

# **Life in America: Tales of Love and Laughter**

**Edited by David Bruce**

**Dedicated with love to  
Caleb Bruce**

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### Bibliographic Data

Bruce, David, editor. *Life in America: Tales of Love and Laughter*. Morrisville, North Carolina: Lulu Press, 2007.

## Table of Contents

Stephanie Bewley: “No Doubt on Tour”	1
Rachel Cairns: “Hang On Tight and Don’t Let Go”	6
Lindsey DeStefano: “Ten Times”	10
Jayme Dyrdek: “The Amazing Mr. Stewart”	14
Zack Edelsberg: “Dream Come True”	21
Jerry Gross: “My Younger Brothers”	29
Rachelle Harrison: “Payback: The Harrison Way”	33
Kate Lennon: “Karaoke”	41
Jessica Lightcap: “In Loving Memory”	48
Kim Lonsway: “The Drive”	52
Katie Maresh: “My Brother the Wrestler”	60
Cassandra McIntosh: “The White Menace”	65
Kellie Melton: “Ya’ll Have Your Passport?”	72
Peggy Metzger: “Their Personal Lab Rat”	77
Insick Moon: “Learning English”	85
Sarah Morrill: “The Bonnie Bell Invitational”	89
Nathan Prosch: “Taming a Beast”	95
Renee Richardson: “High School Sweethearts Gone Bad”	99
Chris Rosser: “Why Music is Better Than Football”	107
Nancy Roush: “Fire!”	116
Jessica Schilero: “The Golden Rule”	120
Andrea Thompson: “Cat Steak”	127

Sarah Tignor: “You Can’t Fit Hiking Boots in a Carry-on”	131
Rebecca Waddell: “Water, Rocks, and Our Imaginations”	138
Raina Wolfe-Stein: “California Vacation”	144
Appendixes	
About the Editor	149
David Bruce, “Humor with a Bite”	150
Works by David Bruce	154

## No Doubt on Tour

By Stephanie Bewley

“But, Mom! Come on! Can’t I, *please?*” I asked for the third time in about two minutes. We were having an argument by the island in the kitchen. All I wanted was a sleep-over with Tracey that night, but Mom wasn’t having it.

“I said no! And don’t ask me again!” She briskly walked out of the kitchen. Just as briskly, I rushed directly behind her. I was not about to give up that easily!

“But you said I could last weekend! I asked Dad earlier and he said yes! Plus, Jason’s not coming home tonight! Tray can sleep in his bed!” Jason’s my older brother. He just turned 16, so he is never home anymore. I dropped to my knees for more emotion. “*Please?*” I knew this would work. As weird as it sounds, begging and whining had been working a lot lately.

“Fine. But do not even *think* about asking me next weekend.”

“Ok! Thank you, thank you, thank you! I’m gonna call her right now!” I hugged Mom tightly then booked it up the stairs to go call Tracey. This was going to be a good night!

Tracey started packing right away. We always packed exactly the same to go to each other’s houses. Pajamas were always first. A toothbrush was close behind in second. Third was the best part: The Barbies! There was almost a certain

routine we had in how we packed our Barbies. Two huge garbage bags in hand, ready to go. Grab all the Barbie dolls, their clothes, then the rest of the accessories, like the pink Corvette and the bedroom.

About an hour after I got off the phone with her, she arrived. Mrs. Turinic walked Tracey up to my door, both with an enormous bag full of goodies! I rushed up to her, said hello to Tray's mom, then she and I ran into the living room downstairs to play and left my mom and Mrs. T.

We dumped everything into a huge heap in the middle of the room.

"Ok," I said. "So what do you want to do first? Do you want to eat some food or start setting up?"

"Let's go ask your mom if she can make us some food."

Mom did. She handed Tray and me each a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and a glass of milk, and went back upstairs to let us play some more.

Of course, we never really ended up actually playing Barbies that long. Setting up was the best part! We spent about two hours every time trying to agree on every single part of the Barbies' life story before we actually starting playing. We usually made it like a soap opera written for seven-year-olds. The surfer Ken doll is named Luke and is married to Malibu Barbie, who is named Carly, and the two kissed for the first time last time we played. Huge drama! But that is not even

the half of setting up. I had the pool, the kid's bedroom, the pink Corvette, and the bathroom. Tray had all the other rooms of the house, including the also pink RV the family goes on vacation with. After at least an hour of dressing the dolls and deciding on their story, we started setting up the house according to the scenes we needed for that day. But this time the story was a wee-bit different.

The music group No Doubt had begun to get really popular at this time. Naturally, we each had a copy of their new CD. If we were not playing Barbies, we were dancing around the house blaring it really loud until our moms yelled at us. But on this particular night, we decided to put the two together.

No Doubt was on tour in my living room! We cast our Barbies as each member of the band. There were agents, managers, producers, the whole bit. We even set up a stage in the living room on top of the TV. The RV was the tour bus, and all of the rooms we had were the inside of the bus so it was easier to play with. We made the extra Barbies sit on the floor in front of the 'stage' in an orderly fashion. We put the CD in and pushed play. We had the music really loud (like we always do). We took turns each song on who made the audience dance and scream for No Doubt and who got to play the band.

“All right, kids, time to go upstairs. It’s time for your Dad and I to be alone.” Mom and Dad came downstairs out of nowhere.

“But, Mom! We haven’t even been playing that long!” In actuality we had been playing for about three hours. It was getting near bedtime, so Mom and Dad wanted to be alone and send us upstairs.

“You heard your mother, kiddo. Upstairs, you two. Don’t stay up much longer and don’t be too loud.” Dad always won. Whenever Dad chimed in, we knew we had to listen.

“Fine. ’night, guys. Love you.” I gave each of them a hug, then Tray and I ran upstairs.

Even though I told my mom Tracey would sleep in my brother’s bed, she never ended up actually doing it. We got in our PJ’s, brushed our teeth and got into bed. Each time we had a sleepover, the same thing happened in the bed. We would either laugh and talk about nothing, or we would play our guessing game.

I lay on my stomach and Tray sat on my butt on top of me. She picked out a sentence or word in her head and lightly wrote it on my back with her finger. I had to guess what she was trying to tell me. We would switch every time we guessed it right. This would go on for hours!



Every once in a while my mom would come upstairs and check on us. She would slowly open the door to see if we were sleeping. Naturally we weren't. We would jump down, close our eyes and cuddle with the blanket pretending to be asleep. When she went back downstairs, we would giggle and get back to what we were doing. She fell for it every time! Really she probably didn't, but we like to say that she did. Eventually we would get so tired we would just crash, and the night would be over.

Mrs. T always came early to pick up Tray. But it was only Saturday!

"Mom! Can I go with her and sleep at her house tonight? *Please?*" I did the bending down and begging thing again.

"Yea, Mommy! Can she, please?" There were two of us fighting for it now! They had to give in!

They looked at each other with big grins on their faces. "Well, I guess Steph could come with us, right, Sharon?" My Mom just smiled at me. Tray and I instantly ran back into my house to pack for round two.

## **Hang On Tight and Don't Let Go**

**By Rachel Cairns**

When trying to remember memories from my early childhood, I find it hard to recall whole segments of time. Instead, I tend to have snippets of memories, some trivial and some very significant. I think memories help shape the person you become in the future; you are affected by happy and terrifying events that happened to you in the past and these memories may decide your personality or your biggest fears. One memory that has kept recurring in my mind brings a meaning to the way I live my life today.

When I was three years old, my parents and I moved from Washington D.C. to the house we live in today in Cincinnati, Ohio. The house was newly built so not many things had been done to it—it was a blank canvas. The minute I saw our untouched green sanctuary of a backyard, my mind thought of only one thing.

Now what is the one thing every little kid wants in their own backyard? Why, their own playground, of course. Being my daddy's little girl, I found that it wasn't hard to convince him to build a swing-set just for me. My mom still talks about how I would just grab my dad's hand, bat my big blue eyes, and as if with a snap of my fingers, I got what I wanted. My dad used to scold my mom anytime she raised her voice to me, even if I had done something horribly wrong, such as

sticking my finger in the electric socket. Being an only child and my daddy's little girl definitely had its perks.

As if a lion were storming our house, the truck tumbled down our driveway, carrying the most precious cargo. It seemed like ages before the construction workers finished the glorious swing-set. I would sit by the kitchen window and watch every board and every nail be put together, my anticipation driving me crazy. I knew the final day of building had come when the best parts arrived. First was a glowing, yellow slide that stood a mile high and was a mile long, followed by a sapphire blue tarp that covered my private clubhouse and the secret escape route down the metallic pole. The most important and exciting pieces were the swings: two blue seats with golden chains swinging in the wind as if awaiting my arrival.

When I asked for the swing-set, the slightly important fact of me not actually knowing how to swing never crossed my mind; it seemed like a small, insignificant detail. So my father promised me that the upcoming Saturday would be dedicated to my swinging lesson. My dad traveled a lot for work when I was little, so any time I got to spend with him was precious.

The sun was out and it was just warm enough to have a calm and refreshing breeze. I woke up earlier than I ever have before on that Saturday and could barely swallow my pancakes before I was out the door. I galloped to the swing-set as

fast as I could to start the most exciting day of my life.

My dad hoisted me onto the swing and placed my hands on the chains. He sat down beside me to demonstrate the proper moves to get the swing going.

“Stick your legs out, and then pump them backwards with all your might,” my dad instructed. Since I was so concerned with getting the swing moving and making sure my legs were in the proper form, I sort of forgot one important detail: my hands. Before I knew it, I had fallen off the swing and come face to face with a friendly ant family. I’m sure my dad wanted to burst into laughter, but he kept it to himself and tried to sympathize with my frustrated cries. My dad never liked a quitter, so he wasn’t going to let me give up on my first try. He picked me up and placed me back on the swing, hands secured in place.

“Now this time, *bold on tight and don’t let go.*” When hearing this phrase, it all of a sudden seemed so simple; I had the key to my everlasting happiness. Not long after, I was soaring in the air, trying as hard as I could to touch the clouds with my toes. My dad had to pry me off of that swing at sunset—I just couldn’t get enough. I can’t think of another time when my life was so exhilarating.

This memory has always stuck out in my mind because of the lesson my dad taught me. In the context of the memory I just told, it applies only to the art of swinging. But I think this

saying applies everyday to my life. It is connected to determination, ambition, and strength. Being in college, I have so many goals I want to achieve and only being partly interested to finish them is unacceptable. I want to prove that I have the responsibility and the courage to get what I want in life and not giving up is the only way I know how. So when a new opportunity presents itself, I always remember, *“Just hold on tight, and don’t let go.”*

## **Ten Times**

**By Lindsey DeStefano**

It is hard to go through life with just one person whom you can call your best friend. I feel this way because I have learned that it is almost impossible to have a best friend. People come and go, change, and grow apart. It is very rare that you can find someone that you can relate to so well and trust so completely. I am lucky to have found that person at such a young age.

Growing up, my younger sister, Erin, and I used to spend every second of our time with each other. We enjoyed pitching and catching in the backyard, singing while swinging on our swing set, and simply following each other around the house. We spent every moment possible around each other. There were days when I remember not wanting to sleepover at a friend's house because I wanted to stay at home and play with Erin. Some of the greatest memories about my sister and me were at bedtime.

Erin and I had separate rooms as children. However, I can't remember a night that she didn't sleep in mine. We used to get into trouble for staying up late on school nights and laughing so hard that we would cry. My father was a main contributor to all of the fun.

The night would typically begin around eight p.m., usually after some sort of athletic practice for the two of us, and then

an episode of either *Full House*, *Seventh Heaven*, or *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*. Then, Erin and I would head upstairs with a long day of elementary or middle school behind us.

“Come up in ten minutes,” I reminded my parents each night as I ascended the stairs with Erin close behind. We would spend about 30 seconds sprinting through brushing our teeth. Next, after waiting several minutes for our parents to come up, we would begin to get frustrated. At this time we would argue over who would go to the stairs to yell down that we were ready for them to come up.

My mother would come up first. She would usually tell us a made-up story or read us a book. However, she would always leave the room with something positive or special that both of us had achieved that day that would make us feel good. Next, my dad would come in and the fun would begin!

The story Erin and I most enjoyed was my dad’s version of “The Billy Goats Gruff.” He would tell the story from memory, in the dark. We would get so excited for the story we could barely stand it. Dad would tickle us while shaking our beds, and Erin and I would fly up and down because of his massive weight pushing on our twin-sized beds. We would laugh so hard that we would cry, and sometimes even have to run to the bathroom. One night, my dad even broke my sister’s bed. Then, the excitement came to an end and we would repeat our nightly routine.

“Love you ten times!” I shouted.

“Love you one hundred times!” replied dad.

“Love you one thousand times!” screamed Erin.

“Love you girls!” dad answered.

The love fest would continue and finally come to an end once one of us decided to quit. The final goodnight for the evening would end with my dad scaring all the “monsters” out of my room. Erin and I were deathly afraid of monsters, especially under our beds and in our closets. My father, being the loving person that he is, decided to make a “monster spray.” The spray consisted of simply water. Of course, Erin and I were unaware of this until much later in our lives. Erin and I made sure he sprayed every area of the room and he would, which would make us feel better. I still remember yelling at him to come back in the room because I thought he had missed a spot.

Once both parents had finally ended their goodnights, Erin and I would continue to sing, laugh, and extend our “bedtime.” We would sing songs from Girl Scout camp as well as songs from our chorus at school. However, our favorite game was “The Scaring Game.” When we had an extremely difficult time trying to fall asleep, we would get out of bed and play the game. Erin would usually hide first. The only rule was that she must hide in my room and not make any noise. We always broke the second rule. From the mo-



ment I got close enough to the door to walk in and be scared, I could not control my laughter. This was mainly because I was so scared she would jump out and scare me to death. I remember my stomach hurting so badly because of how hard the two of us would laugh. These nights ended with a much later bedtime that my parents were very unaware of because my room was way down the hall. Those were some of the greatest times of my life.

As we grow older and move on with our lives, I am positive that the three of us still think of each other when we go to sleep at night because of that special bond that my father created for us. I'm lucky to have these special memories with the people that I care the most about. To this day, as a college student, I still end my phone conversations with an "I love you ten times" and my dad replies with the same old familiar response. Erin continues to do the same. Erin and I also still sleep in the same room when we come home from college and continue to stay up late and laugh so hard that we end up crying. Sometime in the future I'm sure that these traditions will have to come to an end. I'm scared for that day to come.

## **The Amazing Mr. Stewart**

**By Jayme Dyrdek**

I'll never forget the trip I took to Europe after I graduated from high school. I went with my school's culture club, led by the unbelievable Mr. Emery Stewart, the high school's French teacher. Mr. Stewart had been teaching at St. Clairsville High School for over 30 years when a group of my friends and I decided to go on his trip to France and Italy. He had been taking different groups of students overseas every other year that he had been teaching since he started, so we thought this would be a great opportunity to learn about and visit these countries alongside a great tour guide. What we didn't know, however, was how much we would actually learn about the person whom I like to call "The Amazing Mr. Stewart" in the process. His quotes alone on this particular trip were enough to make any of us want to travel with this unique individual again.

As soon as we landed in Paris, Mr. Stewart felt the need to give us a history lesson and instructions before we even left the airport. He went on and on about the history of Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris landmarks, and "fun facts" about the hotel we would be staying in. I started to laugh as he kept going on when my friend Nita nonchalantly asked me, "So do you think we'll even *get* to the city today?" to which I just chuckled in reply.

On the bus ride into the city, I found myself looking out the window and gazing at the luminous sights Paris had to offer, when all of a sudden, I heard a quick and repetitious thumping noise coming from the front of the bus that sounded like a leaky faucet needing to be fixed. It was Mr. Stewart on the bus-provided microphone, "Listen up, people! We're going to be visiting the Eiffel Tower in a few moments, so make sure you have your cameras ready and stick together as a group. Remember, stragglers get mugged and raped." I couldn't believe this. We're already getting instructions from the teacher and we haven't even been in Europe for 20 minutes. "Stragglers get mugged and raped? What did that mean?" I thought to myself, as I turned around in my seat, looked at my friend Caitlin, and just rolled my eyes. We all thought this would be the worst trip ever.

After a long night of sightseeing and listening to Mr. Stewart ramble about one of the many Parisian attractions, we all headed into our rooms for a nice, but short, slumber; we were leaving in the morning for the next city. Before we could sneak out of his sight, however, Mr. Stewart crept up on my friends and me and gave us a piece of advice, "You'd better not stay up too late, people, because if you get up late, you won't get a bowl." Where was this guy coming up with this stuff? It seemed as though every word that came out of his mouth was some sort of ridiculous, but quotable, piece of

advice or instruction. I assumed that he meant if we got up late in the morning, we wouldn't get a bowl at breakfast because they would all be taken by those who were "smarter" and had gotten up in enough time to get one.

Another thing that made Mr. Stewart so interesting on this trip, or in general I suppose, was that whenever we were on the bus and traveling to a new city, he would get out his video camera and record people sleeping. He would then proceed to ask them questions in a soft voice, immediately answer them, ask another question, and repeat this same cycle until the person woke up. He did this pretty much the entire time we spent on the bus traveling from city to city until he had gotten everyone on tape. I think I was caught sleeping once as well, and have no idea as to what he said to or asked me. I will admit, however, that this side of his character was quite hilarious. I can remember my stomach hurting from laughing so hard when he did this to all of my friends, and I'm sure they laughed at me when I was recorded as well.

Mr. Stewart was very anal about being on time and making sure we saw everything in a day's time that we possibly could. I remember how much my feet would hurt at the end of the day and how tired we all would be by the time we got back to our hotel. Mr. Stewart was very strict about stopping anywhere as well. He would cringe when somebody would yell, "Mr. Stewart, I have to go to the bathroom!" He would

reply, “We’re not stopping, people.” He would not stop for anyone—that is, of course, anyone but himself. Whenever he had to go to the bathroom, he would stop. But there was one thing that would make Mr. Stewart stop dead in his tracks. That one thing was postcards. It seemed as though every time he saw something that remotely resembled a postcard, Mr. Stewart would say, “We have to stop here, people! I see some postcards!” He would then stop the group’s progress and wander over to the postcards as though they were calling out his name.

We all learned a lot from Mr. Stewart on this trip, especially when it came to crossing the busy streets of the cities we visited. Whenever we came to a crosswalk and it was our turn to walk, some of us were scared and always resorted to running instead of walking to make sure we got across in time. After seeing this a few times, Mr. Stewart gave us more advice by saying, “People, running only makes you a moving target.” This was another of Mr. Stewart’s famous quotes during the trip. We would recite it every time we crossed the street. He would also say something pretty amusing every time we would visit a popular landmark or museum. He would say, “Stay close, people, because at this time of day this place becomes a human blood clot.” I remember one of my closest friends, Katie, thought this statement was one of the funniest things she had ever heard in her life. I really don’t

know why, but I guess it was pretty humorous at the time. I think at this point, we all started to appreciate Mr. Stewart and his antics, as well as his knowledge about Europe. No matter how funny he was, or how many insightful quips he made, he really knew what he was talking about when it came to traveling and culture.

