is the key!

Yes, I can do it!

I can learn to be a better writer.

Yes, I can do it!

I can do math better and pass the GED test.

Yes, I can do it!

I can enroll in college and start on a new career.
I **am** going to do it!

Yes, I can do it!

Live Oaks Class

JOURNEY OF LIFE

In the years 1986 to 1989, I tried to pursue my GED diploma, but somehow I always got side-tracked and found myself quitting. In September of 2000 I was determined to accomplish my goal that I struggled with in the late 1980's, passing the GED test. I knew that it was going to take awhile, because I quit school when I was sixteen. During my teenage years I abused alcohol and drugs. Now that I'm much older, I have stopped drinking and have God in my life. I began thinking positively that I was going to do it!

I remember walking into Live Oaks for the first time, praying to myself, asking God to stay with me through this challenge. Everyday I would come to class. If I missed a morning class, I would make it up by going to night class. I felt that I was in the fourth grade again.

By the year of 2002, I was still attending class, struggling and getting disgusted with myself. I saw other students come and go quickly, but why wasn't I getting it? I couldn't get through the pre-test. One of the students that I would sit with and who helped me was so supportive and mentioned to me to get tested for Attention Deficit Disorder. I went to the University of Cincinnati to a psychologist and was tested for 8 hours. The psychologist's diagnosis concluded that I have a learning disability. With this in mind, it also gave me extended time when I was ready to get my GED. I studied and worked three jobs. I remember running to class because I had to be at work at 10:45 AM. Class started at 9:00 a.m. It took 25 minutes to get to work. I would ask Marty, my teacher, if we could we do math first and asked the others if they would mind. They didn't at all. They understood because they had been there with me though my journey and knew my schedule. ALGEBRA, GEOMETRY, WORD

PROBLEMS - THINGS THAT I HAD NO CLUE ABOUT.
But, I never gave up!

In the year 2003, my mother was diagnosed with cancer. I was devastated! The doctor explained the treatments to us. I stopped taking classes for awhile and put work aside. Marty knew how important this was to me. She told me to go and finish that journey. While my mom was getting her treatment and knowing the effect that it was going to have on her, I thought to myself how strong she is. She's experiencing a task that was more of a challenge than what I was up against. So, I got stronger. I wanted her to be there to see me finish my task.

Still in school in the year 2004, I was ready to throw in the towel and give up. Mom was getting sick and she felt like giving up. But we made a deal with each other – if she would not give up, neither would I. That made both of us think positively, and we snapped out of it and didn't give up. Having to change jobs helped me a lot. I was closer to school and didn't have to drive as far. In the year 2005, I was tested once again and passed the practice test. I continued attending morning classes. I had learned so much from Marty. I felt that this was going to be the year, gliding right along with no problems. Then my boss decided that he no longer could have me coming in later than the others. In November 2005 I had to say goodbye to Marty and my new friends and was forced to go to night class. I still did not quit. November 17th I was determined that I was going to finish once and for all. I had taken the pre-test and passed and was ready to move on to the real thing. I was hesitant at first, but went for it on December 9, 2005, AND I PASSED! I can't even begin to tell you how overwhelmed I was with gratitude to everyone who helped me keep a positive attitude. I do have to admit that I thought about throwing in the towel. But I did pass and never gave up.

Thanks, Mom, for staying strong and believing in yourself – you got through your biggest journey. By staying strong and never giving up you helped me through my journey. I love you and am as proud of you as you are of me. And I want to thank my teacher, Marty – you were my guardian angel. You showed me how to believe in myself and helped me with my confidence, along with my self worth!

Deborah Shepherd

SPOONS AWAY!

Standing over the deceased feline, I slowly lifted the cold spoon, sterilizing every inch from the panda bear handle to the tarnished scoop. My plan for this utensil was to perform a self-educating autopsy on the motionless creature that lay before me. While tightening the yellow cleaning gloves that were swimming pools for my hands, I thought to myself, "Ok, it's time! Time to unlock the mystery!" My heart pounded; my body trembled. The anticipation grew with every passing second, as if I were a dull green leaf claiming its autumn colors.

As my hand crept towards the corpse, I heard distant footsteps approaching. My mind instantly cluttered with all the many ways my parents were going to scold me. The door pushed open and in came my mother. She stopped in her tracks, and a look of confusion came over her face. Her mouth dropped. That one familiar eyebrow slowly rose into place. Then, she hesitantly voiced.

"Sweetheart, what are you doing?"

"Shhh...not while I'm operating Mommy!" I whispered with intensity.

Little did she know, I was attempting to discover exactly why and how my cat Lipstick had died.

