

# THE INK QUILL

LITERARY AND ART MAGAZINE

Bladen Community College

2017



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PROSE



## A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

Kathy LaMaster—BCC Student

Several years ago found me a newly divorced mother with a 14-year-old son. I had worked many part time jobs since my separation, and had at last found full time employment with benefits. Although it was a tremendous blessing, the salary was very small and there was not much money left to give my son the kind of Christmas that I felt he deserved.

Meanwhile, my son, Ethan, was practicing his trumpet for a performance on Christmas Eve. It was an ensemble piece, with the younger children in the church singing, while Ethan played the trumpet. One evening, while he was practicing, I commented to some fellow church members that I would give anything to be able to buy him a new trumpet. His instrument was a "Junior" version from when he had first started playing in sixth grade, but I did not have the funds to upgrade him to a newer, nicer model. In an offhand manner, I mentioned that I would love to be able to give him a Bach silver trumpet.

A few days later, a friend from church called to tell me that her brother sold instruments to school children, and she had told him about Ethan. She said that he had a silver Bach trumpet in pristine condition that he would sell to me for \$350.00. This, of course, was a fraction of what the trumpet was worth, but he had heard the story of my being a struggling single mother. His sister had also told him that Ethan was an excellent trumpet player and very deserving of a new instrument.

As nice and generous as the offer was, I still did not have the \$350.00 needed to purchase the trumpet. This is where the miracle comes in. I had a very old truck in my carport that I had wrecked a couple of years earlier on my way to the post office to pick up my divorce papers. The truck had died and had been sitting there for months. A few hours after my friend called me about the silver trumpet, my phone rang again. It was another friend who asked me if I would be willing to sell the wrecked truck! Would I ever! He knew someone who offered to pay me \$400.00 for it! In quick order, the truck was sold, and the trumpet was purchased.

I will never forget that Christmas Eve afternoon. My friend came by with the trumpet. She opened the case and showed it to Ethan. She asked him if he would like to play it that evening. He broke into that wide smile that he has that melts my heart and exclaimed, "Sure!" Then my friend told him that the trumpet was his. The look on his face said it all...he was overjoyed and so happy.

A few short hours later, there was nary a dry eye in our church sanctuary as Ethan played his trumpet, while the younger children sang a beautiful song called "The Angels Sang." The trumpet sounded so majestic in the silent sanctuary! It was a true Christmas miracle and the best gift that this mother could ever be given!



## THE OLD GOAT AND THE NICE PERSON

Hailey Rains—BCC Student

The cool dampness from the morning dew caused my feet to itch. This particular morning was chilly and damp. I love to go to yard sales with my mom, but at 6:00 a.m., really? “Oh, my goodness, look at this,” exclaimed my mom. She had located a goat. Yes, a goat. Not the live, breathing kind, but the stuffed, cute kind. He wore a small black and white striped outfit and the tiniest red bandana. His wire-rimmed spectacles set off huge eyes that were topped off by large, curling horns. All in all, he was about 8-inches tall. He held a small sign that read, “Old Goat” in large black writing. I just had to have him. Why? Because I love goats? No. It all stemmed from a time when my cousin Katie and I were teasing with our grandparents.

Every summer, my cousin Katie and I would spend a week with my grandparents. We would do all sorts of fun things like going to parks, libraries, and to their favorite restaurants. Although it was always extremely hot and humid each and every time we visited our grandparents, we always loved the times that we got to spend with them.

One night, my grandparents were laughing and joking with Katie and me. My granddad asked us, “Which one of us is the nice person, and which one of us is an old goat?” My cousin Katie and I laughed, teased our granddad, and told him that he was the old goat and that grandma was the nice lady.

My mom and I thought it very ironic when we found the old

goat at a random yard sale at the beach. We wrapped up the old goat and gave it to my granddad the following Christmas. He kept the old goat on his oak dresser for many years to come.