Another thing Mr. Stewart did that everyone thought was funny was that he always called us “people,” and never really once do I remember him calling us by our names; we were always addressed as a collective group. He even called the chaperones “people” as well.

During our time in southern France, we visited the Pont du Gard. While we were walking across the lower level of the bridge, some of the guys on our trip spotted a small cliff near the edge of the bank and thought it might be kind of cool to jump off it. My friends and I wanted to see this spectacular feat, especially since we knew they would get in major trouble if anyone saw, and we decided to follow them down to the cliff so we could take photographs. They jumped off the cliff one by one and barreled into the water. Once they were done, they decided to repeat this again, but the second time they did it, everyone on our trip took notice—especially Mr. Stewart. As soon as they got back up on the bridge, Mr. Stewart and the chaperones yelled and lectured them to no end. “Do you have any idea of what I would have been responsible for if

anything had happened to any one of you?” he said. “I should have known that” —and then he said the most famous line of the entire trip—“assholes are a dime a dozen.” Even though the boys knew they were in trouble, and probably wouldn’t be allowed to go anywhere by themselves for the rest of the trip, they all just stared at each other and replayed that famous quote of his in their minds before they broke out in laughter along with the rest of us. That night, Mr. Stewart lectured the guys once again about how they could have been killed and how he would have been responsible. “How could you be so stupid? To jump off a cliff in a foreign country! Now I know why God allows murder,” he exclaimed.

I have to explain that I had never seen this side of Mr. Stewart before. I never had him in class in high school because I took Spanish instead of French, and I don’t ever recall seeing him getting mad about anything. I always knew him to be this “happy-go-lucky” guy who was more of a friend to everyone than a teacher. He was also a good friend of my grandma’s because they used to go on trips together when they were both travel agents. So, I wasn’t used to seeing him this upset. I also wasn’t used to seeing him be this funny. Maybe I just didn’t know how funny he was all along, but for some reason, we all warmed towards him by the end of the trip and decided to make t-shirts with all his hilarious quotes listed on the back. We planned to ask him to autograph them

as souvenirs to commemorate all the memories from the trip, but we never actually got around to making the t-shirts.

Mr. Stewart is quite a character. He is still currently teaching; however, he keeps saying he is going to retire, but then never follows through with it. I think his passion for teaching and taking students to Europe is too strong for him to let go of. We all learned a lot from him on that trip and I think we would all be lucky to go with him again.



## **Dream Come True**

**By Zack Edelsberg**

When I was a little kid, I would pull out all the pots and pans that I could find and sprawl them out across the kitchen floor, so my parents tell me. I'd take my bright red plastic drumsticks, plop down in the middle of the floor, and bang away for hours! My parents said that this was a weekly ritual for me. I can't say that I remember doing this, but I also can't say that I doubt it's true.

My parents said it's all I talked about when I was younger—music, that is. I'll never forget the picture that still sits on the shelf in our family room next to the phone. I was about three or four years old, and was avidly marching through the house with my toy drum strapped to my waist, and a maroon bandana on my head. I have a smile from cheek to cheek, and my arms are flailing high in the air. Oh, it's a great picture indeed!

It has always been a dream of mine to play in a collegiate marching band. My parents frequently tell me a story, and it is one of their favorites! I thought that one day it might get annoying to hear, but for whatever reason, I still enjoy hearing it today. "I'll never forget that day you made your father and me sit out in the pouring rain to watch that marching band," my mom would say. "You just had to see those drums—you just had to see those drums!" (Often my parents would go to

the Oberlin football games, and all I cared about was the half-time show.) One night, when I was about seven years old, my parents took me with them to a football game. It was a bitter cold night and the game was not that exciting. When the game neared the end of the first half, rain started to fall. My parents were more than ready to leave, but unfortunately for them, I wasn't! "We tried everything to get you to leave, but you wouldn't budge until you saw the marching band," my mom said. "Your mother and I were shivering but you didn't seem to have a chill on your body," my dad added. "I'll never forget the look on your face once the Oberlin marching band took the field. You were on the edge of your seat, and your mouth was hanging wide open. Your eyes were open wide too; I don't even think you stopped to blink once the half-time show started." My parents claim that they don't remember any of the halftime show, only the look on my face.

I had a chance to make my dreams come true after I received my acceptance letter from Ohio University. One of the reasons I had applied to OU was because of the Marching 110. My percussion instructor, Bill Ransom, was an alumnus from OU, and also marched in the 110. He knew that I was extremely interested in being a part of a collegiate marching band and told me that this was the place for me. I contacted the school, told them I was interested in trying out, and before you knew it, I was at freshman training camp.

After all the freshmen were done unloading their stuff, we gathered out front of Lincoln Hall. Field Commander Shawn Hurley addressed us, the freshmen class of 2004, with this opening speech: “These next four days are going to be long, hard, and very hot. We are going to push you hard, harder than some of you have ever been pushed before. If you are here, you are here because you have a passion for music, and a desire to perform. The Marching 110 is different from any other band there is! The 110 is *special*! It is going to take hard work and dedication—I hope you all are ready.”

Not knowing much about college marching bands, especially not the Marching 110, I really had no idea what to expect. I received an itinerary handbook once I arrived, and sure enough, the schedule proved to be gruesome! The training camp was going to be four days long, from seven in the morning to seven in the evening. There was a break for lunch and dinner, and that was it! The tryout was broken down into two separate parts: a marching audition and a playing audition. Each tryout was graded on a fifty-point scale; the people who scored the highest made the band—it was as simple as that.

The first night was quiet, and I was just trying to get myself mentally prepared for what was ahead of me. Was I intimidated? Hell, yeah! But I sure as hell didn’t want anyone to know that, so I just tried to lie low and get to bed early. Be-

sides, I knew what was to come and I wanted to be well rested.

You better believe that the next morning, at seven a.m., the ninety incoming freshmen, including myself, were lined up on the practice field still half asleep. I could barely open my eyes and I was already getting yelled at for things I didn't even know I was doing! "Boy, what are you doing? I told you not to move at attention!" Since you weren't able to look anywhere but in front of you, I had no idea who was yelling at me. All I knew is that I better stand as still as possible or I was going to have a loud voice in my ear, and saliva flying against the side of my face.

Like I said before, I had no idea how a college band worked, and at the time, the only thing I was able to compare it to was the movie *Drumline*, which mimicked a boot camp-like training. I never thought that I could get tired from being in marching band, but boy was I wrong. That first day we marched from sun-up to sundown, and at the end of the night, I was hurting big time! (What was even more shocking to me was that I am an in-shape type of guy. I work out five to six times per week, and I was extremely sore from the day of marching. I could only imagine how some of the other incoming freshmen were feeling.)

The next three days were not much easier than the first day. It was more of the same, really. Marching, playing,

marching, playing. (One day included more playing than marching, but it still didn't seem to take my mind of the soreness from marching.) By the time tryouts came around, everyone was so dead tired that it made it very hard to focus. I can't say that I felt completely ready for tryouts, and the physical fatigue wasn't helping. What made try-outs even more stressful was the fact that twenty-five people were trying out for six open spots on the drumline. I was competing against some extremely talented drummers, and most of them were section leaders of their high school drumlines just like me. (I had been so used to being the *top dang* at my high school that this was a huge reality check.)

The time had come. The first audition was the playing part, followed by the marching. The playing audition was a bit more intimidating because it was just you, the drumline section leader, and the director. I vividly remember talking to Bill (my percussion teacher), before I went in for my playing audition. He gave me a pep talk before my audition, which helped calm my nerves a little. "You just got to go in there and do your thing, man. I know Marching 110 material and you are it, trust me! Go in there, and play with confidence." Hearing that from Bill, whom I had studied with for the past seven years, really meant a lot!

"Zack, you're up," one of the other freshman guys said. I walked in there confident as could be. I put the drum on, and

waited for instructions. I was told to play a piece that we had been working throughout training camp. As I started to play, I realized that I was playing the wrong part. “God damn it! What the hell am I supposed to do now?” These were some of the thoughts going through my head when I realized that I screwed up. I calmly stopped playing, told them I was reading the wrong part, and just continued on playing the right part, not allowing for any conversation.

The playing audition lasted for all of a minute and a half, and as I walked out from the playing room, I had a very uneasy feeling in my stomach. I did my best that day to keep my head up, because I knew there was one more part to the audition—the marching. I felt quite confident with the marching. That evening, the auditions started. Each section of the band did the audition, while the rest of the band watched from the sideline. The percussion section was one of the last sections to audition, so I had a lot of time to watch other people audition. Sure enough, I nailed the marching audition! I don’t think it could have gone any better. I felt pretty good, too, because I have always had a hard time putting things out of my head when I am disappointed in myself, and being able to put the playing audition out of my head for the time being was a big step for me.

After the marching audition, all the incoming freshmen who had tried out for the drumline were called over to a se-

cluded section of the field by JC, the section leader. Awaiting us was the band director, Dr. Richard Suk. We all knew what was about to happen. “I just want to thank all of you for your time and hard work. I wish that I could keep all of you, but as we all know, I just don’t have enough room. If I call your name, I’m sorry to say, that means that you are cut. If you don’t hear your name, that means that you will either be marching on the line, or be an alternate.” (The alternates have the ability to challenge someone for a starting spot various times throughout the year. The alternates provide safety insurance in case something happens to the existing members of the band.) As Dr. Suk read down the list, I realized that my name was not read. Dr. Suk apologized to those who did not make it, and congratulated those of us who did. Steve, Jesse, Parker, Eric, Waymon, Bobby, Adam, and myself were the new additions to the 2004-2005 Marching 110 drumline. We started jumping up and down like a bunch of schoolgirls and began high-fiving each other.

Later that night I found out that I did in fact make the line and would be marching as a 110 member. I was overwhelmed with excitement! All the hard work and effort that I had put forth those past few days paid off. I have to say, though, the feeling was kind of surreal at the time. I mean, I can remember as a little kid dreaming of only one thing—playing the drums. And then there I was, a new member of

“the most exciting band in the land,” marching as a timbale player in the twenty-member drumline. Wow! What a feeling, what a rush! Except there was one problem with all of this: I had already managed to make an enemy. I didn’t fill an open spot on the line—I beat an upperclassman out of his old one.



## **My Younger Brothers**

**By Jerry Gross**

Do you have little people? I do. When I think of them, I think of nothing but adventure because they are so full of imagination. I have two brothers and a son, but they all act like they are the biggest brother.

My oldest little brother (Thakotae, better known as “Tae”) is age seven, and he has learned a lot in school so far; he has learned enough to impress me. The first day that I was home (which was during my break between summer and fall quarter), I purchased a ukulele before it was time to see them. He knew what it was before I had the time to explain what it was.

While my family was picking me up, I said, “I have a surprise for you guys, and it is a ukulele.” Immediately, my oldest little brother responded, “You have a guitar, Jerry?” and his response shocked me.

Being away from my family for a month did play a factor in my memory, but I really didn’t remember him being that wise and attentive. Well, I mean I can say that some of my memories of him were not his best performances displaying his wisdom. I can’t say that Reli isn’t smart, but I can say he has a smart-a\*\* personality.

My youngest little brother (Tharelius, better known as “Reli”) is age five, and he is the mean guy of the group. Eve-

ryone has a mean side, but his mean is the reason we named him the bearer-of-bad-news; “Reli” is always into something and missing around where he is not welcome or needed, but that’s “mommy’s baby.”

Reli once walked into my room, “What are you looking for, Jerry?”

I responded with little interest in his curiosity, “My phone. I misplaced it.”

At this point I would really be tired of looking for my belongings, but Reli said, “Here it is, Jerry. I’m done using it, brother.”

He calls me by my first name only when he is up to something or in my business, but he calls me “brother” when he wants something.

My brothers often are up to something or in my business, but that is usually cool with me because they are boys. However, it ends up not being cool when they call the wrong girls the wrong names.

“I’m done towking to ya biscuit-head girlfriends, and they like me more anyways, punk,” said Reli.

Tae adlibbed from the distance, “I got some girls, too, Jerry,” but he’s really too chicken to talk with girls unless I tell him what to say.

I enjoy being involved in the same life as my little guys.

My brothers live in their own minds, and that’s why I

know they that they will grow up to be fine gentlemen. One day during this past summer, I found myself influencing my brother Tae to talk to this female for me. This activity took place in our neighborhood swimming pool, where I noticed this fine lady who was wearing a little bit of nothing for a bikini, and who had a luscious caramel complexion.

“Hey, Tae, you see that pretty-faced lady lying down over there? Bro, she looks good for real!”

I ask for Reli’s input, “Don’t she look good, Reli?”

He replies with little excitement as he jumps ten-toes into the swimming pool, “Nope!” (Splash!).

I turn back to my more empathetic brother, so I can achieve my goal (to get her number, of course).

“Tae, man, I like the sight of this lady, dude. She got the pink, the yellow, and the orange bikini that complements her complexion.” My brother sits next to me looking in the same direction, but his eyes seem to be moving all around in his biscuit head. Nevertheless, I unleash the little brother.

“Hey, Tae, take this phone and hand it to the girl. Got me so far?”

He replies, “Yeah, yeah.”

I carry on with the plan, “After you give her the phone, you say, ‘Can’t I have your number pretty lady?’; okay?”

He gives me a nod.

“Okay, Tae, go ahead.”

My brother Tae gets shy when he converses with females, so he blows the plan up. As soon as he gets in arm's reach of the pretty woman he says, "Hey, pretty lady, was my number?" I instantly jump into the play and reconstruct what he has blown up (Laugh), but at least she found it cute, which I expected. The mission was a success because I did walk away with her number.

I find that their creativity comes more fluently than mine did at their age. I love my family, but who doesn't? They keep me thinking, but they also keep me worried about what they might find in my room at home.

## **Payback: The Harrison Way**

**By Rachelle Harrison**

“SETH!” shouted my mother at the top of her lungs. The voice came from the bottom of our old, creaky staircase. Once my mother yelled, we all listened.

“Yeah!” answered my brother nonchalantly as he continued to aim all his focus on what level he was playing on his precious Xbox.

“The phone is for you, and it’s a girl!” Mom said in a goofy, smooth-talking voice.

Almost instantly my sister, Taylor, and I stopped watching our traditional Tuesday night shows. Seth seemed as shocked as we were. This was the first time that a girl had called our house for him. Which was typical, considering my brother was only twelve. As a matter of fact, I don’t think my brother even thought about girls. (Personally, I think his Xbox was of more value to him.) Seth didn’t even seem excited that his first phone call from a girl was even occurring, but for my sister and me, this was the first step to payback.

Seth slowly put his controller down and ran downstairs to answer the phone. Once Seth was clearly downstairs and out of sight, we ran down our long skinny hallway into our computer room. Taylor picked up our second receiver and pressed the mute button. She held the phone slightly away from her ear so we both could hear Seth’s conversation. At

first nothing special was taking place—it was the typical pre-teen jitters of calling your first boy. The girl was just giggling and her friends were making noise in the background. I looked at Taylor, who rolled her eyes. Seth sounded annoyed that he had been torn away from his intense game to listen to some stupid girl giggle into the phone.

“Who is this?” Seth said in a rather annoyed voice.

The girl finally found the courage to reveal her identity: “It’s me, Jo, from swim practice.”

Taylor and I immediately locked eyes. Swimming was something that our entire family participated in, and we were all members of the same club team.

Taylor whispered, “It’s Jo Beachy.”

I gave her a look of confusion. I was much older than Seth’s crowd and the only swimmers I interacted with were my own age.

“What are you doing?” asked Jo in a shaky, nervous voice.

Seth replied in an odd voice that we had never heard before. He was trying to act as if he were the coolest person on the earth.

“I was just chilling,” replied Seth.

I found this whole situation comical. When I looked over to see how my sister was reacting to this conversation, she had this gleam in her eye, and slowly a smirk came across her

face.

“What?” I asked her, wondering what the evil smirk was about.

“I have the most brilliant idea of all time!” she said, almost jumping up and down with excitement.

I was excited that she was excited. I knew something good was about to come next.

“It’s payback,” she said, and that’s all she had to say to get me involved.

As Seth sat on the phone with his new “girlfriend,” Taylor and I started thinking of embarrassing things to do. I had the idea of getting out cheesy love songs and playing them in the background. Taylor agreed that this was a good idea. We got out the cheesiest Mariah Carey songs and played them into the phone. Seth was mortified! He came running up the stairs to get the phone from us; luckily we had hidden the phone once we heard him running. We then sat in our room like we were completely innocent. He was so embarrassed. His first girl had called him, and his horrible older sisters had humiliated him. Once Seth realized we weren’t going to give the phone back, he got right back on the phone, and began to try and act even cooler to make up for the incident. Taylor and I decided to wait awhile to pull our next trick. After about two minutes or so, we decided to get on the phone and make kissing noises. Once again, Seth was embarrassed.

“It’s just my older sisters—they’re kind of mean,” he said to poor Jo.

Jo seemed embarrassed also, probably because we were listening in on her intimate conversation with our younger brother.

“Well, I think I’m just going to go. I’ll see you at school!” she said.

Seth tried to sound unbothered by this comment, “All right, dude. See you around.” Seth hung up the phone and went straight back to the Xbox.

After that, Seth really didn’t get that many phone calls from other girls, so my sister and I had to think of an alternative way to embarrass him. We began to invent silly things to do to Seth and his friends when they slept over. There were times when I Saran-Wrapped Seth to his bunk bed, while Taylor did the same to his friend sleeping on the futon. We also shaved one strip of their leg hair, and mastered the famous prank of shaving cream on the hand, all while they were sound asleep. Now, these tricks may seem a little over the top, but so far you’ve only heard what Taylor and I had done to Seth. Seth of course, had to earn such a punishment. Our dad also had a goofy side to him, and we think this is where Seth gets his crazy ideas. Although we are able to pay Seth back for all his tricks, we are sadly unable to pay our dad back.



For example, I began dating my boyfriend, Adam, when I was a sophomore in high school. We met at swimming practice. He was the team captain for our rival school, and I was the team captain for my school. We began to flirt a lot, and since I was Adam's first real girlfriend, he was extremely shy. It took him awhile to get the guts to actually come over to my house. It was the first real "date" that we had been on. Adam had arrived at my house wearing his Dover basketball tee shirt. My dad, unfortunately, answered the door.

He immediately saw his Dover shirt and asked, "Are you from Dover?"

"Yes, sir, I am," answered Adam nervously.

My father then slammed the door on his face. I ran down the stairs as fast as I could.

"DAD!" I screamed, horrified.

"What, hunny, I was only kidding!" he said, laughing hysterically while re-opening the door.

"Adam! I am so sorry. He was just kidding," I apologized.

Luckily Adam had a sense of humor. My dad apologized and shook his hand, then thankfully left us downstairs to watch television. We sat on the couch, talked, and watched TV. I couldn't believe he was still here after what had just happened to him. I thought that was the worst the night could get.

Enter Seth. He was eight at this time, small as can be, with as much energy as the sun gives off. He comes running down the steps in his whitey-tighties.