Cautiously she asked, "What do you mean while you're operati...ahhhhh!"

I knew by the terrified scream that my adventure had come to an abrupt end, very much like the career of Vanilla Ice.

"Drop the spoon and step away from the cat!" she sputtered while tightly gripping her nose.

As I reluctantly descended from my stool, I whined, "Aw, Mom, I was so close!"

Of course, my curiosities never ceased due to my mother's finding of our lifeless former pet, which just so happened to be stretched out on my fathers' newly surfaced

pool table. (Oops...sorry Dad!) Nevertheless, at nine years of age, this was the first step towards my destiny, Forensic Pathology.

Forensic Pathology has intrigued me ever since I was a young girl. The concept of exploring, dissecting, and going deeper into the anatomy of the human body (or any unfortunate animal that may expire in my home) gives me chills – the pleasant ones. Although my mother opposed my intention to decapitate Lipstick, both she and my father upheld my interests by producing tangibility and belief. Every Saturday, my mother would take me to check out books on one of the world's most gruesome avocations. My father on the other hand, spent months on end creating a laboratory so intricately defined, even Dexter himself would be amazed.

As my GED graduation approaches, the thought of entering college to fulfill my dream truly exhilarates me. I see Forensic Pathology as a helping profession not only to myself, but also to the society as a whole. A friend of mine once mentioned that your greatest interests as a child could one day become your future career. I hope to make Forensic Pathology mine. I'm getting a new cat tomorrow. Perhaps he'll assist me in achieving my goal!

Shaterra Tillman



Fabric of Love



LOVE

Love is when he's standing there
And I open my sleepy eyes from beneath
He kisses me good morning
Before I have even brushed my teeth.

Love is when he doesn't see
That my hair is really a mess
Or when he makes no comment
On my favorite worn-out dress.

It's when he tells me I am pretty
Before I put my make-up on
And when he's totally unaware
My girlish figure has long since gone.

Love is when he looks at me
With eyes full of joy and pride
In his sight I'll always be beautiful
For he loves the me deep inside.

Faye Ann Smith

LONIKA'S LIFE'S RECIPE

I once heard a chef say, "It takes two good eggs to make a perfect omelet." A good cook recognizes that if he takes one good egg and beats it in with one rotten egg, the whole omelet goes kaput. I strongly agreed with this statement. Then I applied it to my life, as it relates to relationships and myself. My experiences have taught me that a person must first develop character in him/herself before joining self with a mate. There are many areas in my life that greatly need perception. I believe this is why I am choosing to stay single in this season of my life. Redeeming this time to honor the God in me and learning how to love and accept myself, I'm making room for change and improvement in my life and in my home. I am learning how to conquer the fear that's been gripping my heart, mind and life. Well, sit back, relax and read a preview of my recipe for life. The things I will share are the things that I think makes for a perfect recipe for life and relationships.

Self-worth is an important ingredient to me. If you don't understand your value, you'll allow others to define you. Consequently, they may mistreat you because you lack confidence, self-respect, and dignity. If you don't first lovingly care for yourself how can you properly love the one you've become one with? Impossible! I'm on a personal journey right now. I am learning to love me for me. Someday, I'll be able to share my life and love with someone special once all the ingredients are put together.

The second "egg" needed in this recipe is to make my home a palace – a sanctuary and welcoming haven of rest for my children, myself, and my future king. I must set the atmosphere! I must decorate and fill my home with love, praise and cleanliness. I am trying to abandon my "clutter bug" bad habits. If things are unorganized and chaotic in the home, everyone that dwells therein is affected. They will begin to feel and act out the chaos in their spirits. This

negatively disrupts the whole house. That is why I am pressing to perfect this area in my life.

The last but foremost pursuit is overcoming my fears of creativity. This is a giant endeavor with me, because fear contradicts my faith. I have many fears that have crippled and robbed me of so many things; for example, getting my G.E.D. Fear has made me think that I didn't need it. I didn't have to go after it. Fear made me give in and to accept my situation as it is. That is a lie!! The Word of God clearly tells me differently. I have consciously made a decision to believe in faith, rather than succumbing to fear. I believe that God will see me through. I know that overcoming this will place me in position to receive a brighter future. Little by little, faith is making me believe that I am becoming a better and stronger ME. With faith, I can believe that my future mate and I will be able to overcome the storms that will come our way. As one, we can look fear in the face and say that we will not be moved! We will stand on the truth of the Word of God.