Sadly, last September my granddad passed away. He always had a bright, energetic personality for his age. He absolutely loved family gatherings and never wanted to miss one. This past December was our first Christmas without granddad. As I have already said, he never wanted to miss a family gathering, so last Christmas he showed up in a big way.

My dad and grandma were talking about the Christmas tree. I heard my grandma turn and say to my dad, “There are a lot of ornaments on that tree that your dad and I made together. I noticed this red goat on the tree. Did you put that ornament there? I have never seen it before.” My dad did not know what she was talking about, so my grandma started asking around. Everyone in my family denied that they had put that goat ornament on the tree. There were only a few people who knew the original goat story, so it was strange that the ornament ended up on the tree.

After a huge lunch, my cousins and I decided to take a walk around their highly residential block. As we got to the end of our walk, we saw something in the distance. We looked over to a neighboring house and spotted three goats. These goats looked almost exactly like the “Old Goat” my mom had found. My two younger cousins decided to approach these goats. I stayed in the middle of the road, waiting for them to come back. When my cousins started

walking back towards me, the goats followed them.

As we got closer to my grandma's house, the goats started to speed up. My cousin Katie told us not to run because they would run after us. Frightened, I decided to run anyway. When I started running just as fast as I could, the goats did, too. After I took off running, everyone else was forced to run all the way back to my grandma's house. We looked like chickens running for our lives. I rushed into the house to tell everyone that we had been chased by goats and that they were standing outside on the lawn. The family laughed and stated, "There is no way that there are goats outside." My entire shocked and amused family ran outside to see the goats. Amazed, they petted and played with them.

When the sun started to set and the lightning bugs started flying, a thought came into my head almost like someone turned on a light bulb. I realized that there was a connection between all those events that had happened in the past few years. My granddad wanted to let us know that he was still around. He was going to be at that family gathering even if it meant he had to come as a goat. If my granddad were still here today to ask me his question again, I would tell him that he was both the old goat and the nice person.



## METAMORPHOSIS

Jonathon Wayne Mullis—BCC Student

Metamorphosis— pain causes it to happen! It hurts, intensely, insidiously, passionately! What you did was not sufficient. What you desired was unreachable. What you were must die.

Change comes out of necessity. Change comes from the last stab that weakens you enough that your guard drops. Then, the blood causes your armor to fall off. The world sees you for what you are. At that moment, the hard, sharp, painfully agonizing spear of truth goes through you. Your eyes open. You know what is coming. You can't escape it. You know now that this has to happen. You know there is no other way. The pain will possess you. The pain will command you. The pain will even violate you. You will carry it wherever you go. It will not go away until the job is done, until what you were, even in your memory, is forgotten.

All of this, for years and years, has had one purpose: to take what was not, and change it to what is. Then after many long hard years, you wake up, and the pain has stopped. Your mind is quiet. Your eyes are open. You see the truth in the mirror. There is another in the mirror. You can't believe it's over. And you thank God for His gift of metamorphosis. You now need no armor. You now need no guard. You now need no one. You only need to hear His voice in your heart. You are now able. What you do is more than sufficient. What you desired no longer matters. What hurt you has no more

power, for He strengthened you from within. Your body has, to your eyes and all others, changed.

And finally, what you feel is the fire inside your body. He now lives within you. The world has not changed, and you are not afraid.



## **YELLOW BUTLERFLY**

Jeanne Butler—BCC Staff

## FIRST PLAYOFF GAME

Dallas McQueen—BCC Student

Offensive linemen are big, fast on their feet, and strong. Usually they have scars on their knuckles, a few broken fingers, and a rulebook of dirty plays. Linemen are not the ones to mess with on the football team. These guys line up every week, take the person facing them, and toss him around like paper. Since the third grade, I have been one of those guys, an offensive lineman. We linemen have a job to do; we have to do everything we possibly can to keep an opponent from stopping our running backs and/or our quarterback. There are six positions on the offensive line: center, two guards, two tackles, and one tight end. I have played all positions.