“Hi there, guys!” he said as happily and jauntily as could be.

I was so shocked. How could he be doing this to me? At this time we had just bought a treadmill and it was currently claiming its spot in our living room.

Seth jumped on the treadmill and shouted, “I’m just going to go for a quick jog and I’ll be out of your way!”

I couldn’t believe it. First, my dad slams a door in his face and now, here is my eight-year-old brother in his whitey-tighties, running on a treadmill. It was completely ridiculous, and I was completely mortified. Now that this memory is in our past, we can tell this story and laugh about it. My sister’s story, on the other hand, is even more mortifying.

My sister is the most amazingly beautiful girl. She’s the type of girl who all the boys think is gorgeous. She’s thin, she has the bluest-ocean clear eyes, and her gorgeous long blond hair could be used in a Pantene hair advertisement. Boys often called the house asking for Taylor, which gave my brother lots of opportunities to embarrass her. He had done many cruel tricks, but the one that stands out the most is the one he did to her while she was talking to her biggest crush, Michael.

Taylor had been flirting with Michael for a long time. He

was the popular boy who was extremely good looking and all the girls wanted to date him. She talked to him for hours on end, and one night Seth decided to strike. While Taylor was giggling on the phone and twirling her hair while talking to the boy most girls considered a god, Seth was sneaking on the other line. He quietly picked up the receiver, put it on mute, and carried the phone upstairs. I watched him creep up the stairs, and I just thought he was being his usual weird, annoying self. I knew I had been wrong when I heard the high-pitched, glass-breaking screams. While Taylor had been talking to her crush, Seth had snuck the phone upstairs into our bathroom. When a moment of silence came, he made his move.

As they both were quiet for a moment on the phone, Seth flushed the bathroom toilet and made a noise like “aahhh” as if he had relieved himself, then quickly hung up the phone. Taylor was completely humiliated! How could she explain *that* to Michael? Michael asked her what she was doing and Taylor, so completely humiliated, quickly replied, “I have to go,” and hung up. She then screamed at the top of her lungs as if she were starring in a horror film. This was Seth’s cue to run for his life. Although Seth may have had to run for his life, our family is very close. We are a fun, loving family who enjoys a good laugh.

Underneath all the torture and the humiliation, our family

is pretty amazing. My brother, although eight years younger than me, is the most protective person I know. He once kicked my ex-boyfriend in the privates for making me cry, and punched a boy in the face for calling my sister a nasty name. We may have our little prank wars, and maybe even a few fist fights here and there, but we always have each other's back. No one messes with one sibling, without taking on the other two. We love each other. Our family lives by a quote that my father says often, "You will have plenty of friends, and significant others come and go throughout your life, but family will always be there."

## **Karaoke**

**By Kate Lennon**

It was the fall of 2001. I had just spent the last eight years of my educational career as a student at St. Gabriel's Elementary School. Eight years and finally I had completed my family's traditional mandatory attendance at the Catholic school. I "graduated" and left all of my friends to start a new chapter in my life: a public junior high school. Luckily, I had to attend Memorial Junior High for only one year because the high school started in tenth grade. One year of meeting new friends, not fitting in, and trying as hard as I could to become a member of the rest of my class. One year for me to try and be an equal with people who had known each other since kindergarten. It would not be easy, but later that fall I would have an opportunity to really shine and show everyone who Kate Lennon really was.

I walked into school and my friend and neighbor, Adrian, whom I met the first day of school and was my first friend at the junior high, told me about a karaoke contest sponsored by the student council. Knowing Adrian was quite the showman, he would definitely have a routine that could win the cash prize of \$50. Adrian said, "Kate, I have the perfect routine for the two of us." I perked up and tried to guess what it was.

"What are we going to sing? Are we going to sing

Wham? Or Backstreet Boys?” I couldn’t wait to hear what his creative mind would say.

“No, even better. J.Lo! ‘Love Don’t Cost a Thing!’”

“Great! So when’s this contest?” I asked.

“It’s on Friday. Yeah, this Friday,” he responded.

It was Tuesday. I couldn’t rehearse until Thursday because I was swamped with Biology homework the other nights. So I made a deal with him. I told Adrian that if he choreographed the routine, I could learn it on Thursday night. Adrian looked worried and said, “Kate, are you sure you can do this? You know who our competition is....”

As the words came out of Adrian’s mouth, I looked over at the lockers and there they were. The team that we had to beat: Mike, Will, and Kenny. They had bought the N’Sync Concert videotape and had rehearsed their dances so that they could copy them to perfection. We saw this display of pop obsession every school dance when the boys would put on a show for everyone to “ooh” and “ah” at. Well, Friday, it would end. It was time for us to prove not only were we better than Mike, Will, and Kenny, but it was my time to shine and show that I belong at this school. I knew in my heart that with Adrian’s choreography and my enthusiasm and star quality we would definitely give the boys a run for their money.

Biology took over my brain for the next two days but then Thursday came quicker than I had expected. Other than

the contest and biology, another event had clouded my head. Keith, my older brother, was having surgery on Thursday. Because I could not be with my brother, I knew that I needed to stay loyal to Adrian and focus on our routine. I went over to Adrian's and we rehearsed in his basement. He first showed me the routine. It was definitely fast-paced and really exciting. He and I both knew, however, that it would be difficult for me to learn it all and perfect it by the morning. Still, Adrian said that he was impressed with how fast I picked up the routine, and I myself was quite impressed as well.

Let me set the scene for you: Adrian starts off the intro to the song with a phone call. The person on the other side of the phone call can't make an important date but is sending gifts instead. Angry, Adrian throws down the phone and the music starts. Soon after the music starts is a series of motions where Adrian will do a move and then I follow with a different dance move. It's sort of a back and forth of movements. Then after a few eight counts, we start doing the same moves simultaneously and we really turn up the tempo. In the middle of the song, there is a dance break that is the climax of the routine. It would be the hardest part to perfect but if we executed it on stage the first prize would be ours.

In the middle of our practice, I got a phone call. It was my mom. She said that during my brother's surgery, his heart failed and the doctors needed to revive him using a defibrilla-

tor. I held back the tears. I wanted to be with my family, but I knew that there was no way I could be there with them. His surgery was not even in Ohio, and with no way of getting there I felt helpless. There was nothing I could do but get my mind off of it. It helped me to use this performance as an outlet. An outlet of everything I had felt inside: the sadness, the worry, and the nervousness. After hours of practice, we had agreed that we were ready, or at least as ready as we could be. Before I left to go home, Adrian told me to wear a red shirt with black athletic pants. I needed to get a good night's sleep so that I could be ready for the competition.

The sun shined through my blinds the next morning and woke me up. I was rejuvenated and focused, and I had my mind on the prize. I talked to my mother and she said that my brother would recover, which was a relief. I felt ready but I had an entire day of school to get through before the competition. My fourth-period class let out, and as I walked down the hall I could hear people's excitement over the competition. They were talking about what they had heard about Mike, Will, and Kenny's routine and how they would be tough to beat. I went to my fifth- and sixth-period classes and afterwards, I heard students buzzing about Will in the hallway. They said that Will was in their gym class and earlier that day he had left school after separating his shoulder while playing volleyball. Although I'm not one to wish bad upon



someone, it was like a gift from heaven. The absence of Will in the routine would make it incomplete and a lot different. It would cause Mike and Kenny to be thrown off. It gave us a boost of confidence that Adrian and I needed.

The end of the school day came and everyone filed into the auditorium. I sat with Adrian and we celebrated the news of Will's injury. The first couple of acts went on stage and they were less than average with less than average scores to accompany their performances. Mike and Kenny took the stage. They looked a little lost and their routine definitely lacked spirit without their third member. Their routine was good, but not all there with Will still absent due to his injury. After the dancing stopped, Mike and Kenny received their score from the judges. There were three judges with a high of ten points from each judge. They accumulated a score of 22. It was better than the other groups, but I knew we could beat it.

After Mike and Kenny performed, it was our turn. We walked on stage in our matching red shirts and black athletic pants. My head shot down. I stared at my feet and the slats on the stage floor. My hands were trembling a little, and I could feel my palms getting clammy and moist. The music would start at any minute and then it was up to me to remember the routine. It would be the most important four minutes of my freshman year of junior high school. It would

make me or break me as an official member of Memorial Junior High.

I could hear Adrian doing the intro on the toy phone that we used as a prop. I heard the phone drop and I knew that the music would start within seconds. The first beat dropped and Adrian moved. I moved. I could feel the heat of the spotlights on my face as I executed the routine. I could hear people clap and cheer in the audience, but I stayed focused. And then it came: the dance break. It was time for Adrian and I to seal the deal. We moved with the grace of trained professionals. If I were Latino, people would think I was Jennifer Lopez herself. We finished the song strong and then the music stopped. The crowd cheered and applauded the routine. We had executed the routine the best that we could. We awaited the judges' scores. The first judge showed us an 8. The next judge followed with another 8. The last judge held up a 9 and we celebrated our score of 25. It meant that we had scored higher than Mike and Kenny in the first round. After a couple more mediocre routines, the judges announced the teams that qualified for the second round. Mike and Kenny joined Adrian and me.

For the second round, each team was supposed to spin a wheel in order to choose a random song to sing. Adrian and I spun first. We got "You're The One That I Want" from the *Grease* soundtrack. It would work well with us because we had

a man and woman to sing each part. We sang the song as well as we could without any preparation and received a decent score to match our outstanding first-round score.

As Mike and Kenny were about to spin the wheel, some commotion came from the back of the auditorium. Someone was walking up to the stage, but I couldn't see who it was because the spotlight shined in my eyes. As the person got closer, I saw that it was Will, in a sling, ready to spin the wheel. Delighted to see their third team member, and the crowd cheering over the injured boy's return to the contest, I knew they would get the pity vote. The boys landed on "Bailamos" by Enrique Iglesias and the boys killed it. They started to do some Latin dancing and every now and then Will winced in pain as his shoulder lay in a sling. The judges, as predicted, gave them a higher score than what we received. It was high enough to help them win the competition. We got robbed. We did not win the \$50, but Adrian and I did get to split the second prize of \$30.

In the end, I realized that the best thing I had was a solid friendship. I challenged myself and prevailed. I did the best that I could and although we didn't come in first, I was a recognized member of Memorial Junior High. I walked the halls and people knew who I was. I was proud of myself and proud of my performance, and that's the best prize I ever could have won.

## **In Loving Memory**

**By Jessica Lightcap**

“G.G., you have a big ash,” we would joke when my Great-Grandma needed to flick her cigarette into the ashtray. Not only did she smoke like a chimney, but she drank like a sailor as well. Not the typical Great-Grandma, but we loved her just the same.

Friday nights were always a highlight in my week when I was younger. It was the night we all went to G.G.’s house for dinner. The food was always delicious, and dessert, even better. After we ate, the adults would play progressive rummy while we kids found our way outside. We would play in the sand or run around like maniacs. Many times I would make “muffins” out of sand and give them to G.G. She would always pretend to eat them and would say, “Boy, these are some tasty muffins!” For years I would let her think that I still believed in our game, just because I knew how much fun she had.

A memorable moment in my childhood was when the adults let me play cards with them. I felt so privileged because I was the only kid allowed to play since I was the oldest Great-Grandchild. My sister and cousins had to play the “kiddy” games while I got to pretend to be an adult. I could feel the envy drifting from them, and loved it.

For as far back as I can remember, G.G. prepared us for

her death. When we would discuss future plans, she would say things such as, “Don’t expect for me to be there.” She even bought a burial plot and tombstone almost fifteen years before she died.

She was diagnosed with lung cancer when I was very young. Part of her lung was removed, and the cancer was gone. Even so, I think this operation scared her a bit. Other than this incident, however, she was completely healthy. When she would begin to talk about her death, I would stop her by saying, “But, G.G., don’t you want to see me graduate from high school?” Of course I did not want to think about her dying—I was only ten years old. Her reply, however, was always, “Don’t you wish that dreadful long life on me!”

As the years went by, we actually began to see G.G.’s old age set in. She had Macular Degeneration in her eyes, which resulted in loss of sight. She could not see well enough to drive or even cook anymore. When I was in high school, she moved in with us. She also had Sun Downer’s, which is a form of Alzheimer’s, but which occurred only at night. One night in particular was very bad; she woke up and came out of her room completely nude. I was dumbfounded. My dad and I just looked at each other trying not to laugh, while my mom went to help her back to bed. She did not realize what she was doing, nor did she recall it the next day. To this day, we laugh about this incident.

G.G. loved to tell stories. She would always talk about her “men” and how she was, back in her day, the life of the party. She would also explain how she began smoking as a teenager, even though it was looked down upon because it was not very lady like. When I began my driving lessons, she would tell me, on a daily basis, the story of when my Grandma got her license. She began by saying, “Linda wanted to get her license right when she turned sixteen. I wasn’t worried, though, because I knew she would never pass. She was so horrible at driving.” She continued, “But I took her anyway. When she got back from the test the examiner got out of the car, and she nearly ran him over!” She would laugh and say, “He gave her the damn license anyways; he thought she was beautiful, but that’s no excuse to give her Mother a heart attack!” If you ask my Grandma today, she’ll say that story is a total fabrication. I guess we’ll never know.

Eventually, G.G. became really sick but we did not know why. She ended up in Hospice, where we found out she had cancerous tumors throughout her entire body. We would have known years sooner, but the hospital had mixed up her files with someone else’s. It was too late—we had to sit by and watch her die the last couple months. I went to visit her one Friday afternoon before work, and by the time I got off of work, she had passed.

G.G. made a hand print on my heart, and I will take her

memories with me forever. Even though she talked about dying for so long, I never believed it would actually happen. I couldn't imagine life without her. But it did happen, three days before my graduation.

## **The Drive**

**By Kim Lonsway**

My senior year of high school I wanted to have a memorable Spring Break with my friends. However, my mom certainly wasn't going to pay for all of it and I didn't exactly have the money. I was desperate to go somewhere so I finally relented to go on vacation with my family. Luckily, my best friend, Brittany, was in a similar situation, and she agreed to come on my family's trip, too.

We decided to go to Florida to visit my grandparents in Fort Myers. My Uncle Denis and his family were planning to go there as well, so my mom suggested we all go down together. The only bad thing was that we would have to drive down with them in their minivan. My Uncle Denis and my Aunt Phyllis are notoriously bad drivers, and I was not looking forward to fearing for my life the whole time. It is a 20-hour drive to my grandparent's house. I would much rather fly. "This is going to be the most boring drive ever!" I thought to myself. I was wrong.

The evening we left, everything was started off fine. My cousin Ryan, who was a sophomore in high school at the time, had a lot in common with Brittany and they were getting along well. Uncle Denis, Aunt Phyllis, and my mom, who all shared driving duties, seemed to be driving surprisingly close to within the normal speed limits. "This may not be so



bad after all,” I thought.

Soon, however, the drive grew dull as expected. Ryan pulled out a spiral notebook and a black marker. “We should put a sign up in the window saying that we’re driving to Florida,” he said.

“Yeah, good idea,” I replied. Less than a minute later Ryan held up a sign reading ‘America’s Wang or Bust’ with a crude drawing of the state of Florida underneath. Brittany and I couldn’t help but burst out laughing.

Aunt Phyllis turned around from the front seat, “What’s so funny?”

“Oh, um, Ryan just told us a funny joke,” I made up. She smiled and turned back around in her seat. I was surprised she believed me because she, more than anyone, knows when Ryan is up to something (which he almost always is).

Ryan handed the sign to Brittany over a snoring Uncle Denis and Brittany put the sign up in the back window. This way, when the headlights of the cars behind us reached our back window, they would be able to read our sign. We laughed quietly for a few more minutes and then we forgot about it.

About an hour later, Aunt Phyllis was now driving. Out of nowhere she yelled, “What is that thing blocking the back window?”

“Huh?” Ryan asked confused.

“That white thing, what is it? Give it to me! It’s in my way!” she demanded.

Uh oh. Uncle Denis and Aunt Phyllis are known for being pretty strict and they were not going to appreciate Ryan’s little joke in the back window. So I grabbed it and handed it to Ryan. He crushed the paper into a ball and threw it into the corner of the car down by his feet. By now, Uncle Denis had woken up in all the fuss.

“Ryan, what is that?” he said.

“Dad, it’s nothing. Chill out.”

“Give it to me!” he commanded. He did not appreciate Ryan’s backtalk and he unbuckled his seatbelt and dove over Ryan’s lap for the crumpled sign. Ryan, realizing he could possibly get in trouble, started punching Uncle Denis in the back. I looked over at Brittany and she couldn’t believe what was going on. There was an all-out brawl in the backseat of the car for a stupid little piece of paper.

The battle was soon over, and Uncle Denis was of course the victor. For the next few hours we had to hear all about how “wang” is not a funny word, and definitely not the type of word that should be displayed in a car window. Finally they eased up and we all fell asleep to the sounds of pavement rushing beneath our feet.

The next morning we were awakened bright and early to Aunt Phyllis’s dreadful rendition of “Maria” from *West Side*

*Story.* Thank you for that, Aunt Phyllis. Surprisingly, though, everyone was in good spirits. The rest of the morning was a smooth ride. This came to an end when Ryan grew bored while we were stopped at a gas station in Georgia.

Once again, he had an idea to make the car ride a little more interesting. He had swiped the bar of soap out of the bathroom at the gas station and explained to us that he was going to write messages on the windows of the minivan. The soap wouldn't damage the car and would easily wash off in the rain or with a wet towel. "This ought to be good," Brittany laughed as we climbed back into the car.

While Aunt Phyllis was in the front passenger seat with her book and Uncle Denis was checking out the engine, Ryan hurriedly scribbled sentences on the windows of both sides of the van. My mother was asleep in the middle seat as Ryan got back in the car. Uncle Denis slammed down the hood, got in the car and started it up. As we pulled out, Ryan turned back to Brittany and me with a devilish smile. "What did you write?" I leaned in and whispered with a smile on my face.

"Just look, you can still read it from in here," he whispered back. From the inside of the car, Brittany and I strained our eyes to read the two sentences he had written. The tinted windows made the writing nearly impossible to see from inside the car, which is probably why Uncle Denis hadn't noticed it. There was one sentence on each side of the car's back

windows. My side read, “Hi, I am Denis the crazy driver!” and Brittany’s side read, “Honk if you’re horny!” We struggled to stifle our laughter. We couldn’t wait to see the faces of the drivers passing by!

For the next hour and a half, Uncle Denis could not figure out why he was repeatedly being honked at. “These people are driving like maniacs!” he fumed. Brittany, Ryan, and I exchanged knowing glances and smiles, but we still held the laughs in. We wanted this to last as long as possible.

When Uncle Denis pulled into a rest stop shortly afterward, we knew the fun was over. He would see the sentences for sure. As he pulled in, my mom, just waking, spoke up, “Hey, Denis, I can drive for the next stretch if you want.”