There you have the recipe for my life. I am surrendered to God. By His grace, I believe that I can and will overcome all my imperfections. I'm trusting that God is building His Son's character in me. I am under construction at the moment. He is at work, perfecting my recipe for life through heart and mind. As I follow His mixing of the ingredients, I know that He is making me to be the woman I was designed to be. He is finishing the recipe to perfect me to be the perfect match to the man that He has for me.

Lonika Thomas

A MILLION REASONS

Here is a million kisses
for all the times I should have kissed you and didn't.
Here is a million sorry's
for all the times I was wrong and didn't admit it.
Here is a million "You're So Beautiful's"
for all the times you looked good and I didn't say so.
Here is a million hugs
for all the times I should have held you and I couldn't.
Here is a million "Thank You's"
for all the times I should have said it and wouldn't.
Here is a million dollars
for all the things I wanted to buy you, but couldn't afford.
Here is a million "I Love You's"
because I really do.

Joshua Bourne

INFLUENCED BY SILENCE

Where do you find inspiration? Is it in the changing seasons, your favorite teacher, or perhaps a religion? Inspiration is not something that can be taught. It is a personal feeling that comes from deep inside. Maybe it makes your heart melt, helps you with the toughest situations, or helps when you are stressed. As for myself, inspiration comes from someone I have only known for two years. He not only gives me inspiration but also builds my inner strength.

He is not a brother, a husband, or a father. It is my son, Eden. That's right, a person who can't even count to five or speak full sentences gives me more inspiration than anything or anyone. You may say that is bizarre or unprofessional. I say that you are wrong. The look in his blue-green eyes and his tiny gestures give it all away. Eden has inspired me to further my education in Cosmetology (my dream career) and has given me a new perspective on life. All in all, it is because of Eden that I have the energy to get up in the morning.

Is it not amazing that some people do not really face life until it is thrown at them? It took me eight hours in the labor and delivery room to grab life by the horns. Before I thought inspiration was puppy love, freedom, and free will. Of course that was in my more immature days as a teenager. Perhaps it was because I gave birth to him at 17 and took on a great responsibility that made me realize what inspiration really was. It is a feeling that is overwhelmingly unable to be described in words.

Unconditional love is, in my opinion, a necessity of inspiration. I can't help but love Eden even when he spills Kool-Aid on the carpet, pulls out all my pots and pans, and refuses to eat his Happy Meal until he gets the toy. You see, he inspires me because he can't criticize, opionate, or give me advice. Being criticized or judged draws me further away

from someone. Therefore, and I am not sure why, but Eden's way of expressions inspires me to make lifelong decisions. My son helps me make the right choices in my personal life. Those of you that have a child (ren) can relate to my reasoning.

Some may wonder, what does it actually take to influence someone? Why a two-year old? To me, an influence is your best friend. They act as companion who is there through thick and thin, rich or poor. They guide and give you awesome advice whether by words or gestures. I live for Eden, and he is the closest blood I have. To see the look on his face when I am about to do something regretful is enough to make even the strongest man cry. That is what it takes to be an influence and a loyal companion. Eden was there for me when I entered marriage. He has been there when I cried and when I thought all hope was lost.

The most unexpected persons or things influence people. It may not make sense to others, but you know what influences you. Eden will always be my strongest influence. It has taken me this long to realize that an influence is not your clique in school or the people that make decisions for you. It is Eden, who looks at me with that face. That adorable face saying without words, "Now, mom, you know that's not what you want!" I will always love him unconditionally. I am stress free, and there is always a good head on my shoulders when I listen to him. I listen to his gestures, his looks, and his thoughts. Eden is without any doubt, my number one fan. He is my loyal, trustworthy influence.

Kaemi Fowler

MISSING YOU

The glass is full, the wine is fine, but I can't seem to get you
off my mind.
I stand here with my drink in hand, happy for another new
year, but my heart is back to when you and I stood here
together, as one.
A tear quietly falls down my cheek as I raise my glass to
speak.
I wish I had you here with me this night, to keep.
Instead you are lying in the snowy ground below.
I tell you how much I love you and how much I miss you and
how much I long to be with you.
I tell you all about our children and grandchildren.
I tell you about our drafty old house and how much I enjoy
the roses we planted together.
Then I stop and listen to the blowing wind, as if you are
hidden there within.
Oh, how I long to hear your voice once more, even if it is
only in the wind.

Kathy L. Boyd

HEARTBREAK

Have you ever been in love, but they didn't love you?
Have you ever felt like crying just to see what they would do?
Have you ever looked into their soul and said a little prayer?
Have you ever looked into their heart and wished that you
were there?
Have you ever looked into their eyes when the lights were
way down low?
Never fall in love, my friend, for this is what I know:
In the end, the very end, your heart will break in two.
All this and more I know, my friend, 'cause I'm in love with
you.