In ninth grade, I played Junior Varsity football, first as the center and then as a tackle. Because of my size, I was the biggest. The Junior Varsity and Varsity teams practiced on the field at the same time. I remember seeing how big the Varsity players were and could not wait until that was my time.

I pulled my time on the JV team, and finally my first day with the big boys came. We practiced all summer in the heat going over hitting drills and plays, just waiting on the first day of wearing our pads. Once we were able to wear pads, the coaches wanted to see what the new guys were made of, so they lined us up against the older guys. I was scared to death to line up against them. That was my first and last time ever being scared in football.

So there I was, standing and watching my teammates get hit, hoping I would not get called. However, sure enough, the head coach called my name. I had to go up against a guy named P-Town. There we were in a three-point stance waiting on the whistle to blow. It was only a few seconds before it finally blew, but to me it felt like ten minutes. We both took off running toward each other, and I hit him so hard he landed on his back in front of everybody. I just knew he was going to kill me, but he jumped back up and said, "Let's go again!" I put him on his back three times that day. The coaches started cheering and yelling and hitting my helmet. I knew then I was finally a part of the Varsity football team.

Five games went by and I had not had my shot to play in a game yet; I had to wait my turn for a starting spot. Finally, in the sixth game, I got to show what I could do. It was raining, and our running back ran into our tackle and took the tackle out of the game due to injuries. The coach called me in and told me to tell the team that the play was "45 counter," our famous play. We lined up, and the play began. I had to pull to outside and block for our running back; I carried the running back 95 yards down field for a touchdown, blocking the whole way. After that game, I started every game for the rest of the season.

We only had one game left in the season. If we won this one, we would go to the playoffs. We played Fairmont High School at home. The stands were packed, with people lined up along the fences just to see this game. The weather was so cold that night that every hit, block, and tackle felt like a thousand needles going through me on just about every play. Fairmont's defensive end beat me on my outside just about

every play. He was roughly six-feet two-inches tall on a small frame, but, man, he was fast. I could not catch him in time to stop him. In the fourth quarter, we needed one more touchdown to insure the win for us. Before the offense went back out on the field, the coach grabbed me, “Dallas, I need you to take him out now. We need this!” Out on the field, once the ball was hiked, the defensive end took off like a jet. I had only one shot to make this work, so I put my head into his left knee. Once we hit the ground, I heard a loud, nasty POP, and the yell that boy let out was like nothing I had ever heard. When I got up, I saw that all had gone as planned, and we had scored. Once our offense hit the sidelines, people were hitting my helmet, saying, “Good block.” In the stands, fans were yelling, “Good block, Number 80! Way to go!” I looked back across the field at my downed opponent and saw his teammates helping him off the field. At that point, I knew that what I had done was wrong, and I felt ashamed. However, nobody seemed to care as long as we won the game. Now we were headed to the playoffs.

The playoff game was away this time, in the mountains in Reidsville, NC. Once we got there, it was freezing cold. Our captains walked onto center field for the coin toss. The referees flipped the coin; we won the toss and elected to receive the kickoff. We were excited to run the offensive line first because we had not had a team that could stop our running game yet.

The whistle blew, and in what seemed like slow motion, the ball was up in the air, players running, pads clashing, people cheering. Then BANG! Reality set in. The opposing team stopped our boys on the five-yard line; at this time, we knew

that team was tough! So the offense took the field on the game's first play. Coach called a pass play, and we lined up on the field. In front of me stood this huge man, six-feet five-inches tall, 345 pounds. I knew I had to give the play my all and hold this big man up.