“Ok, that sounds good. I am getting pretty tired. Just let me use the restroom real quick and then we’re back on the road,” he answered. He was all about making good time. He pulled in and got out of the car and jogged up to the bathrooms. My mom got up, and opened the side door to get out. She left the door open as she walked around the front of the car and got into the driver’s seat. Soon Uncle Denis returned, got in the car, and we left.

How could this be? The adults had not noticed the soap sentences! Then I realized it was because my mother had left the side door open for Uncle Denis. The open door had covered the back window and its hilarious message so he had not

seen it as he was getting back in! The fun was going to continue!

As mom pulled back onto the highway, Aunt Phyllis continued to read her book and Uncle Denis put his head down to sleep. As we expected, the honks soon started up again. We were delighted at this surprise source of entertainment. That is, until the hillbillies came along.

Most of the cars that were honking had honked only once as they sped by. But then, out of nowhere this old, white, rusty pick-up truck was right on the side of us. Two sunburnt hillbillies were inside of it, mullets and all. As we watched from inside our van, the hillbilly driving looked over and read our window. It just so happened that they were on the “Honk if you’re horny!” side. Uh oh.

He slapped his friend on the shoulder and pointed to the message. They both started laughing and they sped up so that they could look to see who was driving the van. My mother and Aunt Phyllis were sitting up front laughing and talking to each other. We watched from the back as the hillbillies approached and finally caught up.

On first sight of the two women up front, the hillbillies went nuts. They started honking like crazy and speeding up and slowing down and getting really close to the side of our van! Mom and Aunt Phyllis started to panic. Aunt Phyllis yelled, “What are these people trying to do!”

This woke up Uncle Denis. “What’s wrong? What’s going on?” he said, still half asleep.

“There are crazy men trying to run us off the road!” Aunt Phyllis cried.

“What?” Uncle Denis shouted as he looked over to the crazy hillbillies. “Just pull over to the side of the road. I’ll handle them.”

My mom moved over and pulled off to the side of the road. Luckily, the hillbillies kept driving and didn’t stop. Everyone was pretty worked up, though. Ryan, Brittany, and I were even frightened. “What *was* that?” Aunt Phyllis said exasperated. Everyone just kind of looked around the car at each other not knowing what to say.

“Umm, well, I think it might be because the car says ‘Honk if you’re horny!’ on the window,” Ryan said sheepishly. I could not believe he had confessed! Immediately, Uncle Denis and Aunt Phyllis were screaming at the top of their lungs demanding answers. “It was just a joke. I wrote it with a bar of soap...we can wash it off right now,” Ryan offered.

“You bet your ASS you’re going to wash it off NOW!” Uncle Denis screamed. Ryan got up and grabbed some wet-naps we had lying around and quickly wiped off his prized sentences. It was dead silent for pretty much the rest of the trip because by this time we were in northern Florida.

When we finally arrived a few hours later at my grandpar-

ents' house, we were all worn out. The day's events, along with the overnight car ride had left us all haggard and exhausted. Thankfully, my grandparents had a big dinner ready for us and pretty soon we were rejuvenated.

That night we recounted the tales from the car ride for them and they thought it was hilarious. We were all laughing, even Uncle Denis. To this day, I still laugh when I tell people about that crazy drive. But next time, I'm flying.

## **My Brother the Wrestler**

**By Katie Maresh**

My brother, Dan, and I had a typical brother-sister relationship when we were kids. Dan is two and a half years older than I am, so he did the older brother things, like protecting me from scary things that hid under my bed or in my closet, and he was always there when I needed him to be. However, I remember one part of growing up with Dan more than the other parts. We were the only two children of my parents, which meant Dan never had another brother to beat up on, so he decided that I would have to do.

Dan never really hurt me, but he did decide to use me as his unwilling participant as he tried out new wrestling moves he and his friends had learned from watching television. It all started out innocently so Dan could figure out what he could get away with. For instance, if I was lying on the couch, he would randomly come over and jump on me and yell, “body slam!” as he did it. As time went on, he realized just how much stronger he was than me and the wrestling moves became more and more extensive. There is one incidence of his wrestling with me that I remember the most.

It was a summer afternoon and we were both on vacation from school. Dan and I were both bored out of our minds watching television when Dan decided to cure his boredom with a wrestling match against the target of his choice: me. As



I looked to my left I saw my brother hurling himself at me and leaping through the air.

“Body slam!” Dan shouted as he landed.

“Oosh!” I replied as the air was knocked out of me. “Get off of me!”

Not listening to my pleading, Dan continued to wrestle me. He grabbed my legs and pulled me off the couch and I landed on the ground with a thud.

“OW! Get off me!” I exclaimed again, all the while my brother was laughing hysterically. On the ground he put me in hold position after hold position seeing which moves he could carry out successfully. Then, in an instant we heard a loud crash as something delicate shattered across the floor. We both immediately stopped and looked over to where the sound came from.

“What was that?” Dan asked.

“I don’t know! You did it!” I replied.

“Na-uh, it’s your fault,” I responded.

As we looked at the shattered remains of my mom’s favorite vase strewn across the floor, my heart sank in my chest.

“What’s going on down there?” mom asked from upstairs.

“Nothing!” we both exclaimed in unison as we looked at each other with fear in our eyes.

“Oh, you’re gonna get in so much trouble,” I said, laughing at the thought.

“We can put it back together. Go and ask mom for the glue,” Dan said, offering the solution.

“And *what* am I supposed to tell her we need it for?” I asked

“I don’t know, just think of *something*,” he replied trying to figure out how to piece the badly shattered vase back together.

“Fine, I’ll think of something. I’ll tell mom you broke her vase,” I said with a snicker.

“No you won’t! She’ll never believe you.”

“Of course she will. She always believes me!”

As I started to go upstairs to ask my mom for the glue, we heard someone coming down the steps. Once again my heart sank in my chest knowing what was to come.

Dan and I both got in trouble for breaking the vase that day, even after the whole story was told. I still believe it was completely his fault for starting the wrestling match in the first place, but we both spent the rest of the night in our separate rooms without dessert from that night’s dinner. One would think after an incident so dramatic that the wrestling matches would stop. Oh no, not for my ever-hyper brother. The wrestling matches still happened and they happened of-

ten. After a while, I began to get tired of being wrestled to the ground and decided to do something about it.

Dan and I had arguments, as pretty much every brother and sister do, and Dan always thought he would win every argument simply because he was older than me. He thought he could take whatever toys I was playing with or the television remote out of my hand and watch what he wanted to or wrestle me to the ground whenever he felt like it. I caught on to this and came up with my plan. It was pretty simple and would fix the wrestling problem, among others, and show him that while I was younger, I was also smarter. First, Dan and I would get in an argument and here's where I put my plan into action. I would start screaming and yelling as if my brother was wrestling with me and hurting me, which in turn always got the attention of my parents. Before my parents came downstairs, they would always yell down for us to stop whatever we were doing and behave, but when my yelling didn't stop they would come downstairs to see what was going on. This is the time I would conjure up some fake tears and pretend I was hurt. At the same time, I was thinking up a story to tell my parents about how Dan had beaten me up and hurt me. Some of the time, we were wrestling and I just did this to make him stop and other times we were just arguing. My act would get Dan in trouble and leave me smiling at my accomplishment. Being that I am the baby of the family,

and the only girl, my plan always worked and to this day I don't know if my parents ever caught on. If they did, they did not show it well because every time I faked some tears, Dan would get in trouble. There were times when Dan and I were not even in the same room and I would decide I wanted to get him in trouble, so I would start yelling and make some tears and Dan would be getting in trouble five minutes later.

Today, Dan and I have a great relationship, as I believe we always have. We are able to sit around and laugh about these stories letting each other in on the true motives of our actions. He forgives me for getting him into trouble he didn't deserve and I forgive him for causing me pain I didn't deserve. I know somewhere down the road when we both have our own children they will play the same games and we'll both be able to remember our childhood and the funny stories we lived.

## **The White Menace**

**By Cassandra McIntosh**

I met the love of my life when I was five years old. I know I was probably rushing things, but he was gorgeous. He stood about four and a half feet tall and had long flowing white hair. His name was Sam, but I decided to call him Snowflake. He was every little girl's dream. He was my first pony.

Since I was born, I had cycled through a various menagerie of animals; almost nothing was left out. We had everything from cattle that we raised for profit on our 400-acre farm, to skunks, rabbits, chickens, hogs, ferrets, Quaker parrots, Rottweilers, chows, Jack-Russell terriers, a raccoon, guinea fowl, and, one very unfortunate time, a 30-pound turkey that thought chasing me every time I came out of the house was great fun. But almost every little girl knows that longing for her white pony. Thank goodness my parents were as much animal lovers as I was and on my fifth birthday they decided to give me the best present of my life.

That September fourth I was awakened to the sound of pounding on my bedroom door. "Wake up, Cassie Linn, we gotta feed the animals," my dad yelled through the door. I knew that even it being my birthday wouldn't get me out of helping with farm chores, so I grudgingly crawled out of bed, slowly pulled on some barn clothes, and fumbled the door

open to see my dad's smiling face. I still, to this day, don't know how you can manage the act of smiling at five a.m. Outside into the dark we went, off to the back field to start the feeding with our cows that were due to calve in March. I scrambled onto the back of the four-wheeler, and we headed for the barn where the truck, hay, and various mixtures of corn were waiting for us to put to use in the next couple of hours. My job at this point in my life was to drive the truck while Daddy threw the hay bales from the bed and spread the grain in the feeders in each field. Daddy had started me driving the week before by tying a tin can on each of the pedals so I could reach them and explained that I had to follow the tracks already in the field as closely as possible and not let the little red needle go over the five-mile-per-hour mark. My mom had a huge problem with this arrangement, but he always told her, "My daddy started me driving at five. She'll be fine."

After going to each of the ten fields, he took me to a barn on the very back of our property. I had been here only a few times, and it was still slightly dark outside, but he pulled the truck right up beside it and said he needed some help inside. I jumped out of the truck, still tired and ready to try to grab a little more sleep before it was time to go to school. "But, Daddy, I just want to sleep. The bus will be here in an hour." "Just come on, Darlin'," he pleaded, "I need some help." I

drug my feet the whole way to the door, and on the verge of pouting I followed him inside. There stood my mom, and my best friend, Lacy, with her parents from the next farm over, with a birthday cake and a banner reading “Happy Birthday!” My dad turned to look at me with that big smile again and shouted, “Happy Birthday, Darlin’! I don’t think you are going to school today.” Everyone in the barn shifted a few feet to the side, and I caught my first glimpse of Snowflake standing there with a big blue bow perched between his little pointy ears. I am sure I had a shocked look on my face as I bound over to the stall he was standing in with a very irritated look on his face that seemed to say, “Get this bow off of my head this instant!” I knew, just from that look in his eye, that we would get along just fine.

After that day, Daddy moved him to the barn that was closest to the house so that I could take care of him easier. I learned very shortly that Snowflake was a very mischievous creature. The first morning that he was in the new barn I awoke to the sound of whinnying in the back yard. The barn he was being kept in was a good hundred yards away, but this sound was really close to the house. I clambered out of bed, yanked open my bedroom door, and ran to the back door as fast as my sleepy legs would carry me. There Snowflake was, standing just as happy as can be in my plastic swimming pool, stomping his feet and tossing his head like it was the best

thing he had ever thought to do. I ran into the kitchen where my daddy was drinking his morning coffee. "Daddy, Snowflake is out!"

"I was wondering when you would notice," he said. "There is a lead over there in the closet. Catch him, put him back in the barn, and this time run a piece of leather through the snap so you can't get it open without untying the leather." A big job for a five-year-old, but I was sure I was up to it. Outside I stomped, angry that he was in my pool. "Snowflake, come here," I shouted. He just looked at me and snorted. "Snowflake, I said come here!" This time he didn't even bother to snort. I walked toward him, and I suppose this meant that the game was just beginning because he kicked up his heels and began to trot gaily around the yard. I probably chased him for an hour that morning. He would allow me to get within reach and then run again. Finally my daddy came out, caught him, and helped me to rig up the leather on his stall to keep him in the next morning.

When I came home from school that day, I decided that this would be my first day to ride him. I would teach him who the boss was in this relationship. So after getting off the school bus, I went to the barn and put the halter on him and started brushing. I had been riding for two years, so my parents were ok with my riding ability and allowed me to meet up with Lacy for a ride around our property. Daddy helped



me to put my new saddle on Snowflake. It was a little purple saddle that still had the new leather smell and creaked every time it moved where it had not been broken in yet. Daddy helped me to climb on, and away I went to meet Lacy at the back fence.

When I got there, Lacy and Rocket, her pony, were already there waiting on us. Lacy came through the gate and we took off at a dead run. This is where Snowflake decided to have some fun with me. In my mind I was on Pegasus, the great winged-horse, running through the fields, ready to take off in flight at any second. There was a small fence, just a couple of feet high, from one of our old pig pens up ahead and I pointed Snowflake at it. Just when I was readying myself to soar over the fence gracefully, Snowflake had a different plan. Right before takeoff, he decided he didn't want to be Pegasus after all and planted his feet. I, however, still soared over the fence, landing on my back in a pile of mud and who knows what else. Snowflake nickered playfully, tossed his head, and began to run toward the house. I had to catch a ride to the house on the back of Rocket. When I got there, Snowflake was lying peacefully in his stall, door wide open. I couldn't believe it. He had made a fool of me again. All that did in my little girl mind was make me even more determined to conquer this white menace.

I would love to say that is exactly what happened, but

that isn't quite true. He did become my best friend after that day, carrying me faithfully and safely over trails that even my mom and dad wouldn't go down, but he was still the same nuisance. He has carried off tool belts while Daddy and I were out working on the barn, torn open loaves of bread and strewn the bread throughout the barn, tossed me over his head quite a few times when he didn't feel like running any more, and each time he tossed me he would leave me there to walk back to find him waiting in his stall. I still remember one scorching hot day that Daddy had been out putting up hay when I was about 10. He came into Snowflake's barn to see how I was doing on my chores and if I needed some help. He sat down on a bale of hay and cracked open a bottle of cold beer. Snowflake must have liked that smell because his head snaked out of the stall slowly, reached over Daddy's shoulder, and snatched that beer so quick that Daddy didn't know what to think. Snowflake then proceeded to tip it up and polish off the rest of the bottle like it was something he did all the time. We called him our little jester because he was always doing something to make someone shake their head and laugh.

Snowflake never did stay in his stall if he didn't want to. Every morning since that first one, he could be found standing out back. We tried everything short of padlocking him in. So this morning, bright and early, sixteen long years later, I walk out of my house with lead rope in hand to find Snow-

flake waiting on me in the back yard. He is now on my 20-acre farm, miles away from my parents, but still up to his old tricks. But, at twenty years old, he is a little less spunky. Now he runs only 10 circles around me before he allows me to catch him. Since ponies live around 40 years, I am sure he will be here when my kids come along to teach them the importance of having a sense of humor in the face of irritation, the need for a ride when things get tough, and that being tossed when you are getting a little too complacent may be just what you need. I met the love of my life when I was five, and he hasn't let me forget it a day since.

## **Ya'll Have Your Passport?**

**By Kellie Melton**

My sister, Katie, has always been a little different from anyone whom I've ever known. She's always wanted to travel and be a part of something bigger. It should come as no surprise that she's been all over the place. About two summers ago, her love for traveling put her in an internship in Istanbul, Turkey. My dad had the "novel idea," as he would say, that the rest of the family should go and visit her. We would start in Turkey, then go to Greece and our final destination would be Egypt. It sounded pretty nice, and since it was an all-expense paid trip how could I turn it down?

My family consists of five people. My dad just turned fifty-one, but he still is the biggest kid you'll ever meet. He also is famous in our family for pointing out the obvious. It could be raining outside and he would tap me on the shoulder and say, "Hey, Kel, there's water falling from the sky." It never fails to make me laugh. My mom is the definition of a southern belle; she was born and raised in South Carolina. My dad's job moved them around quite a bit, but she has stayed true to her roots and language by using words like "ya'll" and phrases such as "over yonder" on a daily basis. She's also the sweetest, most caring nurse you'll ever meet. My brother, Kenny, is a twenty-six-year-old freethinking, longhaired hippie who believes deodorant is optional. Then

there's my sister, Katie, or as she calls herself, "Katherine the Great," whose bright red hair and vibrant personality make her stand out in any crowd. And then there's me, the baby of the family.

We flew out of the Charlotte, North Carolina airport in the middle of summer. The travel agent booked it so my brother and I were flying on separate flights from my mom and dad. My brother must have scared the airport officials with his long hair and goatee because he was stopped at every checkpoint and searched. This left Kenny in a very pissed-off state of mind but we made it there in one piece.

The next few days consisted of traveling through Turkey and touring Istanbul and Cappadocia. It also consisted of my family adjusting to being around each other 24 hours a day. My brother hadn't been around our family for such a long period of time in about eight years, so he had the most adjusting to do. Kenny had a little trouble with the fact that my dad had to be in control at all times; no matter where we were, we could count on hearing, "Ya'll have your passports?" This annoyed Kenny to no end because he wasn't used to being treated like a kid.

My dad also had a thing for nicknames. I can't tell you how many times I've walked into my house and heard, "Kel, the Kelster, Kelanator, Kelorama." This trip he was on his game, he started calling me Kelbabe and my brother found it

funny and decided to keep it up. Kenny then found it even funnier because I hated it. It became a family joke that I wasn't really in on and everyone began doing it. That's what Turkey offered me—touring beautiful places, spending time with family, and a new nickname.

Our next destination was the Greek island Mykonos. We got to our hotel two hours early so we weren't allowed to check in. However, we didn't mind. We had breakfast at the restaurant and the food was delicious and then we all changed into our swimsuits and jumped in the beautiful pool. Mykonos was the most gorgeous place I had ever seen. My sister and I added to the beauty by walking around quoting my sister's favorite movie, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*.

We were eventually allowed to check into the hotel. My brother went and rented a moped, so he could drive around Mykonos on his own. Everyone in my family took turns riding around on it. I, however, didn't really have any interest in riding it until my brother came over and asked me to. I declined at first, but he asked again because he knew I'd eventually cave in and go with him. We drove around following signs to Super Paradise Beach. It took us a lot longer than either of us thought it would, but finally we had almost arrived at our destination. We had only one more hill, a very steep hill, and of course my brother lost control. He failed to mention that once you lose control of the moped you're sup-

posed to jump off. Kenny jumped off of the bike—I did not. I slid all the way down the rocky hill and luckily survived the crash, but with the largest strawberry known to man. Luckily, a few Italian tourists nearby had a first-aid kit and fixed me up well enough to make it back to the hotel.

Once we arrived at the hotel my mom, the nurse, took care of me. The next day I tried sticking my leg into the pool, but it was a salt-water pool and it hurt like hell. I tried to lie out in the sun, but it burned my leg; I spent the next few days inside our hotel. My brother stayed in with me because he felt so bad. While we were inside one day, Kenny decided to look up the beach we tried to go to in our book about Greece, and it turns out Super Paradise Beach is the number-one nude gay beach in all of Greece. Kenny decided we weren't supposed to make it there after all.