Dawn Powell

WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW

They all say if it's meant to be
It will find a way.
I say if it finds a way, then it probably
Wasn't meant to be for me.
Some say I'll never fit into a world full
Of love and trust.
Others say sooner or later I'll give in to
Lust.

But what they don't know,
What they can't see,
Is that everything I am reflects onto me.
Some say I'm nice and kind.
Others say I'm a little behind the time.
What they don't know
Is what makes me me.

One group invites me to stay and play.
While the other group says, "Just stay away."
But what they don't know,
What they can't see,
Is how my heart truly does bleed.
It bleeds for love.
It yearns for trust,
It looks above, yet tears for lust.

For how many years should I wait to wed?
And let no man take me or offer his bed.
But have I lusted?
"Of course," I say.
But what they see
May not always be.
And what I feel may not always be felt.
And what I hear may not always be heard.

What they don't know
Has been lost in the rain.
For in their hearts, they feel no pain.
They don't have love;
They know no trust.
All they have
Is their body's lust.

April Spangler

SOUL MATES

I met him years ago through a friend at a party. I was in the kitchen when I heard someone say, "He's here," and I wondered, who?

Then he walked in and I knew as soon as I saw him. He's the one. Tall with broad shoulders, dark chocolate with a slow easy smile. He was wearing sunglasses but I knew when he took them off, I'd be hooked.

Our eyes met and held each other's gaze and something passed unspoken between us. Imagine all this, before anyone even introduced us. Well, I just didn't know how to act, I mean, what to do.

I just knew that I couldn't take my eyes off of him. I'm trapped by feelings of overwhelming helplessness. Knowing that I would be his and he would be mine, together for always as Soul mates. . .

Henrietta Young

TRAPPED

Maybe I was wrong
To turn and walk away,
But maybe you were right
To say what you needed to say.

Your shield has disappeared now
I can see through you like glass,
What you say now in the present
Reminds me of the past.

You say that we have changed
That I'm too blind to see,
But underneath the pain and tears
You'll find the loving me.

You have locked away my heart
And thrown away the key,
You've trapped me in a cage from love
To benefit your need.

One day you'll open up your eyes
And see what you've done wrong
But by the time you change your ways
I'll be unlocked and gone.

Jessica R. Carroll

Author Biographies

Fumiko Adair (p. 102)

I'm from Japan, and this is my sixth year learning English at a Self Even Start program. My ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) daughter makes my life more interesting. It's sprinkled with thrills, suspense, horror and laughter. I'm glad to have a place to share her stories with you.

Carol Adams (p. 39)

This is about when my dad was a young boy and after he grew up.

Maria Allgood (p. 9)

My name is Maria Angélica Hernandez de Allgood, and I'm from Torreon, Coah, Mexico. I have been in this country for 11 years. I am happily married with 2 children, and started attending English class last year. I'm so happy for the opportunity to learn the language and the culture while also sharing my culture, of which I'm very proud.

Jasmin Barham (p. 64)

My name is Jasmin, and I live in an Adult Group Home in Youngstown, OH. I attend GED class at Hope VI, which is near my home. I am 22 years old and work at McDonald's. After I obtain my GED, I would like to go to college and major in Commercial Art.

Jess Barnhart (p. 99)

This is one of my dearest memories from childhood. It is also the one I hold closest to my heart. This is a story that I want my children to read, so in a way they will know him too.

Evelyn Bedo (p. 65)

Patty Boring (p. 73)

I'm 39, a single mother of two girls. I wrote *Jealousy Bruises* after living it for three years.

Joshua Bourne (p. 79, 162)

My name is Joshua Daniel Bourne, and I have had a fairly good life, but I have had one too many bad times. The way I deal with the bad times is through poetry. It is the best way for me to release my thoughts, anger, sorrows, pain and happiness.

Kathy Boyd (p. 165)

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

Richard Brought (p. 139)

Rose Buckner (p. 133)

Vy Khanh Bui (p. 22)

My name is Vy K. Bui. I come from Vietnam.

Kilcha Canfield (p. 7, 145)

I came to the United States in 1986 from Korea with my American husband. He is retired from the military and works at the VA hospital. We have been married 22 years. We have 2 sons, one in college, and one in high school. GED class helps me improve my English, and I enjoy it very much.

Brenda Carroll (p. 41)

My name is Brenda Carroll, and I'm 53 years old. I live in Circleville, Ohio, and attend Pickaway County ABLE classes. I enjoy writing stories that come to me. I enjoy learning in my classes of studies, and I thank my mother and all of the teachers who gave me the courage to do it!