Like lightning, the ball snapped; the play was on. When this guy and I came together in a hit, the sound was like a gun firing. I held my ground and stood this big man straight up. As I looked to my left, the quarterback was scampering in the backfield looking for an open man to throw to. Then I looked to my right to see the outside linebacker coming for me. I knew that if I let this linebacker go, he would stop our play for sure. I stood my ground and waited for the hit. What felt like a truck hitting me was this linebacker putting everything he had on my right knee. Hearing my own knee pop, I went down like a ton of bricks. My leg was bent sideways. I was on top of the linebacker, and the giant was on top of me. Once they both got off and away from me, I lay there in the freezing mud. I pulled every ounce of strength I had and got up. Our team completed our four plays and I went to the sideline, where the trainer wrapped my knee up. Coach came over, "Son, can you play? We need you out there!" Although I had a busted knee, I answered like anyone would who has a love for the game. "Yeah, Coach, just help me up." I played three quarters of ball that night before I could not walk any more. Our team ended up losing 58 to 60. My knee injury ended my football days forever.

## SEAT BELTS-A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

Michael Barnett—BCC Student

All of my life, I have disregarded seatbelt laws. My role models never enforced them when I was growing up. In fact, for twelve years, I rode on school buses where only the bus driver wore a seatbelt. However, sociological and environmental influences are not the only factors in a person's beliefs about seatbelts; traumatic events can also influence those beliefs.

On an eerie morning many years ago, the birds were singing a melancholy song with tears in their eyes. My daddy was a little boy then, on his way to school as always. However, on this particular day he rode separately from his best friend. Little did he know those birds were singing for his friend. There was an accident just a few miles from my dad's house that morning. His friend's car was involved in the wreck, and his friend was trapped inside the car. The boy's parents tried desperately to free him from his seat belt, which had become jammed during the collision. Firemen pulled the victims from the car just before the entire inside of the car was engulfed in flames. The only thing anyone could do at this point was to helplessly hear the screams of a little boy, burned alive because of a seatbelt malfunction. This event turned my dad completely against seatbelts. He refused thereafter to wear a seatbelt because of this traumatic childhood experience.

On August 19, 2015, those same birds that sang for my dad's friend sang another sorrowful song. I awoke that Wednesday morning to a missed call and an empty feeling deep inside. Something had definitely happened somewhere, but I could not put my finger on exactly what. I returned my mother's phone call, only to hear my brother say assertively, "Get over here now!" Confused by such a harsh greeting, I rushed to my mother's house. The air was heavy around the house when I arrived. My mother, my brother, and my brother's girlfriend were waiting for me on the porch. After I mounted the porch steps, Mom took me by the hand, sat me down in the swing, and in a broken voice wailed, "Your dad was on his way to work this morning and was in a wreck. He was killed, and the other guy is in the hospital." I felt as if the world had ended. With a sorrowful heart and many unanswered questions, I decided to go with my brother to clean out Dad's car the next day.

As we approached the car, I knew immediately what had killed my dad. The front end of the car was totaled, but the only parts of the interior that had been damaged were the driver's side window and the windshield. The driver's side window had been completely shattered by Dad's hand, based on the pieces of glass found in my dad's hand. The windshield had an impact diameter of just a few inches, the size a head would make when slammed into it with a strong force. Knowing my daddy as well as I did, I knew he was not wearing his seatbelt correctly, if he had it on at all. Autopsy confirmed that severe head trauma had killed him. Had he been wearing his seatbelt, Dad would have walked away from that wreck with a broken wrist and possibly whiplash. The seatbelt would have restrained him and prevented him from

slamming into the windshield.

I have revisited my own beliefs about seatbelts, for they can be the difference between living and dying. Whether we want to wear them or not, it is better to wear a seatbelt and not need it than to need a seatbelt and not have it on.

Although seatbelts can be just as dangerous when worn as when not, the loss of my father has taught me the importance of wearing a seatbelt. Hopefully, I won't ever be in a life-and-death situation in a vehicle where I need to have it on, but if I do, I will be more protected against whatever comes my way because I will be wearing my seatbelt.