Several fights also happened on the trip but the strangest one occurred between my brother and me. We were all sitting in a restaurant in Santorini discussing our favorite places to eat. I made the mistake of saying Taco Bell was my favorite; apparently Taco Bell doesn't pay their tomato pickers, which my brother wanted no part of. He was so heated about it that he actually left the table. In his absence I sat there wondering, did I really just get in a fight with my brother about a fast-food restaurant not paying their tomato pickers? However, to this day I don't think about Taco Bell the same.

The last visit on our trip was to Egypt. It was amazing. We rode camels around the pyramids of Egypt. We all just sat there realizing this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience; we had the pyramids in our background and the beautiful city of Cairo in front of us. My dad then turned to us and said, “Hey guys, is that Cairo?” Even our tour guide had to laugh at him.

Eventually, the trip had to come to an end. It was amazing and I learned a lot about my family in the process. I got to see some beautiful places, ride a camel, and walk the beaches of the Greek islands. The memories of this trip will stay with me forever; I have a daily reminder of my vacation because every family member and friend now refers to me as Kelbabe. And just in case that’s not enough, I have some rocks permanently stuck in my leg from attempting to visit Super Paradise Beach.



## **Their Personal Lab Rat**

**By Peggy Metzger**

Being the youngest of the family can sometimes make people as cracked as a brick-paved street. With two significantly older sisters, I am no exception to this rule. My two older sisters, Angie and Susie, are 7 and 5 years older than me. This caused many problems, because as my oldest sister was going into her teenage years, I was still in grade school. However, they did find out that many of the things they learned at school, or on television, they didn't need lab rats to test on; they had a younger sister, who as long as she got to hang out with them, was happy to do whatever they wanted. This got both them and me into more trouble with mom than was really necessary.

As was usual when we were kids, my mother would shoo us outside every chance she got. We didn't have computers or videogames to distract us from the wonderful adventures of our back yard, and the neighborhood. The only things that we could do then was watch the television, with its wonderful characters including Bugs Bunny, Mickey Mouse, Tom and Jerry, and most of their friends. Mom always made sure that we never sat in front of the brain-sapping box when it was a bright sunny day. Once outside, our brains would kick into overdrive and we would run, or ride our bikes throughout the small neighborhood, never once wondering about what was

going on outside of our little town. At that time I didn't know anything about the failing economy or the problems in the Middle East with oil, and 9-11 was the number I called if something went wrong and mom wasn't home. Life was simple.

However, being a lab rat to two maniacal Einsteins does not make for a healthy life, or diet. While "hanging out" with my two older sisters, I have eaten a plethora of items at their insistence. When I was about three, they had fun seeing what they could get me to eat just to find out what it tasted like. They fed me "popcorn," which in reality was chalk. Mom was not as amused as I was about the pretty pastel colors my floaters took, as I exclaimed over them in the toilet. My father, with his off-the-wall sense of humor, found it even more amusing when I thought I was going to turn into a dog, because I had eaten some of the dog's food and his biscuits that my sisters, whom I looked up to with adoration, had given me. There was also the time, when I was a bit older, but still as enamored of my sisters as ever, that they had me eating grass.

On one fateful summer day, though, my sisters had decided to cause even more trouble than usual. After hanging out with their friends, they found out that you could put a blade of grass in between your thumbs, and if you'd blow into the hole that forms, the grass will whistle loudly and rudely,

sounding like a goose that is scolding its delinquent gosling. Being the cooler older sisters, and my personal tormentors, of course, they did it around me, but did it covertly so that I never saw how it was done. I followed them around and begged them to show me how it was done. They traded looks and fed off of each other like two comedians.

“Look, we would tell you how to do it, but it is a secret,” Angie whispered.

“Oh come on, I’m your sister. I won’t tell no one.” They both appeared to think rather hard about it.

“Well...okay but you can’t tell anyone,” Sue responded before leaning closer. “The secret is you have to eat the grass.”

I looked from one angelic face to the other. “I never saw you guys eat it! You are all big liars.” I ran away going from the front yard to the back, and out of their sight. I sat and swung on the small swing set, while the dog ran around psychotically chasing birds, and I listened to their honking and laughter. My thoughts were tumbling around in my head like a gymnast during the Olympics. I finally made the decision: they are my big sisters, and they would never lie to me! Did I mention, I was utterly devoted to them, and had short-term memory loss as a kid? I decided to take precautions, though, from anyone making fun of me, and ran behind the garage where no one could see me. I grabbed a long blade of grass

and slowly and thoughtfully started to chew on it. To my dismay, it tasted like the smell of fresh-cut grass. I then held my hands up to my mouth and blew. Nothing happened. I chewed some more and actually swallowed it this time. Nothing. I threw the grass down and rushed inside in a temper. Later, they found out that I had tried what they suggested, and laughed their butts off. My mom frowned at them, and my dad just smiled and shook his head.

My sisters have several other stories they love telling people about me, and about how gullible I was as a kid. But my sisters are not the only ones who tell stories about me; my grandfather delights in one, and Susie delights in embellishing it, especially since it was all her fault.

To this day my sister Susie is someone that words cannot describe, though I will try as hard as I can. Even then, she was physically daunting at 5 foot, 11 inches, and had the build of a sturdy Amazonian woman. She has a halo of curly brown, shoulder-length locks that those with ironing-board hair are jealous of. She has a stern face that intimidates people when she frowns, but many don't know that she is one to smile, and cause others to smile, more often than frown. The most impressive features about her, though, are her mind and wit. She thinks faster than any person I know. She thinks of good comebacks and thinks of several, as I can barely think of one. Her mind is like a spider web. The thoughts might all

converge at one point, but they all branch out and connect to each other. Some might not see the connection of the topics that she brings into a conversation, but she can always manage that path effortlessly and ridiculously.

Once I turned 12, I started to go with my dad when he went on weeklong trips up to his dad's for fishing (and the lies that come along with such a sport). When I was 11, though, I spent a couple days before dad came up with my grandparents, aunt, and uncle. Susie came up two days later.

By this time, we had grown a little more out of our animosity toward each other and were starting to become the great friends that we are now. She did, and still continues, to pick on me, though. On this certain day, we were fishing; my grandpa, aunt, sister, and I were all spread out along 30 feet of shore. The lake sparkled as the sun reflected off its rippled surface, as a gentle breeze played along its face like a harp player. Our fishing had been going well, catching the fish, showing them to each other, and then releasing them back into the water when they were too small to clean and eat. We were all in high spirits after my grandfather had pulled up a snail on his bottom line. I was having fun fishing among the rocks, where the little fish played with the bait, and caused giggles to erupt from my throat, as I watched them swim up, bite the worm, then sprint away as I jerked up the line.

We all watched as a line of about eight ducks went gliding

past, about 40 feet out from where we were standing. Grandpa, furthest up shore, pointed them out as they glided past him. Sue leaned over next to me and I looked up at her.

“You know, there are always fish around ducks. They follow the ducks around because their feathers scatter bugs as they swim.” I looked out to the ducks and then to my pole. My mind was cranking, scattering its layers of rust on the ground.

I reeled in my line and watched as the ducks glided further up the shore, passing my aunt, then Sue, and finally me. Just as the last duck crossed in front of me, I cocked my arm, getting ready for the cast it was going to take to get behind that last duck 40 feet out. Right then, my grandpa saw my figure out of the corner of his eye and had an idea of what I was going to be doing.

“Peggy Ann, don’t you cast behind...” it was already too late. My arm had been thrown forward launching my line out. It made a beautiful arch, which then slowly started to descend. “...that DUCK!” he finished as there was an audible plop of my red and white bobber hitting the water. We all stared stupefied as the last duck turned, as if it heard the yell, and looked behind it in surprise, before taking advantage of the free food and ducked down grabbing the worm, and the hook, in its bill. I did what any great fisherman would do when they felt a tug on their line, and jerked the pole setting

the hook.

I don't think the duck appreciated the hook being sunk into it, because it then tried to follow its buddies. I am not sure which was louder at that point, grandpa's yelling, the duck's quacking, or my sister's hysterical laughter. I tried to reel in the duck so I could get the hook out of the poor thing, and it worked until the duck was halfway to the shore. The bird finally decided it didn't want anything else to do with me, and tried to take off. Reeling in a swimming duck is quite different than a flying duck. It is so much more fun when they are flying!

Grandpa was about to have a heart attack at this point. He got out his pocketknife and when the duck was as close as I could get it, which was still at least 15 feet out, he cut the line. I was of course upset that we couldn't get the hook out of the poor duck, Sue was crying because she was laughing so hard, and grandpa was a pretty shade of red in the face. He pointed across the lake at a low building. He then started explaining how that structure was the game warden's building, and how if we got caught, there would have been a rather large fine. We immediately packed up and headed home. In the car my grandfather had calmed down, but was still muttering to himself. My aunt was trying to calm him down, and Sue was just smiling. She turned to me in the back seat and chuckled.

“That looked like it fought pretty well,” she commented and I stopped for a second, thinking. Then I broke into a huge smile.

“That was AWESOME!” That of course sets off my grandpa again, and we just laughed the rest of the way home. This story is always brought up on fishing trips, most of the time by Sue, to get me in trouble, because grandpa always goes off yelling at me again. I never got to tell any of them what Sue told me, and why I did it. I just comment, “It was the best fight I’ve ever had.”

Despite my messed-up childhood, due to the pranks we played on each other, the arguments we got into, the several threats from mom about locking us in a closet together, and my sisters trying to convince me I am adopted, my sisters are now the best friends, I could ever have. I wouldn’t trade them for anything. Even if they do still try to convince me I am adopted.



## **Learning English**

**By Insick Moon**

I had never expected that I would be in the United States. What I anticipated for my life was to live in Korea and die in Korea, so I did not try hard to learn other languages in middle and high school, and it resulted in poor English skills. Yet, it did not bother me at all before coming to the United States.

One day, after getting discharged from the army, I prepared to go back to the university I attended before entering the army. At this time my parents came to me and told me to go the United States to learn English; learning English is one of the most important skills needed in order to get a job in Korea. Of course, I said no, absolutely no. Then, my father said, “Well, if you don’t want to listen to us, we don’t want to listen to you, either. First, I want you to give me your credit cards. I do not want to pay for you anymore.” (In Korea and most other Asian countries, most students do not make money. They just lean on their parents and get financial aid from their parents until graduating from a university, and so do I.)

My father looked so serious about this, but it was not easy for me to agree with the idea; going to the United States seemed a terrible nightmare for me. The only English I knew was “How are you? I’m fine, thank you, and you?” How could I survive in the country with such poor language skills?

So, I firmly resisted what my parents said.

After that day, my parents did not mention it anymore, and I thought that everything was fine. One week later, I went to a restaurant with my friends to have dinner. I gave my credit card to a server to pay for the dinner, but he came back to me and asked me to give him another credit card or cash. I could not understand why he needed another one, so I asked him, “Why do you need another one? I think the card I gave to you is enough to pay for the dinner.” He answered, “It does not work, sir.” Yes, it was my father. He had called the credit-card company and reported it lost. What could I do without a credit card? This is how I came to this country in spite of my poor language skills.

On the first day in the United States, everything scared me. The very first thing I did in this country was to buy earphones. I put the earphones in my ears all the time even though I did not have any kind of MP3 player because I was afraid that somebody would talk to me in English.

One day, since I was a human being, and human beings need to eat food, I went to a fast-food restaurant and looked at the menu. I really, really liked number four on the menu; it was a bacon cheeseburger. To order the number four, I glanced at a language book, which I had brought from Korea. It had some information about how to say things in a specific situation for tourists. It said that “Can I get XXX?” is one of

the ways to order.

Speaking English freaked me out, but my hunger was bigger than the fear. I approached a clerk hesitantly and said, “Can I get the number four?” Unfortunately, he could not understand what I said. (Because Korean and Japanese do not have the R sound, Korean and Japanese people tend to have difficulty in pronouncing it.) I guess it sounded like “Can I get numba pou?” to him.

Anyway, he kept asking me again and again, but I could not respond to him. I was in a panic! “What the heck is he saying to me? What can I say in this case? What can I do?” Thousands of thoughts popped up in my head in seconds. I just wanted to run away from there because I felt like all the people in the restaurant were looking at me. I was so embarrassed.

Fortunately, a Korean proverb rose in my head; it was “You can survive if you don’t lose your mind even when a tiger attacks you.” Thus, I tried to find my mind that had left earth. Suddenly I got an idea to get rid of this situation. Order the number one! “One” is an easier word for me to pronounce. Why did I not think of this earlier? After trying to calm down for one second, I said, “Can I get the number one, please?” “Sure,” he answered. He finally understood what I said. Thank God. (I ordered only the number one at every fast-food restaurant for a while.)

I finally got the hamburger but was not satisfied because what I really wanted was the number four, not the number one. Have you ever eaten what you don't want because of a language problem? The feeling cannot be fully described with the adjective "sad." It is sadder than sad. However, because this event stimulated me to study English hard, and now I'm almost at the end of getting my bachelor's degree in the United States, I'd like to thank the clerk who did not understand my English.

Now that I have come to the end of this story, one thing I want to let you know is that I am capable of ordering number four now. Seriously.

## **The Bonnie Bell Invitational**

**By Sarah Morrill**

“Morrill, don’t get excited!” said The Lusker as he lit a cigarette. Greg Lusk, or “The Lusker” as he was known to most of us, wasn’t your ordinary cross country and track coach. From his grey hair, Coke-bottle-shaped lens in his glasses, and two-pack-a-day smoking habit, you could tell that he didn’t care about two things: his appearance and his health. And, one more thing, the boys’ team. He despised the boys’ team and yelled at them to “Go play in traffic” whenever they crossed paths. Although my coach wasn’t the friendliest coach around, there was always a reason to his madness. That is, until the Bonnie Bell Invitational rolled around.

It was a warm, sunny day in May, and our track team was headed for the Bonnie Bell Invitational. You could almost taste the excitement in the air. This wasn’t any ordinary track invitational—it was the Bonnie Bell Invitational complete with free Bonnie Bell lip balm for anyone who participated. Not only was this a big deal because I was a freshman going to a big invitational, but we were going to get free lip balm and all of the flavors Bonnie Bell had were delicious. The senior girls on the team had been telling us about The Bonnie Bell Invitational since the beginning of the season. They even told us what flavors they got the previous year.

My friend Amanda and I went over the different flavors we might choose.

“Root-beer or strawberry,” she said, licking her lips.

“MMM...grape, chocolate mousse, or pineapple,” I chimed in.

After an hour and a half of dreaming about Bonnie Bell products, we finally arrived at our destination: The Bonnie Bell Invitational. All of the excitement of the free lip balm had helped me avoid thinking about the inevitable, until now. The one and only Lusker had decided to put me in the 400-meter dash.

“Dash!” I complained to Amanda. Under no circumstances was I going to be running a dash. I was a distance runner—dash was not in my vocabulary.

“Don’t worry, you’ll be fine,” Amanda said positively. She didn’t understand, though, because she was a sprinter. She could dash.

“But, I’m a long-distance runner,” I whined to The Lusker as I begged for him to put me in another event. “Morrill, don’t get excited!” said Lusk. Not getting excited seemed to be his solution to everything, but it still didn’t solve the fact that I was being put in the 400-meter dash although I was a long-distance runner. I guess my experience as a veteran distance runner in middle school was of little use to me now.

As I was sitting alone watching everyone else warm up, something hit me. It was the fact that I hadn't run the 400-meter dash in a very long time and I might actually do well in it! A new wave of self-confidence rushed over me, and I started to get ready for my heat. I ran up to The Lusker with a little more excitement this time and asked what lane I was in.

"Morrill, you're in lane eight," he said in his raspy smoker's voice.

"Lane eight!" I shouted disapprovingly. Lane eight was quite possibly the worst lane ever. It was the last lane on the track, and I had to stay in it the whole race! I couldn't believe my ears. My self-confidence immediately went downhill.

Before I knew it, it was time for me to race. I jogged to the starting line and lined up in lane eight. The official began to shout instructions, but everything was a blur. My legs shook as I waited for the gun. I tried to calm myself down by looking around. The sound of the gun going off brought me out of my daze, and I had to run. I started running faster and faster, and as I looked around, I noticed that I was ahead. But then another gun went off immediately. A false start! Someone had false started. In the back of my head, I was hoping it was me because then I wouldn't have to run. Unfortunately, I wasn't that lucky. I jogged back to lane eight for a grueling second time. "How can this be happening," I thought to my-

self. It was bad enough I had to run the 400-meter dash as distance runner and then, someone false starts. The next gun went off signaling the start of the race, the dash. Once again, I ran as fast as I could, glanced around, and saw that I was winning! I couldn't believe it; I was winning 100 meters into the race! Suddenly, I hit the 200-meter mark and it felt like I ran into a brick wall. The rest of the girls in my heat zoomed past me and onto the finish. I struggled to move my legs. They felt like they weighed 1,000 pounds. I ran to the finish line as fast as I could, but it didn't matter. Everyone else was already done and had been done for at least a few seconds.

Out of breath and out of energy, I somehow managed to get to The Lusker. "Not too bad, Morrill," he said in between coughing up a lung.

At that point, I didn't even care about my time. It was over. Somehow I had sprinted 400 meters around a track despite being a long-distance runner. I was exhausted, but thrilled to find out that my time didn't qualify me for the finals later that evening. What made me even happier was something I had forgotten about during my dreadful lap of death around the track: the free Bonnie Bell lip balm!

I sat in anticipation as I watched the end of the meet. I couldn't wait to get the lip balm! The team packed up the tent and began boarding the bus. As we started to leave, I asked one of the senior girls about the lip balm I had yet to get.



She laughed and exclaimed, “Sarah, you actually thought you were getting lip balm?”

“Yeah, it is the Bonnie Bell Invitational,” I said confidently.

“Hahaha,” she said bursting into more laughter along with the other seniors.

Through their laughter, I heard one of the girls say to Amanda and me, “It’s just a joke we play on freshmen! This invitational isn’t even called The Bonnie Bell Invitational, it’s The Bell Invitational. Bonnie Bell doesn’t sponsor it, and there’s no free lip balm!” she giggled.

After having to run the 400-meter dash despite being a long-distance runner and then not getting the lip balm I was anxiously awaiting, I was really ticked off. All of the other freshmen also were upset that we were fooled into thinking we got free lip balm. Our role models, our mentors, the seniors, and the rest of the upperclassmen tricked us! We didn’t really know why they did it to us, but we decided that the next year we were going to trick the new freshmen into thinking they were going to get free lip balm, too.

As for The Lusker’s explanation as to why I had to run the 400-meter dash in the first place, he told me it was to build character. He said, “I made you run the 400-meter dash to see how you would compete. Even though you are a distance runner, you won’t get any better if you just run long

distances all of the time.” As much as I hated running the 400-meter dash that day, I realize now that he was right.