Jessica Carroll (p. 170)**Susan Crabbe** (p. 45)

My name is Susan Crabbe and I am an ABLE student. I am a 53-year-old grandmother, and I have received my GED. I am now taking some computer classes that will enable me to find a good job.

Vicki Dennison (p. 14)

My name is Vicki Dennison. In December 2003 my then 5-year-old daughter and I left our hometown of Basingstoke, England. I married an American from Grove City, Ohio, and we now have a year-old son who was born in America. We are very happy, but I am frustrated with the immigration process that prevents me from securing employment.

Afi Abi DeSouza (p. 97)**Laura Disbro** (p. 134)

My name is Laura Disbro. I am 44 years old and have two sons. Jason is 24 and Joshua is 16. I am currently working on my GED. I wrote this piece of poetry at a very difficult time in my life. Writing sometimes is very therapeutic for me. Since then, things have turned around for me. I have my eye on a goal...to someday walk into a bookstore and see my name as "author".

Kaemi Fowler (p. 163)

My hobbies include writing, dancing, swimming, and traveling. I am a mother, and I have been married for two years. My

chosen career is Cosmetology. Doing all of this and only being 19 has ultimately built my personality. As a woman I am definitely “girly,” which helps define my energetic people skills. I keep my head up straight so that I can be an awesome influence on my younger sisters. Besides trying my best to be outgoing, there is more to my thoughts. The following describes me to a point: “Today is the first day of the rest of your life” (Anonymous author).

Sara Fox (p. 42, 49)

I’m originally from Vinton, Louisiana. I have two boys of my own and two of my boyfriends’ children. Amy was very special to me, and I thought she should be remembered in a special way. What better way than by letting the world read about her.

Mercedes Garcia (p. 108)

I am 28 years old. I attend Glenwood ABLE classes and would like to attend a vocational school. And I can do so after receiving my GED.

Kay Goetz (p. 101)

Kenneth Grubb (p. 80)

I wrote this about my life and where it was leading me and what would happen if I did not quit my drug addiction.

Adan Ibrahim (p. 3)

Margaret Ison (p. 44)

My name is Margaret Ison. I’m a mother of three children and love to read and write. I wrote this book for my three kids. As they get older, they will have learned something from the story.

Nancy Johansen (p. 47)

I returned to school to get my GED. I'm a wife, a mother of six, and grandmother of nine.

Nataly Johnson (p. 12)

I'm Nataly Johnson. I am from Kazakhstan. Three years ago, I got acquainted with Marion Robert Johnson. We chatted by Internet, and when he came to Kazakhstan two years ago, we got married. One year ago, my daughter and I arrived in the USA to live with my husband. I now attend ESOL classes.

Joan Kay Joseph (p. 106, 147)

My name is Joan Kay Joseph, and I'm a displaced worker. My job moved to Mexico, and Canada. I am 56 years of age. I took the test for my G.E.D. on January 19th of this year, and I am awaiting the outcome. A good teacher, Amy Guda, and I have high hopes. Yea! Just found out I passed.

Kum Sun Kim (p. 95, 133)

My name is Kum S. Kim, and I am 49 years old. For four years I have been attending ABLE classes in Milford, OH, and my goal is to become a cosmetologist.

Jennifer King (p. 126)

Nikolay Koptev (p. 4)

My name is Nikolay Koptev, and I'm from Belarus. My country is a beautiful place in central Europe. I was living in Green City, Gomel. My city was contaminated as a result of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of Ukraine. I was a builder. I have been married for forty years, and I have one son who is living in St.Petersburg, Russia. I arrived in the U.S. nine years ago, and I have been living in Cleveland. I am happy living here.

Tonya L. Lay (p. 107)

I wrote this poem for my dad because I love him very much. Sometimes I wonder if he knows how much he means to me, so this is my way of showing him.

Ruo Yun Liu (p. 16)

My name is Ruo Yun Liu. I am a 32-year-old Chinese immigrant. I came to Cleveland 15 months ago. I look forward to studying accounting after I feel confident of my English skills.

Live Oaks ABLE Class (p. 150)

Keeva Long (p. 68)

Elizabeth C. Marinich (p. 111)

The reasons I came to get my GED was to fulfill a life-long dream. Life before GED classes was overwhelming with family and journals. Now it is filled with learning how to put those journals and family together. I want to enroll in college for journalism classes, so I can write a book. I want to write professionally, so that my family and Mamaw would see I can attain my goal.