## **GRAZING CATTLE**

Erin Pait—BCC Student

## THE STOMPING GROUNDS OF SICKNESS

Hannah Allison—BCC Student

Movies depict hospital rooms as barren wastelands. This one isn't like that, however. The walls are painted a pastel orange. Faded chalk drawings remain on the windows from the room's most recent occupants. The place seems almost happy, but something sinister lurks in the narrow veins of nearly everyone there. Sickness, with its head held high, parades through the hallways, certain of its victory. It looks into cribs and onto suffering children. Doctors and nurses use their best defense mechanisms—most of the time winning the battles, but other times sadly defeated. This is Duke Children's Hospital.

Spending four weeks of my life in this stone cage helped me realize how cluttered my life was. Even with illness sneaking into every breath I took there, I learned one of my biggest and most important lessons in this place. Before we delve into that, however, let me take you back to the beginning, back to when this lesson began.

My stomach dropped when I felt it. It was, and still is, a familiar feeling to me. My abdomen had twisted itself into a knot, and I knew right away that it was going to be a terribly long night. You see, I have an unidentified illness inside me somewhere that likes to attack my pancreas. Every so often I have these "attacks," which always result in my staying up to the wee hours of the morning puking my guts out in pure agony. It wasn't until around two o'clock that particular

morning when I realized this time was different. This wasn't just pain any more; it was gut-wrenching torture. I could not even stand up straight without feeling like my insides were going to burst out of my belly button. I had never felt any pain like this before, but I really did not want to go to the local hospital. All I wanted to do was curl up into a ball, but my family finally persuaded me to go to the local hospital, where the doctor told me I had a bowel obstruction and sent me via an ambulance to Duke Children's Hospital.

Within the next four weeks I would have too many IVs to count, two surgeries, two procedures, and one birthday, my fifteenth, to be exact. I would be enrolled in a school that I would never attend, and I would do homework while slightly high on pain medication. I would meet a large array of doctors and nurses, some who were like doves to my arc and others who were more like piranhas that had not eaten in a few days. Either way, all of them would help me through this adventure.

What I remember the most is the moment I was told that I was going home at the end of the fourth week. There was always important news to be shared when my surgeon came to see me. So, much to my surprise, I could see Dr. Rice almost prancing toward my room through the small window in the door. Stopping only to knock on the door as a warning, he pushed through the door into the room. His small grin told me there was good news. When the doctor first opened his mouth, he spoke in medical terms. Somewhat disappointed, I stared at him, pretending to

understand what he said. Finally, in an excited tone of voice, he asked quizzically, “Aren’t you excited to be going home?” It took a moment for my brain to register what he said. A smile that broadened to the size of Canada grew on my face as I hurriedly replied, “Oh, yes!”

The day I left was not at all what I expected; I cried for over an hour without even knowing why at the time. However, looking back, I see the reason quite clearly. You see, nothing in that whole hospital could have scared me as much as going home. There would be much more school, wound vac changes, an abundance of curious visitors, help doing everyday tasks, picking my life up where I left off, and facing the real world that I had so quickly left behind. I had become so accustomed to the daily schedule of the stomping grounds of sickness that real life seemed more a threat than a normality. After four weeks, I felt like I had been tucked away for so long that it would be impossible to return to this real life. Here is where faith comes in. What I realized was that throughout this ordeal, God had my back. Everything I had been through, He had been through with me. At no time was I ever alone in my battle, nor would I ever be—no matter what the sickness.



## MR. PACKER

Erica Hollenbeck—BCC Student

The phone is ringing; about forty people are talking; kids are laughing and playing; game machines are going; the sirens on the fire truck are screaming, and SpongeBob, Squidward, and Patrick are arguing.

This is just an average Saturday at Cici's Pizza. In fact, it is a beautiful Saturday. It's the middle of February, to be exact, February 13th, 2016, the day before Valentine's Day, and it's pretty cold outside for Lumberton. Everyone is bundled up inside where it is warm and cozy.

I love working Saturday mornings as a cashier because there is so much going on: birthday parties, soccer teams celebrating, buses from schools or camps, parents bringing their kids for lunch on their day off, and other folks just out and about who decide to eat lunch at Cici's.