## **Taming a Beast**

**By Nathan Prosch**

Here I am again, standing at the summit of the mountain overlooking the slopes of white, snow-laden tracks leading down to the bottom, about to fall all the way down and make a fool of myself for the tenth time. Needless to say, snowboarding is like a lot of things in that it is much harder than it looks. The professionals at the X-Games and the Winter Olympics make it look so easy. I said to myself, “I can handle this.” Boy, was I wrong. After spending most of the day on the frigid, wet ground, I decided to quit snowboarding and take up something I would definitely enjoy for as long as I live...skiing.

It was seventh grade when I first was able to “sled” down a giant hill other than my backyard or a public park. I went on my first skiing/snowboarding trip with my church to a ski resort in Pennsylvania. My dad had been begging me to join him skiing, but I thought skis were for wimps and so I rented a snowboard. After riding the ski-lift up the mountain, I watched the snowboarders carving through the snow, trying to remember how they looked so I would be able to mimic them. Once we got to the top, I was so excited I could barely stand. I was breathing so hard you would think I had just got done climbing up the mountain instead of taking the lift. I inched my way to the edge at I tried to remember how to do

this thing. I took one last breath and went for it. About thirty feet down the slope, I came to the realization that I didn't know what the hell I was doing so I fell to the ground to stop myself. That's how it pretty much went for most of the day. After growing annoyed and impatient, I wimped out and traded in my board for a pair of skis and asked dad to help me tame this beast.

Learning how to ski was like learning how to do anything else—I didn't succeed the first time. Learning how to do anything is like a work of art—a person needs to practice and be patient. For some reason, I caught on to skiing very quickly. Thanks to my dad teaching me, we went down three or four runs before I could finally make it all the way down without falling. I finally mastered the bunny slopes! It was kind of awkward seeing little kids half my age flying past me, leaving me in the dust. Once I got used to skiing, I increased my speed and was able to keep up with dad. My first day was like any chick-flick; it had a rough start but had a happy ending. The next day I started things off right, remembered my training and was able to tackle the more difficult slopes leading to one of the best times in my life.

Teaching my friends to ski was just as fun as learning how to ski myself. Actually, it was much more enjoyable because it was my friends falling down all the time instead of me. My friend Zach was my first friend I taught how to ski. Our

sophomore year in high school, he joined my church on another ski trip to West Virginia. I tried to train him the way dad taught me. “Pizza...French Fries!” I would yell. “Pizza” meant shaping your skis like a slice of pizza to slow down and “French Fries” meant keeping your skis parallel to speed up. After a few hours of tumbling down the hill, Zach finally caught on and was doing it by himself. In fact, the next day Zach was flying down the slopes. I could always tell where Zach was because he left his coat unzipped, causing it to flutter behind him like a superhero wearing a cape. Zach was my first success, and I taught the rest of my friends the way I taught him.

On the next ski-trip, I had to teach three more of my friends. Now that was a really fun time. Kevin, Joe and Tyler had never skied before, and it was up to me to teach them how. After we had rented our skis and got our lift tickets, we made our way outside. The guys were standing there in a straight line waiting for me to give them instructions when one of them fell. It was like watching a stack of dominos. As Joe fell, he grabbed on to Kevin’s jacket to catch himself and Kevin grabbed Tyler’s jacket to catch himself and Tyler couldn’t grab on to anybody so they all fell together kicking and flinging up snow everywhere. I was laughing so hard I wasn’t paying attention myself and fell as well. We finally got to the top of the run, and I went down part of the way first to

show them how to do it. They all tried their best to mimic my motions and they all fell down again—this time they were spread out all over the slope. But like Zach and myself, they caught on pretty quick and were able to enjoy the rest of the trip skiing instead of falling.

Skiing is one of my favorite recreational activities to partake in. It is even more fun when you have a group of friends alongside you to laugh at you when you fall down and then you return the favor when they wipe out. Taming this beast was one of the more exciting challenges I have overcome in my life, and I was glad to see that my friends have tamed this beast as well. There is no feeling in the world like the feeling you get when you are speeding down the slopes of a beautiful mountain, slicing through the freezing air and having wind burn on your face. I once thought that skiing was for wimps, but now I'm glad to be called a wimp because there is nothing on earth quite like skiing.

## **High School Sweethearts Gone Bad**

**By Renee Richardson**

“Hey, Baby, guess what? I got accepted to OU!” I screamed into the phone before my boyfriend, John, could even get out the word ‘Hello?’

“Did you really! I can’t wait to go!” he exclaimed.

“I know, me either. I’ll be over a little later. I have to get off and call some more people!”

“Ok, I love you.”

“I love you, too. Bye.”

My boyfriend, John, and I go back as far as I can remember. We had been best friends since fourth grade. He is a very fun-loving kid, with big brown eyes, brown hair, about six foot two, 180 lbs., tan. We were perfect together. The couple every other couple wanted to be. We even got picked as “couple most likely to marry” in the yearbook. We both got accepted to Ohio University at the end of our senior year, and boy, were we excited!

Summer seemed to take forever but finally moving day was here! We packed up our stuff, and our families followed each other to Athens to move us into our dorms. The whole way down all I heard from my mom was how many different boys were going to be there and that she “wasn’t too wild about me going off to college with my high school boyfriend.” I didn’t want to hear anything she had to say. I was

too excited to be going away to school, have my own place and be free to do whatever I want, and I was with the guy whom I loved.

After our parents left, we got all settled into our rooms. We didn't live in the same dorm, but they were very close. It definitely didn't take me long to meet new people and explore campus. Everything was great, just like I had planned. John and I were meeting a lot of new people and having the time of our life. We really weren't apart all that much except for classes, and even then, we took some together. We watched movies, went out to eat, and even studied together. We both had single rooms in the dorms, so every night we would cuddle up in those little, tiny, single, extra-long dorm beds. John would lean over and say, "Goodnight, sweet dreams, I love you." And every night I would have the same reply, "Goodnight, you too, I love you, too." We would kiss, turn over and fall asleep happy. We were in love—that "new love" kind of thing.

Fall quarter went by without any problems. I had no idea what my mom was talking about and why it was such a big deal for me to be at the same college as my high school boyfriend.

Then winter quarter came along, and that's when it all started to go downhill.

John and I still loved each other, but we were definitely



finding out real fast that there were a lot more people out there to meet and we were kind of holding each other back. We didn't want to be apart, we didn't want to hurt each other, but then again we knew we were missing out on a lot of new things.

The lying came shortly after we started hanging out with our own friends. The more and more we did things on our own, the more I felt like I was doing things I wouldn't have done if he was in my presence—such as dance with other guys, flirt, and act like any normal, single freshman girl would. So I started lying about things. I didn't really see it as lying, just as not telling the whole truth. The more I did that, the more I started to not believe or trust him. We started fighting a lot, and it got to the point where we couldn't take it any-more. We decided we needed to do our own thing, so we broke up. If we were meant to be together, we would be together later in life. We didn't speak for about two weeks. There was no way we could be around each other or even talk as “just friends.” Two weeks doesn't seem like a long time, but when you are so used to someone being in your life all day everyday, trust me, it's a long time!

I had tons of new great friends whom I always had a good time with. I even met a few guys whom I was kind of interested in. My friends and I were living it up and going out on the weekends. The situation with John and me would get

to me a lot at times, but I tried to keep myself busy and have fun with the new friends I had made.

Weekends were the best. Our motto ever since John and I had broken up was, “Drink ’till we can’t feel feelings.” My friends and I always took our time getting ready so we would look cute, and we definitely dressed to impress.

One Thursday night we decided to do a little partying in the dorms, and then go to Skippers’. Skippers’ was a lot of fun, with tons of guys buying us drinks and flirting. It was very flattering as a freshman girl. We came back to the dorms happy, laughing, telling stories about all the guys who hit on us and bought us drinks. We were having a wonderful night, until I walked into my room and saw I had seven messages on my answering machine. I was reluctant to hit the Play button on my phone, but I did anyway.

My mouth dropped when I heard, “Hey, it’s me. I have been thinking about you a lot lately and really miss you. I wish you were here with me right now. But I guess you are out having a good time...” I hit the next button, “I guess you really are having a good time. I just thought I would call again to see if you were home. But I guess you aren’t, so I guess I am going to go to bed, so I guess I’ll talk to you later.” The next message came on and the next and the next, and they were all just the same, from the same person, John. I stood there with a million things going through my head. Should I

go over there? Should I call? Should I forget this ever happened?

By this time it was about 3:30 a.m. My friends were still up and I knew they would disapprove of me going over there, but I couldn't help myself. Not after what I had just heard. So I snuck out of my room so none of my friends would hear me. I made it outside and walked over to his dorm. I walked up the three flights of stairs to Mod A, room 344. My heart pounding, not knowing exactly what I was going to say or what I was going to see. I was excited, but at the same time something was telling me this wasn't such a good idea. The messages on the answering machine popped right back into my head, and I put my hand up to the door, turned the knob, looked in, and... there was no one!

I'm not going to lie. I was pretty upset, but couldn't tell if I was mad, or sad. As I was walking down the steps heading back to my dorm, I remembered a girl who lived on the second floor whom I always hated him being around for some reason. She always came on to him and just really seemed like she was into him. I got pretty mad just thinking about it, and considering the circumstances I let myself go straight to the second floor.

I turned down the hallway to the left, the girls' hallway, and stood right in front of her door, listening, trying my hardest to hear something, *anything*. I didn't hear anything

other than music, to be exact, The Marshall Tucker Band, “Can’t You See.” Oddly enough, that was one of the only things I remembered clearly until the next day. And to this day, I can’t listen to that song without bringing back bad memories.

I stood to the side of the door so if someone were to look out the peephole they wouldn’t be able to see me. I closed my eyes, and knocked.... Nothing. I waited and listened a little longer, still nothing. I knocked again. This time I heard a girl’s voice, “Fine, I am coming, damn!” As the door was opening I stepped in front of it. She was wrapped up in a comforter, I didn’t even look at her, all I heard was, “OH, SHIT!” and she ran out of the room. I had a feeling she was saying “oh shit” because he was in there, but I didn’t want to be right. I walked straight over to her bed, pulled the covers down, and looked John straight in the eye (well, as straight as I could look him in the eye), and said, “Do you know who you are talking to?” He answered very hesitantly, with an extremely shaky voice, “Renee.” The only other thing I had to ask him was, “Do you have anything to say?” For a second I didn’t think I was hearing correctly. “I do love you” are the words that came out of his mouth. That set me off. I didn’t even think twice—all I could do was hit him. And I guess I hit him pretty damn hard. I was yelling and telling him to never tell me he loved me ever again. Apparently, someone

had to literally drag me out of the room. Surprisingly, he didn't touch me once that whole time I was screaming and punching and God only knows what else.

Once I was out of the room, I left his dorm, started bawling and called my friend. "I think I broke my knuckle, and I don't have keys to get in. Will you please come let me in?" I don't even know how I got that much out of my mouth. My friends took care of me the rest of the night, and the next day. For a little while, it all seemed so unreal, I couldn't even tell the whole story about what happened, and I refused to go to the hospital.

John was trying to get a hold of me from any number he could, trying to come to my dorm and everything. I couldn't deal with it, so I left for the weekend. While at my friend's house, her parents took one look at my hand and took me straight to the emergency room. There I was asked a lot of questions—a lot of them I didn't exactly want to answer truthfully. So I decided to tell them that I slipped on ice walking out of a bar, went to catch myself, and it didn't work too well.

I don't think anyone bought it, especially when the doctor came in from looking at the x-rays and said that I had what they called a "boxer's fracture." My friend started laughing and said, "So, she would get a boxer's fracture if she, let's say, punched a guy in the face?" I about died laughing. But he an-

swered very professionally with a small smile on his face, “Yes, exactly.”

I told my parents and everyone else that it was from falling. Even though I don’t think they believe me to this day, they never said anything about it.

I later found out, when I finally answered one of John’s phone calls, I broke his nose as well.

As horrible as it sounds, I smiled to myself when he said it, and from then on I felt a little better about the blue cast on my hand.

## **Why Music is Better Than Football**

**By Chris Rosser**

This is a story about finding one's calling, I suppose, looking back on something that didn't necessarily have to happen and being glad that it did. Some time ago, eight years or so, I realized that music is the sole thing in which I find pure enjoyment, sometimes in a good song, but more than anything in making music of my own. Let me tell you about my band.

Let me begin where the band did, late seventh grade, halfway through some assembly being held in our cafeteria/auditorium. No matter how the discussion began, it was ultimately decided that the three of us—Travis, Dave, and myself—were the only three available “musicians” in our junior high, and also that Rock and Roll was a rather good thing. We agreed that we should meet at David's house after school and bring our guitars, and so we did. I admit, these sorts of memories have a way of distorting themselves, brightening the colors a little bit, and making three seventh-grade boys with crappy guitars sound like semi-respectable musicians. But I am now, just as I was then, modest about what really transpired. Obviously we weren't very good and we knew it, but we also knew that it was a genuinely good time and that we still had plenty of time to improve. So we decided to officially consider ourselves a band.

Not without a drummer, of course; no Rock band can get very far without one. We actually had the relative luxury of holding a bit of an audition if you can believe it, even though nothing much came of it. That is, nothing if not for a lot of racket, no drummer to speak of, and so far no Rock band, but we hadn't given up yet. It turned out that Dave had been keeping secret from us the entire time the fact that his very own brother had his very own drum set and could play it on-par with our very own guitar playing. We found out, though, and he was in.

The complete band was composed of four instruments, accompanied by four young gentlemen who could barely harness the powers that they were unknowingly holding in their hands. We decided that I would take care of the lead guitar. Travis was our rhythm guitarist and vocalist. Later he was also to be valedictorian of our class and the first of our entourage to experiment with the marijuana plant. By all accounts, it would seem his experiment was met with success. David, total jock later turned first-class hippie, brought up the bass. Eventually he traded it for the keyboards and the nickname Grateful Dave, neither of which were ever to be incorporated into the group, no matter how hard he tried. Finally, his younger brother Michael handled the drums, though not very well. The rest of us grew up alongside our ability to play our instruments. Michael basically never left childhood in ei-



ther respect.

These were the characters, described both as they were and as they became. Realize however, that these ends weren't clear from the onset. This was a time during which we were graduating from junior high school and progressing through the four most difficult years of teenage life. But while these four years were centered on dances, marching bands, and football games for most of our peers, it was an altogether different high school memory I share with my bandmates.

After forming the band we decided on some songs, started practicing, started making fun of each other, and started looking like a band. I might add that the little brother took the brunt of the jokes. I remember one evening in particular, since it was my birthday. We were setting up to practice in Dave's barn. Before Michael showed up we took the liberty of loosening the wing nuts on the legs of his floor tom to the point that it was barely standing on its own. He showed up and sat down.

"Ok, Mike, we've got this song and we want you to try something with it."

"All right, yeah. What should I do for it?" Little brother Mike was going to buy it, easy. We started playing some nonsense and told him to come in on the toms.

"Ok, that's pretty good. Try it on the floor tom, though, it needs to be bassy-er." So he started beating on the floor

tom. He was probably wondering at that point what we were all grinning about. Either way, nothing was happening.

“All right. Yeah, I like that. Get louder, beat the shit out of it.” He kept beating on it, and we kept wondering what the hell was taking so long. I don’t remember who did the horrible job with the wing nuts, but our bright idea wasn’t going so well. We started playing louder, getting him to follow along. It took a while but eventually the final blow came. He was playing right along with the music, grinning, having a good time, and suddenly his tom just dropped. We started busting out laughing. Laughing harder than he was hitting those toms. Hard enough that we must not have noticed Michael standing up and walking past us out of the barn and putting the padlock on the door. He actually locked us in.

It was a careless mistake, and to make a long story short, I spent most of my birthday locked in a barn. It started to get cold out and we thought about trying to light a fire but the barn had more tools than wood. We ended up taking the bolts off the back of the lock and getting inside before it got too cold. Dave’s dad made Michael put the lock back together.

Despite our setbacks, we did manage to work out a few songs. It was at our 8<sup>th</sup>-grade graduation ceremony, being held in our cafeteria/auditorium, that we made our first public appearance. There were a lot of old people, there were

screaming almost-high-schoolaged girls, and I broke a guitar string for the very first time. It was our first real show and I'm not ashamed to give it more credit than it was worth.

The next year was even better. We four freshmen won the high-school talent show, hands down. Being a hopeful freshman, I was half expecting to see chainsaw juggling, or maybe another band, but our only competition turned out to be a mime and someone lip syncing Vanilla Ice. But it was still a victory and we actually got a standing ovation—from seniors no less. More importantly, it got our names out in the public consciousness. We were the coolest—and the only—freshmen (plus one 8<sup>th</sup> grader) that any seniors in the high school knew.

We kept doing the talent shows, playing dances, getting in on choir concerts and the like, and basically making a name for ourselves. It wouldn't be long before we got our first opportunity outside of school to play a gig. Stuart's Opera House, the center of the local music scene, wanted to host a two-part show with two local high school bands to raise money for some benefit or fundraiser or what have you, and we got booked. We were going to play our usual blend of classic Rock, Blues, and Psychedelia. The other band played what I suppose is considered Metal, and they were called Mutilitia. It was a change for us. Before, it had always been us, front and center, with no competition. Now there was this

other band playing, and even though our musical tastes were in no way similar, the race was definitely on. This was a race, of course, that was held freeform on a totally undefined track, and in the end we both went away as first-place winners. Needless to say, no Rock band is going to settle for that.

Understand that when a band comes together, the members are mutually agreeing that they should bind their individual efforts into one cohesive unit. Further still, when faced with another unit of the same kind, it is agreed that all members will do their best to show that their collective efforts are indeed greater than that of the competitor. That is the single and express purpose of having what's known in the business as a "Battle of the Bands." It was held once again at the Stuart's Opera House, and once again our old friends were back.

We did our set and walked away from the stage on top of the world. There were brand-new fans from far-away schools, as well as our own, and some definite good sportsmanship on the behalf of some of our fellow bands. Mutilitia did their set, but we weren't as concerned as before. The last band went on, Slaughter Drive from Athens, and did their little brand of bubblegum Pop/Rock. They were the real competition, but it goes without saying that we weren't impressed. After all, they were the competition. However, it seemed like there was an awful lot of clapping afterwards, probably—we thought—by all the friends they hauled from Athens along with their

equipment.

Shortly thereafter, the results were in. It was on a 1-50 scale, with five judges judging four different criteria and then giving an overall rating. Three judges gave us forty-eights, another gave us a forty-seven. The last gave us what was undoubtedly his honest assessment, a thirty-six. That's right, 48-48-48-47-36. Ours were winning numbers. That is, if you were in Slaughter Drive, who actually won first place in the contest. The score sheets were given to us to look at. The judge who rated us 36 even wrote some happy comments to us for a pat on the back. We accepted our second-place prize, smiled, thought nothing of it, and went home. Not long after, we came to find out that the judge who rated us 36 was actually the father of the two lead members of none other than Slaughter Drive.