Steven McCord (p. 37)

This story is one of the most exciting and memorable writings I have ever written. Not a day goes by that I do not think of these times. Camping at Blue Rock was a childhood thing that I always looked forward to. For those of you that still have a child inside, camping is where you should be. Thank you and God Bless.

Eunise McCoy (p. 24)

I am a missionary worker from Colombia. My American husband and I do missionary work in Colombia and the United States. We have four children. Recently, I became an American citizen.

Doris Molina-Hernandez (p. 93)

I was born in the city of Bogotá, Colombia, and I went to José Allamano High School. I got a degree in International Business in Cooperativa Integral Advanera. I am married and I have two children and work at the Marriott Hotel North in West Chester, Ohio. Now I am studying English (ESL) in Great Oaks.

Shanequa Morrow (p. 96)

My name is Shanequa Morrow. I'm 24 years old and was born in Youngstown, Ohio, but raised in Akron, Ohio, for 13 years. I was raised around a big, loving family. By the time I turned 16 years old I was on my own. I've come a long way, and I'm still trying to achieve my one big goal: complete my GED and become a Child Care Provider.

Patikai Mark Musuka (p. 117)**Linda Nelson** (p. 43)

I am in my late forties, and I am now going to school to get my GED. I am a mother of four grown-up sons and a grandmother of eight. They are all very supportive of the effort and hard work I have shown towards making my dreams come true. Just like my husband told me, you can accomplish anything; all you have to do is want it bad enough. I would like to say "thank you" to my family and all my wonderful teachers for their support.

William Norman (p. 63, 125)**Tomasa Nuñez** (p. 33)

I am a single mother of three daughters, and soon to be a grandmother of one (a boy). I was born and raised in Victoria, TX, moved to Ohio to make a better living, and now after working odd jobs almost all of my life, I am working toward receiving my GED. Not only for myself, but for my children and my grandson, who is due on April 21, 2006. This is

dedicated to my baby brother, who was murdered in May 2005.

Emily Nutter (p. 31)

I consider myself to be a very romantic, very sensitive person. Therefore, any situation in my life could be an opportunity to write something about it. That was the case with "The Unread Letters". There are some situations in my life that make perfect stories.

Tony Panza (p. 130)

Shirley Pasholk (p. 118, 130)

Shirley Pasholk, recording secretary of USW Local Union 979, has worked in a basic steel mill since July 1976.

Mike Paynter (p. 82)

I'm really thankful for one more chance at life. I'm finally learning how to live on life's terms, and for that I'm truly grateful.

Ulises Perez (p. 148)

Ladonna Pharis (p. 70)

My name is Ladonna Pharis. I have two beautiful girls, Miranda, 10, and McKayla, 8. I wrote this story because I want people to realize how hurtful one rumor can be and how it affects people's lives.

Ebony Pierce (p. 55)

My name is Ebony Pierce, young mother of five anointed children. I'm studying for my GED and would love to become a mentor of teenagers who might need encouragement to turn their lives around and believe in a Higher Power to focus on life's terms.

Joe Pilot (p. 133)

Gloria Portis (p. 87)**Dawn Powell** (p. 166)

I am 25 years old and enjoy writing. It is the only way to express my true feelings and emotions. I recently earned my G.E.D. and am now enrolled in pharmacy tech classes.

Rebecca Ramos (p. 25, 26)

I dedicate this book to my mother who told me all these wonderful stories as I was growing up. Also to my teacher Linda Pelton who encouraged me to do so.

Robert Rojc (p. 83)**Carol Rudder & Karen Smith** (p. 128)

Karen and I have worked at Pierre for several years. We both work in the Quality Control Department. We both have had our writing published in previous Beginnings books. We both enjoy writing. We are proud of our accomplishments.

Monica Ruddock (p. 60)

Hello, my name is Monica Ruddock. I'm working on my GED at this present time. I have a 4-year-old son, and I have a new son due in Feb. 2006. Thank you.

Hayfa Ali Saleh (p. 23)

I made this program to make people aware of the true Islam, because Islam has been portrayed as religion of terror. The fact is that Islam is religion of peace and love, and the terrorists who call themselves Muslim represent only themselves. Please read about Islam to know about it.

Deborah Shepherd (p. 151)

My name is Deborah. I am fifty-two years old and have been attending the ABLE classes at Live Oaks. I started classes in 2000, taking up this challenge in life to complete my

education (and it was a challenge). It took five years and has been frustrating, but I never gave up. I took the GED test in the year of 2005 and passed. The big thing that I believe is to have a positive attitude and attend class every day!

Faye Ann Smith (p. 159)

I am 26 years old and I live in New Philadelphia, OH. I am a mother of 2. I love to write poems. All of my writing comes from the heart, and is mostly about life experiences. I want to thank my teacher, Charlotte Putt, for all that she has done for me.

Lisa Smith (p. 143)

April Spangler (p. 167)

I am a 23-year-old who started writing when I was about 8 years old. It was and sometimes still is my way of relaxing. My notebook is like a counselor to me. It gives me a chance to express my feelings. It is hard to find a trustworthy person nowadays, so I turn to my pen and paper. My son has now become an ear to turn to. He is 3 years old, so he can't tell anyone.

Tiruwork Tadesse (p. 20)

I am a student of the Adult Education Second Language program.

Inessa Tarkhanova (p. 19)

I was born in 1928 in Moscow, USSR (now Russia). In 1945, I graduated from school and in 1950 from Moscow University. From 1950 to 1994 I worked in the department of Immunochemistry of the Institute of Microbiology and Epidemiology. In 1994, I retired on a pension and left Russia for America as a refugee. Now I live in Cleveland, and I have been in America for 11 years.

Andre Thomas (p. 75)

Lonika Thomas (p. 160)

My name is Lonika Thomas. I am a single mother of two. I am working to get my GED and move further in my education as God leads. I have written these writings as a testament to the things I face in my life. Also, I hope to encourage someone who may identify themselves with my writing. God Bless!

Maria Thomas (p. 66)

My name is Maria Thomas. I'm in my forties, and I'm also a struggling, single mother of three children. I'm trying to start over for the first time in a long time, and my goal is to get my G.E.D. and move forward to a better future.

Shaterra Tillman (p. 154)

My name is Shaterra Tillman. I currently reside in Canton, OH, with my lovely three-year-old daughter. At 19 years of age, I am actively pursuing my GED to better the life of myself and my daughter. My career goals include anything that has to do with medicine. Actually, to be more specific, it's Forensic Pathology. This has been my dream since I was a child. I believe with all my heart that I will soon achieve this goal through hard work and motivation.

Misty Tinker (p. 109)

My name is Misty Tinker. I am 26 years old. I have a 2-year-old and a baby on the way. I am attending Diamond Oaks ABLE program. I wrote this essay about my grandparents because next to my daughter, they are the reason why I walk this earth. My life would be so much different without them in it.

Roselle Turner (p. 130)**Candice VanSickle** (p. 56)

My poem was about a rough period in my life. I'd have to say I learned a lot from that part, but I appreciate what I have

now, which is family and friend. I'm 24 years old, I just got my GED last year. I have a wonderful boyfriend and a baby boy on the way.

Roger D. Wade (p. 57)

My name is Roger D. Wade. I do tree work for a living. I cut trees down for people who want them down, or I top them. As for the wood, I use it for heat, or I sell some too. That's how a tree man lives.

Tina Wagner (p. 35)

Kin Wijasa (p. 6)

My name is Kin Wijasa. I came to the United States six years ago. I have two daughters & one son. I am a 63-year-old grandmother learning English! I would like to become a citizen of the U.S.A. I also want to speak and understand English better because I have 4 grandchildren.

Shawn Wycuff (p. 81)

My name is Shawn Wycuff. I enjoy taking life easy and raising my little girl, Keyara. I can only pray she chooses a better road in life than I did.

John A. Yonkof (p. 130, 138)

Work for Mittal Steel, designer, writer, photographer for 979'er News.

Henrietta Young (p. 58, 169)

My name is Henrietta Young, born and raised in Columbus, Ohio. I'm a mother of three, grandmother of seven, and a GED student. My hobbies are reading, listening to music, and writing poetry and short stories. Listening to spoken word is also another joy of mine. My husband and I are empty nesters who enjoy being together and helping others. My goal is to pass on to my grandchildren the knowledge I have learned, and I pray that they carry on and do well in their lives.



Honorable Mention

Authors

Rogelio Abad	Lori Clemons
Peggy Agee	Cao Li Coffee
Mahiam Ahmad	Donna Colburn
Mohamed Ahmed	Felisa Coles
Sirad Ahmed	Dawn Collins
Melissa Albert	Lurai Collins
Eligio Alvarez	Michael Compton
Tana Amerine	Anthony Cooper
Mary Anomah	Irma Cordero
Marie Arellano	Linda Crawford
Dorrine Bankston	Barb Cress
Barton Beardsley	Beth Croskey
James Beatty III	Luisa Cubero
Rosa Beltran	Amanda Dalton
Judy Bennett	Jemone Daniel
Lourdes Bermudez	Francisca Dapaa
Stephanie Berry	Angela Davis
Vera Bjelicic	Deena Deller
Jeff Busse	Jackie DeRouchie
Tricia Busse	Mohamed Dia
Paul Butler	Sadio Diaby
Brittany Campbell	Hong Do
Oralia Cano	Hien Doan
Miechelle Charles	Gin Hui Dulle
Tonya Charles	Vincent Durante
Yi-Fan Chen	Soeung Eap
Anita Clark	Irina Efimova
Jessica Clark	Maria Egoavil
Michelle Clark	Miechelle Evans