We went back the next year determined. Determined to get some honest judging and to kick some honest-to-goodness ass. Our set list was made of about half previous year's material, mostly our original music, along with a few new additions. One new addition even included an unaccompanied, unabridged, Jimmy Page-esque virtuosic guitar solo played by myself. And luckily, it went over far better than any lead zeppelin might have theoretically gone over. The show finished up and we got the results, all in the upper forties. We had won the contest. First place in the Power 105.5 WXTQ

Battle of the Bands contest, but it was to be our last and greatest achievement.

We were all graduates by this point—no more room for high-school-band battles. Now it was either find some bars or get out. No bars did we find, but we were booked for our last time at the Athens Boogie on the Bricks and set to open the show. Slaughter Drive was there, set to do whatever it is that Slaughter Drives do. Travis and David were out of town, out of state, at a music festival, and were supposed to be on their way back. Michael and I were calling and getting no answer. It was almost time to go on.

A friend of the band was with us waiting for everything to start when his phone rang. It was our bandmates with some “wonderful” news—they didn’t want to play and wouldn’t be coming home. Apparently out-of-state music festivals are a lot more fun than any old music festival one might be booked to play at themselves. There was going to be no show and as Mike and I both realized, more than likely no more band. We spent the rest of the day apologizing to the organizers of the event while they frantically looked for a replacement. There was no one who was going to book us after this, and we knew it.

After all four of us were back home and settled, we did a few practices, but only a few. We all knew it was the last hurrah and that the band was finally going to be winding down.

After six years of lugging around heavy equipment, struggling to come up with original music, and riding to the crest of the Big Kahuna Rock and Roll wave, it was time to finally watch it break. I was a little disheartened, but a couple years after the fact I can say it wasn't all bad. With all said and done, I got some good experience, four good pals whom I can still rely on, and I didn't have to step foot on a football field even once to get any of it. I consider it a start, a learning experience worth having. So I say, here's to Rock and Roll, wherever and wherever it remains to be found. Cheers.

## Fire!

**By Nancy Roush**

The Fourth of July at my grandparents' house always goes about the same, but this particular day in the cheery suburb ended up quite differently. I was twelve years old and Molly, my sister, was thirteen. We went the whole nine yards to deck ourselves out for the holiday—we wore stylish denim shorts and sleeveless red shirts, our hair in scrunchies, with glitter and stickers on our faces.

After an hour of drawing with chalk, hoola-hoop contests, and playing badminton, Molly and I were pooped. We sat down with the adults and sipped Sprite through a straw. My aunt had passed around a stack of photographs from a recent vacation out west, and my grandpa and Uncle Jeff were having an enthusiastic discussion about the latest news in sports. When the conversation eventually dulled, my grandpa excused himself from the table for a moment. The women shifted the conversation to gossip about some distant relatives I'd never heard of, and no one turned a head when Grandpa returned and sat back down in the patio chair. At a moment when no one was looking, he leaned down as if to tie his shoe, but instead set off a firecracker on the patio! Everyone jumped as if they had been pinched, and we instinctively put our hands to our ears. The ornery grin on Grandpa's face showed his delight that he had surprised eve-



ryone. Of course, this set off a barrage of complaints from my grandmother.

“John! Why do you have to set those darn things off? I thought you threw them away!”

“Oh, hush, Alice—it’s only once a year!”

Even though my sister and I were terrified of getting too close to the action, we begged him to set off more. He conceded that he had bottle rockets and asked, “What do you girls think—do you s’pose we should go to the front yard?”

“Yeah!” we responded.

“Ok, let’s find a bottle to use,” Grandpa said.

We fished through the recyclable bin until we found a container suitable for the task, and then my grandpa and uncle took the reins and started the show. They set up in the front yard, arranging the bottles so that when a rocket exploded the flare would shoot straight between the two giant silver maples into a bright blue clearing.

Grandpa and Uncle Jeff were taking turns lighting the rocket—to me they seemed fearless, bravely getting close enough to light the wick and never sidestepping away fast enough to suit my sister or me. We shrieked with excitement and fear each time. After a few seconds, the rocket started making a sizzling sound and shot straight into the air, flying thrillingly high before fizzling out and twirling back down to the ground. After several rounds, the men were dissatisfied

and wanted a grand finale, so they decided to try aiming a rocket down the street. (Keep in mind this idea came to fruition after the consumption of several alcoholic beverages.) “I don’t think that’s such a good plan—haven’t you done this enough?” said my mom, impatiently. She was always the one to spoil the fun. “Last one!” said Grandpa. He took the bottle and tilted it a tiny bit sideways so that the rocket would sail past the trees and down the street. He ignited the device and it performed just as he had hoped—it sailed past the trees and down the street, into the air before it began its quick descent... straight into the neighbor’s bush. We watched for a few seconds, thinking all was well, until we saw an orange flame suddenly appear at the base of the bushy evergreen framing the house.

“Oh, shit!” said Uncle Jeff.

“Dammit! Let’s get over there!” my Grandpa directed.

My mother ran back in through the front door and down to the basement, where they kept the fire extinguisher, which to my knowledge had never been used before.

“Oh, my God, should we call the fire department?” asked Aunt Mary, as my sister and I looked at each other in panic, unsure how to respond to this crisis.

Over at the Millers’, who happened to be on vacation at the time, my grandpa and uncle were scrambling to get the hose out to smother the flames. They turned the knob and

were ready to fight fire, only to discover that the water was turned off. As we later found out, the trouble-making boy Nick, who lived next door, had once broken the Millers' basement window and used the hose to flood the entire basement. After this incident they had decided to turn the water off every time they vacationed. Little did they know how close their house would come to being set ablaze because of their safeguard.

A couple of the neighbors had heard the commotion and had left their houses to investigate the situation. Stephen, our next-door neighbor, emerged from behind his dark brown fence armed with a super-soaker to try and combat the fire, which continued to spread up the bush closer and closer to the eaves of the house. At last my mom emerged with the fire extinguisher and my aunt with a bucket of water. Together, they killed the inferno, ending the disaster with a huge sigh of relief—we hadn't needed to call the fire department and we had salvaged the house. Unfortunately, the evergreen bush was quite charred, as was my grandparents' relationship with the Millers.

## **The Golden Rule**

**By Jessica Schilero**

Always treat others as you would like to be treated; this is a sentence most of us recognize as The Golden Rule. When I was growing up, my parents always tried their best to instill this in me; they felt it was a very important trait to possess. An only child, I had fallen short of their expectations a few times. For example, there was the time in third grade when I “unintentionally” kicked a girl in the shin for stealing my swing; or another time, in junior high, when I laughed at a cruel joke about another girl, just because it was the cool thing to do. Of course, I am not proud of any of these instances, but not one shames me nearly as much as the occurrence I am about to share.

It was my sophomore year of high school and the students’ first day back from spring break, typically one of the most dreaded days of the year. As fourth period rolled around, everyone filing into Mrs. Darren’s Advanced Algebra class already looked stressed out from previous classes. Terri and Brooke, my two closest friends in the class, and I were no exception. We took our usual seats awaiting our impending doom of starting yet another chapter on how to find the slope of a line or perhaps how to properly solve for the sine, cosine and tangent of a certain number. However, Mrs. Darren was not the one to walk through the door when the bell

rang; instead, it was our drill sergeant-like Vice-Principal, Mr. Shank, followed by a small, meek-looking woman.

Mr. Shank informed us, “Mrs. Darren will be out on maternity leave for the remainder of the year, and Ms. File will be taking her place.” He mildly gestured to the woman standing beside him and then continued, “I also want to let you know that I expect you to give Ms. File the same respect you would give Mrs. Darren.” Then Mr. Shank marched out of the room, without giving our new substitute another thought.

Ms. File was a short woman with round cheeks and a timid expression. Her outfit was neatly creased, but terribly out of date, as if it had been purchased from an antique store. Her blank gaze turned into one of terror as she scanned over the twenty sixteen-year-olds staring back at her. Ms. File tiptoed to the front of the classroom, behind Mrs. Darren’s large desk and picked up a folder labeled “lesson plans.”

We all watched intently as she pulled a sheet of paper out and began to read, “The lesson for the first two weeks includes solving problems that include sine, cosine and tangents....” Before she could proceed any further, some slackers in the back plopped their heads down to nap for the rest of class. Suddenly, a few of the over-achievers shot their hands up in the air. The commotion must have startled her because she looked up at the class for the first time since Mr. Shank had left.

“Uh, do you have a question?” she managed to choke out as she half glanced at a math club member who had her hand up.

“Yeah,” the girl quipped. “When is our first test?”

Ms. File began frantically rustling through the lesson plan folder. Before she could find an answer, a properly dressed boy chimed in, “Are you sure you’re qualified to take Mrs. Darren’s place because you do not look old enough to be teaching this class.”

This was quickly followed by, “Do you even have a degree?” coming from a different part of the room entirely. These commands continued for the remainder of the class period. Even Terri, who usually kept to herself, barked a few demanding questions at the weak excuse for a substitute teacher. When the bell rang, all of us jumped out of our seats before Ms. File even had a chance to look up from her scrambled mess of papers.

By the second week, Ms. File had relinquished all control to the students. Brooke and I had cleverly given her a new nickname, File Cabinet. We had initially invented it for our own amusement; however, by the following day it had already caught on. Students not enrolled in the class were greeting her in the hallway as a paper-organizing device. Despite the embarrassment she must have endured, Ms. File was far too soft spoken to make any attempt at protesting her new title.

Later that week, some guys who usually slept through class, invented an ingenious game to play in place of pretending to listen to File Cabinet. They would draw an enormous target on the chalkboard. Then, while standing on the other side of the room, they would swat crumpled wads of paper at the target with the classroom yardstick. Like Ms. File's nickname, the game became a huge hit. Upperclassmen from other classes would take bathroom passes so they could have a chance to play. Once again, File Cabinet refused to make a single action towards keeping the classroom in order; she would just keep her eyes locked on her paper and ask, "Does anyone...um...have the answer to number eleven from last night's homework?"

Walking into class the following Monday, I was immediately taken back. In the middle of each desk were packets of neatly stapled paper. It didn't take a math whiz to realize exactly what File Cabinet had in store for this class period. She took her usual defensive position behind Mrs. Darren's desk and stammered, "Today we have our first test...hopefully everyone...studied." She winced after finishing the sentence, knowing she was about to be barraged by an enormous number of questions and complaints. After students had made a few attacks at her lack of teaching capabilities, Brooke calmly raised her hand.

"Yes, Brooke?" File Cabinet's petite mouth managed to

squeak.

“When exactly did you inform us we had a test today?”

Brooke snapped.

File Cabinet cleared her throat, “Well...it has been on the board...and I reminded you twice last week.” She paused for a moment and cleared her throat once more, “You all better start or you may not have enough time to finish.” She spit the words out all in one breath, as if they would have never come out otherwise.

The math club girl didn’t waste anytime beginning her test. Some guys from the back of the class stood up and began hitting paper wads towards the target that was still plastered on the chalkboard. Terri, Brooke and I glanced at each other, picked our pencils up and hoped that somehow the answers would magically appear out of thin air. Halfway through the exam, I wandered through the crowd up to File Cabinet praying that she might help me raise my inevitable F to at least a D-. I tried to whisper above all the noise, “File Cabinet, I am confused about what problem six is asking me to solve for?”

She briefly glanced at my paper, then solemnly looked at me and replied, “The answer is 24.67.”

“Excuse me?” I shot back.

Without one change in her glum expression, File Cabinet said, “You...um...heard me, Jessica...now quietly return to



your seat.” I couldn’t believe what had just occurred. I was not expecting her to help me at all, let alone give me the answer. Still in shock, I pushed my way through the crowd waiting to try their luck at batting paper wads toward the wall.

As I took my seat in between Terri and Brooke, a loud “smack” and then an even louder “crack” echoed throughout the classroom. All twenty of us looked up, startled, including File Cabinet from her fort in the front of the room. When she discovered what had happened, she crept over to the scene of the accident and picked up the evidence. In her hands lay two broken pieces of the yardstick bat the guys had been using the past week. As File Cabinet made her way back to Mrs. Darren’s chair, I saw a tear dripping from her right eye. I glanced to my two friends seated beside me; we knew all the grief and embarrassment our class had been causing her had taken its toll and now she was going to explode. Instead, she rose from the chair, brushed off her well-pressed navy suit and with tears streaming down her puffy cheeks, quickly exited the room. The group of us sat alone in silence until the bell rang fifteen minutes later. Those of us who had attempted the exam left them in a pile on Mrs. Darren’s desk and filed quietly out of the room.

The next day we returned to Mrs. Darren’s Advanced Algebra class, wondering what awaited us. A clean, wooden yardstick had been placed in the chalk tray, beneath the

board. The smudgy target was erased from its usual place in the middle of the board, and all the desks were back in army-straight rows throughout the room. To our amazement, File Cabinet boldly walked into the room and stood in front of Mrs. Darren's desk.

"I replaced the yardstick that was 'accidentally' cracked yesterday; hopefully, all of us can keep this incident to ourselves." The words flowed out of her lips without one hint of uncertainty. At that moment I realized that Ms. File hadn't told Mr. Shank what had happened. The guilt from my horrible behavior was bubbling inside of me. My mother's words circled around in my head, "Treat others as you would like to be treated." I kept thinking this to myself over and over, until I knew what I had to do.

"Ms. File," I said without even raising my hand. "I'm sorry." After all, she had treated each one of us with respect and based on our actions we didn't deserve it. It was about time someone gave her a little in return. Ms. File smiled for the first time since any of us had met her.

"Thank you," she said appreciatively.

## **Cat Steak**

**By Andrea Thompson**

I got married when I was twenty-two years old. Two weeks after the wedding, I boarded an airplane headed for Tokyo, Japan. I was starting my life as a military spouse, a life that would be filled with many twists, turns and surprises. I experienced many different things while living in Japan for three years such as earthquakes, typhoons and a volcanic eruption, but one of the most vivid memories that I recall from my life in Japan was the night that I was almost served cat steak.

It was Memorial Day of 2004, and because I was living on a United States Air Base, the American holidays were observed. Of course, this meant that many things had closed down for the holiday. The commissary and restaurants on base were closed in observance of Memorial Day. I was five months pregnant with my son. My best friend, Angela, who had been feeding me during my pregnancy, was out of the country visiting friends and family in the United States. She had been cooking dinner for me due to my inability to deal with raw meat and morning sickness at the same time. My husband was a lousy cook; therefore, the best option was to eat out. One of my biggest pregnancy cravings was for steak. My husband and I had to use a lot of caution in choosing a steakhouse off base due to the emergence of mad cow disease

in Japan. It was imperative that we ate only at restaurants that served USDA grade beef. Our favorite off-base steakhouse was called “The Family Steakhouse.” We had eaten there quite a few times and were pleased with the food and the service. On that Memorial Day evening, we chose to return to the “The Family Steakhouse,” for a fine dining experience, but little did we know about the insanity that was about to ensue.

After putting on some nice clothes and gathering up our military IDs, we headed off- base for our favorite steakhouse. The restaurant was only a few blocks from the base. My husband always drove because the idea of driving in Japanese traffic left me horrified. The Japanese drove on the opposite side of the road as compared to drivers in the United States. The Japanese traffic also moved a lot faster than the traffic I was used to in my small hometown in Ohio. This was enough to deter me from getting behind the wheel off-base in Japan.

When we arrived at the steakhouse, friendly hostesses greeted us. We returned a customary bow, and we were led to our table. I grabbed a menu that had English written in with what appeared to be a black Sharpie. The restaurant had provided these special English menus as a courtesy to the many military families living near the restaurant. I was perusing the menu very carefully, paying attention to prices and descriptions when a particular steak caught my eye. It said “Cat

Steak.” I looked again, as I thought perhaps I was seeing things. Once again, there were those words: Cat Steak.

Immediately my pulse started to race. Could this really be true? Was my favorite steakhouse really serving up cat? I had heard jokes before about people in Asia eating cat. I knew that people in certain countries, such as Korea and Vietnam, did indeed eat cat, but I was in Japan!

I became more frantic and started to pick up my purse and jacket. My husband looked ever so much bewildered and asked me what was wrong.

“We have to leave now,” I said.

He looked even more confused now.

“Is there something wrong? Is it the baby?” he asked with a hint of urgency.

I whispered across the table to him, “No, the baby is fine, but these people are serving up cat!”

He then had a look on his face that I’ll never forget. He had gone pale and looked sick. To this day I’m not sure if this was due to the belief that we were about to be fed cat, or the sudden realization that he was married to a crazy woman. He asked me to calm down as he grabbed his menu.

I was sitting there at the table, trying not to cry as I thought of our dear cat Harley, at home. Poor little Harley! We had adopted her from the animal shelter on base. Had we not would she have ended up on this menu?

My husband was flipping frantically through the menu to find the page where I had found the cat steak. It was then that he busted out into laughter.

“Why are you laughing at me?” I inquired.

He then handed me his menu and pointed to the “cat steak.” There on the same page where I had seen the grotesque cat steak in my own menu were the words “Cut Steak.” Whoever had written the English on my menu had mistaken an A for a U.

I eventually calmed down and ordered a cut steak, baked potato, garlic bread and Coca-Cola. It was a very enjoyable dinner, despite the crazy mix-up, and I will always remember it.

## **You Can't Fit Hiking Boots in a Carry-On**

**By Sarah Tignor**

This was it: my first trip without my mother closely chaperoning, my first plane ride, my first trip outside the United States, and as a fresh graduate from high school my first real-world experience. I was going to Germany for two weeks, under the loose direction of my native-born German teacher, Herr Brode, who was referred to mainly as just Brode. His son Noah, one of my best friends Elyse, and TJ and Seth, two juniors in high school, would join me on the trip.

I found out that I was able to go at the last minute, so it gave me less than three months to prepare for this once-in-a-lifetime trip. I had a million things running through my head: “What will it be like?” “Is my German good enough?” and most importantly, “What am I going to pack?” That’s when the first warning sign came: Herr Brode told me I was allowed to bring only ONE suitcase. This I could accept; I had bags large enough to fit my entire self in (believe me, I did it once, but that is an entirely different story). Then the second warning sign came: the suitcase had to fit in an overhead compartment. One nineteen-inch suitcase for two weeks is nearly impossible for any girl, let alone me, who could not pack one bag for a weekend. But for Germany, I was willing to suck it up and make an exception.

The trip was nothing short of amazing. We spent the first

week and a half touring different cities and castles. I loved every single second of it, even dragging my over-packed suitcase around. We got to ride trains everywhere and really experience what German culture was about. Most of the time I caught myself wishing I never had to go home.

Then it came time for our final stop: Salzburg, Austria. Salzburg is famous for being the home of *The Sound of Music* and Mozart, and for being surrounded by the Alps. I got to spend three days in a place so beautiful it took my breath away. As always the six of us would sit down after we got settled into our rooms and talk about what we wanted to do while we were there. Everyone agreed that the next day we would get up early and go for a hike on one of the smaller mountains that were literally across the road from our hotel.

The Alps, even the smaller ones, are not beginner-level hiking by anyone's standards, and my experience with nature was limited at best. This was my first hint that the experience might not turn out as well as I hoped it would. But while in Germany I could not help but be excited about every experience I got.

Our adventure began with showers, a quick breakfast, and Elyse and me packing our book bags for a hike with lip gloss, cameras, money and our trusty water bottles. It was around 8am when we reached the spot where another group of hikers were exiting. My second hint that this hike was not going to



be as pleasant as it sounded in my head came shortly after we got to the bottom of the trail: other hikers had what I called “metal walking sticks.” Being me, I ignored the second hint and went on ahead like I was an experienced hiker.

Shortly after beginning the trail, we noticed we must have taken a wrong turn because all of a sudden the trail ended. Since the girls were greatly outnumbered during the voting process, “we” decided to make our own trail. According to Noah and TJ, they were certain that this would lead us right back to the trail and save us time, instead of back-tracking. So as a group we started up this hill fighting through small trees, shrubs, and the occasional briar patch.

The one good thing about being lost in the Austrian Alps is that no poison ivy is in Europe. However, I was later informed that they do have something similar to poison ivy, only it is harder to spot and it causes excruciating pain and itching for fifteen to twenty minutes and then it’s gone. This is clearly a better alternative to the American kind.

Finally, we came to a clearing and once again were faced with another tough decision: go up the seemingly completely vertical, grass-covered mountain in front of us or turn around and go back. Being in a group of mostly men really left Elyse and me with only one option: go up the mountain. We started our ascent up the mountain but quickly realized this was not going to be easy as it looked. About halfway up, you could no

longer climb standing straight up, and there were not enough trees to continuously grab a hold of. This forced us to finish the rest of the way to the top on our hands and knees, gripping fistfuls of grass for stability. After what seemed like an eternity, we reached the top, to find that the top not only did not meet up with the trail, but also was actually a ledge that was not even wide enough for two people to stand on beside one another. On either side of this ledge was a grave possibility of death, either from falling down the side we just came up or from falling down the other side that was covered with rocks. It was finally then that our Eagle-Scout leaders decided that it was too dangerous, mainly for Elyse and me, to continue mountain climbing without the trail, and that turning back was the best decision.

The boys, minus Brode, decided to go back the way we came, while Brode, Elyse, and I thought the rock-covered side was a safer bet. I was definitely not prepared enough for the climb down, which for me consisted of holding on to a giant rock and letting my feet slide out from under me until they found another solid spot, and repeating the process. At one point my fool-proof-or-so-I-thought plan failed and Herr Brode caught me by the back of my shirt as I came sliding past him. The boys beat us to the bottom and sure enough together we were able to make it back to the actual trail.

At this time, the fun and excitement of going on my first

actual hiking trip was long gone and I was ready to go back to the hotel, but the boys had other plans. They wanted to continue up the mountain and try to make it to the midway point, and once again Elyse and I were outvoted. Luckily for us, the rest of the way was not quite as bad as what we had just experienced.

The extremely narrow path did take us up the mountain, but it was still a large amount of work considering that on one side of the path was a ravine that I'm fairly certain would cause great bodily harm if you fell down it. After many miles of listening to me complain, the boys finally agreed to let us take a break at the next small clearing. We got around the bend, and to our surprise was one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen. A small but powerful stream of crystal-clear water poured down the side of the mountain and ran along the path. The tree line was visible and even though we were not above it, it felt as though you could see forever. The temperature was even starting to drop, and no one could even find the words to describe this little, perfect piece of nature we had stumbled upon.

We were incredibly thirsty and pushed our better judgment aside and drank from the stream. Honestly, after what we just went through, drinking potentially contaminated water was the least of our worries. The water was so cold that it made our hands hurt after only a couple moments in it. It was

at this time that everyone decided to count our blessings, cut our losses and head back down the mountain.

Everyone who thinks climbing up a mountain is the harder part clearly has never spent hours attempting to get up it just to turn around and go back. The path was dangerous going up, but the narrow twists and turns seemed nearly impossible for our now weak legs to manage. At any moment it seemed very possible that I was going to slip and end up tumbling all the way to the bottom. The worse part about this whole experience was the boys were now miles ahead of us, leaving no one in earshot of Elyse and me had the worst-case scenario actually happened.

We safely returned seven hours later to our hotel rooms, covered head to toe in dirt and sweat, and quite frankly angry. Outside on our balcony, I looked out to the mountains that surrounded us and as I banged the dirt out of my shoes I said out loud, "I hate nature." I heard laughing in the background and quickly realized Herr Brode had heard my rant about no longer being a nature enthusiast. Later that night, Brode informed us that tomorrow we would be giving another mountain a shot, but only after promising me that we could take the zip-line to the halfway mark.

This trip was really life changing. I learned about another country's culture from the inside and just how beautiful the rest of the world was. It allowed me to learn many things

about life and traveling: to always remember to appreciate the beauty of all things, take a lot of photographs, and never, under any circumstance, listen to your professional-mountain-climbing German teacher when he says going on a “hike” is a good idea. Trust me on this, zip-lines are much more exciting, take less effort, and don’t leave you at the mercy of four boys and the Austrian Alps.

## **Water, Rocks, and Our Imaginations**

**By Rebecca Waddell**

“Three, two, one, go!” I shouted as I pushed my cousin with all of my might. We were doing what we did almost every summer day, playing in the creek that runs beside my grandparents’ house. But today was not an ordinary summer day. Today we were testing our newest adrenaline-pumping scheme. I don’t know whether it was my cousin Tori’s idea or mine, but it was brilliant! We realized that our green plastic winter sleds didn’t need to be cooped up all summer. We knew that when we used them to ride down the place where the slate-bottomed creek runs off the hill into a large water hole, they would create the perfect waterslide.

“Woo hoo!” Tori exclaimed as she slid down the embankment quickly approaching the drop-off at the end of the slide. Everything seemed to be in slow motion, like those scenes from a movie when the final batter hits a home run to win the game or when two people see each other after a long period of time and begin running toward each other. It was a hold-your-breath-in-hope-of-sweet-success kind of moment. If our latest experiment was a success and she landed in the water below, avoiding the large rocks, we would be elated in finding a new heart-pounding summer thrill. I watched from the top of the hill as she hit the drop-off, went airborne, and landed in the pool of water below with a huge “Splash!”

“YES!” I screamed. Success. “Oh my gosh, I can’t believe it worked...it actually worked!” I excitedly babbled on as I ran down our newest form of entertainment and high-fived my sopping wet cousin. “Was it totally awesome?” I asked. “I mean, I’m sure that it was.” I continued to chatter on as I grabbed the sled from my cousin’s wet hands. “I have to try it!”

That was the beginning of a long series of trips down our waterslide. We rode on our stomachs, backwards, and any other way we could think of. We even tried surfing once, which I wouldn’t recommend unless you enjoy headaches and scraped knees. This slate-bottomed decline behind our grandparents’ house became the ultimate source of entertainment for two skinny sun-kissed adventure-seeking kids.

The waterslide was not the only thing that our long winding creek had to offer. It was full of tiny creatures that could be captured with just a bucket. And that is just what we did. We spent many days lifting up rocks searching for a crawdad that was a bit bigger than the one that we had caught the previous day. Being the chicken that I am, I would lift the rocks while Tori, my brave adventurous cousin, would catch the crawdad with her bare hands and place it into our bucket with all the other catches of the day. We (well, I guess I should say Tori) caught crawdads of all shapes and sizes. There were baby ones, which I was brave enough to hold, and huge “big

papa crawdads,” as we liked to call them, that I would not go near, even if they were tinier than me. I was *not* taking any chances.

At the end of our hunting excursion, we would have buckets full of crawdads and salamanders to show off to our parents and grandparents. They always acted interested although I know they hated it when we brought our buckets into the house, because in all of our excitement we sloshed creek water all over the floor. My grandma, a calm and cheerful lady, always said, “That’s nice. Now take all of your little creatures outside and let them go. They need to go back to their families.” Although we never wanted to let them go, we always did. We would dump the bucket into the knee-deep creek and watch all of our catches disappear behind the rocks.

Our creek was full of rocks of every shape, size, and color. My cousin and I found a great way to make “Indian paint” by smashing tiny colorful rocks with much larger ones to create a powder. When this powder was mixed with water, it made the perfect paint. We created various colors by grinding different-colored rocks and mixing them together. We would paint pictures or write our names on large pieces of slate that we found lying along the babbling creek.

When we got bored painting the slate, we would take turns painting each other’s faces. We promised each other over and over again that we “would not draw or write any-



thing stupid” on one another and that the other one would get her turn at painting next. Sometimes we could barely keep our finger in line because we were laughing so hard. We made all kinds of designs that made us look like we were ready for battle or just spending the day at the spa.

But the rocks weren’t always kind, and our ideas weren’t always a success. One idea that I later regretted came to us on a cold winter day when the creek was frozen over from the frost the night before. We were outside playing in the snow and decided to test the ice in the creek to see if it was frozen. Sure enough it was, and so we began to slide on it with our winter boots. Everything was going great and we were pumped to tell our mothers about our newest adventure until “it” happened.

And by “it” I mean the painful event that ruined this perfectly good time that we were having. I tripped on my shoelace that had come untied and came crashing down on the ice. My mouth just so happened to hit one of the *only* rocks poking up through the ice like a groundhog in February. My mouth immediately began to bleed, and my cousin looked over in shock. She tried to help me up, but it was nearly impossible because of the slippery unpredictable ice. When we finally got inside the house, my mother was making dinner. She took one look at me and exclaimed, “What in the world happened to you?”

Since I was in no shape to talk, my cousin spoke for me. “We were skating on the ice in the creek and Becky tripped on something and she fell and she hit her mouth on this big rock that was sticking through the ice and her mouth started to bleed,” she explained. “Is she gonna be all right?”

My mother reassured her, “It’s just a busted lip. I promise she will be perfectly fine,” as she placed a damp rag on my lips to wipe away the blood. “I know it looks bad now,” she said, “but when it stops bleeding it will not be so terrible.” As the bleeding came to a stop, my mother handed me an ice pack to place on my swollen mouth.

“You’re lucky you didn’t knock out your teeth, Miss Rebecca Nicole!” my mother declared. I just looked up at her through my blood-shot puffy eyes; I had nothing to say. My day had been ruined. “Looks like you will be having chicken noodle soup for dinner!” my mother added. I had chicken noodle soup for dinner that night and for lunch the next day. My lips were so swollen that I looked like a platypus. Eventually the swelling went down and I was out sliding on the ice again. One of the advantages of my youth was that I still lacked the ability to dwell on my mistakes and could face each day with newfound courage.

The creek beside my grandparents’ house provided Tori and me with many wonderful adventures and memories. Whether we were sliding down our waterslide or making In-

dian paint, we were having a great time. We did not need any fancy high-tech toys—just some water, rocks, a bucket or sled, and our imaginations.

## **California Vacation**

**By Raina Wolfe-Stein**

It was 2002, the summer before my senior year of high school, and I was visiting my best friend, Emma, in Arizona. Emma and I had met at school in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and we soon became best friends because of our shared love of gymnastics, shopping, and adventure! However, a year after we'd met, Emma and her family moved away to Glendale, Arizona. Although we were then living almost 2,000 miles apart, we remained best friends by writing each other letters, talking on the phone, and visiting whenever we could. I was lucky because my dad was happy to pay for me to fly out to Arizona every summer, where I would spend a week or two with Emma and her family. I loved visiting in the summer, even though the temperatures were usually in the 110's every day. Emma and I would spend hours in her pool, doing crazy tricks off the diving board and working on our tans. We also entertained ourselves by shopping, going to see movies, and sneaking out of the house at night. We always tried to get away with as much as we could.

On this particular visit, Emma and I decided that we needed to do something bigger and better. The plan we devised was to take a road trip and head to California for a few days. I had never been to California, and I was anxious to go to the ocean and check out some surfers! First Emma asked

her mom if we could go, and she agreed pretty easily. I wasn't surprised, since Emma's mom was generally much more lenient than mine. Next, I had to make the phone call to my mom to ask permission to go on the road trip. I remember telling her, "Mom, it will be totally safe! You can trust us!" And of course my mom worrying, "You've never done a long drive like that. What will you do if you get lost or the car breaks down? Where are you girls planning to stay once you get there?" The questions continued, and I was sure that the final answer was going to be a firm "NO." Amazingly, after some serious persuading on my part, my mom gave in! I was shocked but elated, and Emma and I immediately began preparing so we could leave the next morning. Since her car didn't have a CD player, we made a tape of Eminem's latest CD, *The Eminem Show*, to listen to on the drive. We also packed our bathing suits, flip-flops, and beach towels, and we were ready to go!

The next morning, Emma and I were excited to start out for California. We had decided to go to Huntington Beach, a town outside of Los Angeles, because it was a popular beach town, and also because Emma had been there once before. The drive from Glendale to Huntington Beach took about six hours, and we took turns driving on the way. But soon we were there! I couldn't wait to see the ocean, but we also knew that we needed to find a place to stay first. We hadn't re-

served a hotel room, and decided instead to just find somewhere to stay when we got there. The first hotel we went to was too expensive, and also required that whoever was renting the room be 18, which neither of us was at the time. The next place we checked out was more affordable, and they didn't say anything about us not being 18. So we were in! After getting checked into the room, we immediately headed down to the beach.

Over the next couple days, Emma and I had a great time exploring all that Huntington Beach had to offer. We visited the surfing museum, swam in the ocean, and walked up and down the boardwalk. We also got airbrush tattoos (because we both wanted real tattoos but couldn't get them since we weren't 18 yet) and went and saw the movie *Blue Crush* (a popular movie at the time about a group of surfer girls). Of course, the time in California flew by, but we wanted to make the most of our last day there. We decided to spend our last day in California at Six Flags Magic Mountain, and then drive straight home from there. We knew that we had a long drive ahead of us, but nonetheless we stayed at Six Flags almost until it closed. Instead of leaving the theme park when we knew we should, we decided to go on one more rollercoaster. We waited in line for over two hours to go on the newest rollercoaster at the park, but it was worth the wait because it was an awesome ride! We didn't realize how tired we were until

we were walking to the car, and then we began dreading the six-hour drive that lay ahead.

Luckily there were two of us, but since one person was usually sleeping, it didn't really help whoever was driving to stay awake! Also, if you've ever driven from Arizona to California, you know that most of the drive goes through uninhabited desert. No lights. Few places to stop. Nothing to help keep a tired driver awake! Fortunately, neither of us fell asleep at the wheel, though we did stop a couple of times so we could sleep long enough to get going again. When we finally pulled into Emma's driveway, it was almost five in the morning. We were so happy to be back, and we stumbled into the house and headed straight to bed!

Although the drive back was not the highlight of the trip, so many other great moments happened along the way. I have returned to Huntington Beach a couple of times since that vacation, and I have added even more great memories of the times I've spent there. However, I will always remember the trip Emma and I took because it was my first time in California, and the first road trip I went on without any adults. Just being able to go on our own, two teenagers on a great adventure, will always make that trip stand out.

## Appendixes



## About the Editor

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy—me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name—David—ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, is the guy who gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At OU, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas in 1980, then I added a master’s degree in English in 1984 and a master’s degree in Philosophy in 1985. Currently, and for a long time to come, I publish a weekly humorous column titled “Wise Up!” for *The Athens NEWS* and I am an English instructor at OU.

To see my “Wise Up!” column, go to [www.athensnews.com](http://www.athensnews.com)—then perform a search for “David Bruce.”

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## Humor with a Bite

**By David Bruce**

People who know me well are aware that I spend some of my all-too-short leisure time reading celebrity autobiographies and biographies. No, I'm not obsessed with celebrities, but I have decided to say why I spend part of my leisure time reading about celebrities, particularly comedians.

There are many reasons, such as learning about life in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Groucho Marx, Eddie Cantor) or vicariously living the life of a person whose life I could not know otherwise (Dick Gregory). But I think my main reason is to learn about humor that makes a point—that is, humor with a bite.

For example, black comedians in the civil rights days used to seek out white audiences so they could educate them about what it was like to be black in a racist America. So comedians such as Dick Gregory and Godfrey Cambridge (I remember his routine concerning a Ku Klux Klan application form in which applicants were supposed to fill out their name—"If your last name is X, you can stop here") frequently performed in front of whites.

Dick Gregory's autobiography is titled *Nigger* (please don't accuse me of racism—that's really the title), and his dedication is "Dear Momma—Wherever you are, if ever you hear

the word ‘nigger’ again, remember they are advertising my book.” That’s pretty good—turning a racial epithet into an advertisement.

Gregory also made fun of the Ku Klux Klan in this excerpt from his act:

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, I understand there are a good many Southerners in this room tonight. I know the South very well. I spent twenty years there one night. ...

“Last time I was down South I walked into this restaurant, and this white waitress came up to me and said: ‘We don’t serve colored people here.’

“I said: ‘That’s all right, I don’t eat colored people. Bring me a whole fried chicken.’

“About that time these three cousins come in, you know the ones I mean, Klu, Kluck, and Klan, and they say: ‘Boy, we’re giving’ you fair warning’. Anything you do to that chicken, we’re going to do to you.’ About that time the waitress brought me my chicken. ‘Remember, boy, anything you do to that chicken, we’re going to do to you.’ So I put down my knife and fork, and I picked up that chicken, and I *kissed* it.”

The black comedian Bert Williams makes a very forceful point in this next anecdote from Eddie Cantor’s book *As I Remember Them*:

“On one occasion [Mr. Williams] philosophical humor

and showmanship turned the tables on a bartender in a southern city. After a matinee, Bert walked into a bar and ordered a drink.

“‘Right,’ said the bartender, ‘but it will cost you fifty dollars.’

“Without batting an eye, Williams took three one-hundred-dollar-bills from his pocket, and laid them on the bar. ‘I’ll take six,’ he said.”

Of course, the Jews have also been the targets of prejudice in this country. As you would expect, Groucho Marx engaged in the kind of humor that pricks holes in the “logic” of those who engage in bigotry. This anecdote in Cantor’s *As I Remember Them* is well known, but shows how humor can be used to expose the stupidity of prejudice:

“Several summers ago [Groucho] and his wife drove down to one of the famous beaches in southern California. His wife suggested that they become members of a beach club. Groucho thought it was a good idea.

“When he applied for membership, the manager said, ‘I don’t know if you are aware of this, but we have a very restricted clientele here.’

“Groucho knew what he meant. Taking the cigar out of his mouth, he said, ‘Look, Mister, I am Jewish. My wife is not Jewish. That means my kids are only Jewish. Can’t they go into the water up to their knees?’”

Groucho, of course, made fun of many kinds of pomposity. Once, as recounted in *Life with Groucho*, written by his son, Arthur, he attended a séance run by the mysterious Narobi, who claimed to be able to get in touch with spirits such as that of George Washington. Once Narobi entered the spiritual, she would allow members of the audience to ask questions of the dead. Think of it! What would you ask Homer, or Lincoln, or Napoleon? Groucho's hand shot up, and he was allowed to ask his question: "Narobi, what's the capital of North Dakota?"

So there you have several examples of humor being used to combat racism, anti-Semitism, and general stupidity. Remember: Humor can be a very effective weapon.

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