Chante Evans	Sheila Hightower
Dora Fernandez	Colene Horvat
Boris Fidler	Jerry Howard
Jessica Fields	Yu Tien Hsiang
Tanika Fields	Darlene Hunter
Joseph Fike	Ragiye Ibragimova
Sunshine Finney	Junko Isaki
Laura Fogle	Chase Ison
Crystal Freeze	Yolanda Raquel Ivy
Shirley Frommel	Toni Jackson
Oleksandr Galanin	Zahra Jama
Katrina Gambill	Amanda Johnson
Tanya Garay	Mareka Jones
Cruz Garcia	Melissa Jones
Barbara Gatians	Tonia Jones
Blanca Gerena	Cora Jordan
Jeanie Gerlach	Hannah Kambitsch
Ginny Gilpin	Makalai Kandalin
Michael Glover	Oleksandra Karpa
Sue Glover	Holli Ketteler
Vaishali Goel	Rachel Kinser
Anita Gomez	Beate Klauke
Bianca Gomes Goncalves	Bolodymyr Koval
Michelle Gonzalez	Brenda Lee
Karen Grabill	Chris Lee
Julia Gressell	Visnja Lemajic
Jimmy Griffin	Sofya Lippert
Julieta Grotowska	Kevin Loar
Doug Grove	Keyanna Long
Marie Guillemain	Carlos Lopez
Michael Habib	Juan Mejia Lopez
Leroy Hall	Yalonda Lozoda
Amina Hashi	Brandi Mack
Annie Heath	Jaduiga Macza
Gunther Helfrich	Hannah Martinez
Kay Henderson	Theresa Maslyk
Seketta Hicks	Art Massengill

Carmen Maxwell	Nada Prekajski
Cassie Maxwell	Tameesha Rainey
Khristie McKinney	Zouhour Ramadan
Meredith McMullen	Amber Reasoner
Mariana Mena	Robin Recklaw
Joe Messer	Cheryl Richard
Luba Miktuk	Tamara Riley
Brandy Miller	Johanna Rivera
Naoko Miyazaki	Michael Roach
Leigh Moore	Lorra Rocha
James Morgan	Ana Rodriguez
Chinatsu Morohashi	Carmen Roldan
Crystal Morrison	Aniqua Rosalez
Iffat Mustafa	Janette Rose
Goura Ndiayo	Abigail Ross
Noor Nemer	Marta Ruiz
Shantell Newkick	Nikkia Ryan
Uktam Nishonov	Antoine Abi Salloum
Kathryn Oakes	Nicole Sampsel
Olena Orlova	Kathy Sanchez
Juanita Ortis	Sokdom Sann
Carmen Ortiz	Gina Santos
Ida Osborn	Sheila Santos
Alyona Osipova	Elva Scales
Irma Padua	Amanda Schmucker
Judy Parrott	Manyangli Sedall
Savilla Patterson	Linda Seymour
Rudy Perez	Nancy Shields
Melissa Pertuset	Liliya Shved
Robert Peterson	Mioslaw Skdowski
Thuy Phan	Debra Smally
Yenly Phan	Michael Smith
Catherine Phillips	Misty Smith
Yeniva Pippert	Desirae Souders
Azarae Pippin	Wayne Stalling
Susan Pitts	Carrol Starcher
Geeoun Post	Philip Stevenson

Brenda Stidham
Teresa Strahler
Ursula Strobel
Juli Stroup
Sherri Svoboda
Ewa Szymanska
Fanny Tamayo
Eva Tayala
Caila Taylor
Jana Teach
Sara Ticala
Helen Tipton
Sheri Todd
Zlata Tomic
Kim Hui Tran
Quoc Tran
Klara Trusova
Hisayo Tsuchiya
Lucina Umstead
Javier Martinez Vargas
Maria Vazquez
Carmen Visalden
Kevin Walker
Jennifer Wells
Tia Whiteglow
Andre Williams
Aaron Willoughby
Barbara Wilmoth
Kim Wilson
William Wilson
Rosetta Winphrie
Willie Woodall
Bin Wu
Dawn Yonis
Moses Young
Sandra Young
Jacky Yu

Veronica Zapata
Candice Zuponcic