An elderly gentleman who usually comes in weekly walks through the door. "Welcome to Cici's," all the employees kindly greet, smiling extremely broadly and very thrilled to see this gentleman. He ambles towards my register, smiling just as hard as I am and beams, "Hey there!" Anxiously I reply, "Hey there, Mr. Packer. Where in the world have you been?" I am puzzled because he was a regular and I have not seen him in about two months. Mr. Packer looks at me, smiles and snuffles, "I lost my wife the first of January." Then it hits me. I have been so excited about seeing him for the first time in months that I haven't even realized that he

doesn't have his wife with him; he never comes in without her. Suddenly I begin to feel as if my heart is breaking in two, but I know I have to be strong for him. I reply, "I am so very sorry." He is trying his best to keep it together and hands me the money for his buffet, "I am so lost without her!" It is all I can do to keep from falling apart. I suddenly feel something deep in my heart tell me to return his \$7.59, even if I have to pay for his buffet.

I reach out to return his money, but before I can say anything, he shakes his head, "I'm not taking it!" I counter, "Oh, yes, you are!" At that very moment, he begins to break; to be honest, I am about to shatter. Mr. Packer loses it. Tears stream down his cheeks while other guests steadily come through the door. I open my arms to him, "Come here." He is blue in the face and still crying his heart out, as he sobs, "She loved to come here." I cannot hold in my emotions any longer. I break down along with him. In fact, I break down in front of everyone. As hard as I try to stay strong, I just cannot. Finally, I have to let him go, and I turn to my next guest, tears still streaming down my face, "How may I help you?"



## TRASH TO TREASURE

Travis Smith—BCC Student

I love vehicles — all kinds: big, small, old or new, cars, boats, motorcycles and especially trucks. It all started when I was about three years old, and someone gave me a toy dump truck. It was a big yellow Tonka truck, and I constantly played in the dirt with it. By twelve years old, I was learning some basic car maintenance from my dad. He taught me things like how to change the oil, how to change a tire, and how to use jumper cables if a car wouldn't start. When I was fifteen years old, my parents took me to a Monster Jam show at the Crown Coliseum in Fayetteville. Oh, my God! The roar of those huge engines and the jumps those trucks could make! It was love at first sight.

For my twenty-second birthday, my mom planned a trip for us to go to Kill Devil Hills, NC, to the headquarters of my favorite monster truck of all times, The Gravedigger. I was so excited! A long five-hour drive, some hotel issues and lots of road construction — all couldn't dampen my enthusiasm. We finally pulled up to Digger's Dungeon, and there parked in front of the building were three Gravedigger trucks. I stepped out of the car with eyes as big as saucers, and all I could say was "Holy Moly!" I felt like that little three-year-old boy again. I ran over to the trucks and looked inside and out, taking in every detail. My family took many, many pictures that day!

We ate breakfast at the Digger's Diner. It was the best omelet I had ever eaten. It was stuffed full of ham and cheese.

I'm not sure if it was great because I was hungry or because it came from Digger's Diner, but either way, it was an awesome meal. A bonus was the waitress who was really cute, too. We took a ride in the back of a monster truck, checked out the petting zoo, and looked around the garage where they built those big beautiful trucks. We spent the whole day exploring the area and learning all about how the Gravedigger team got started. We were supposed to be able to get pictures and autographs with the Gravedigger driver, Mr. Dennis Anderson. But due to other obligations, he was not able to be there that day. That was disappointing, but I later received a birthday card in the mail signed by Mr. Anderson and some of the other Monster truck drivers. I found out my Mom had arranged the card as a surprise.

Finally, we got to the gift shop. I searched every nook and cranny, taking it all in. I was trying to pick the perfect souvenir. My mom joked with me, "Too bad you can't take one of those trucks home." A sales clerk overheard my mom and said "Oh, he can. We sell pieces of the Digger after it gets wrecked." Needless to say, she had my attention.

My souvenir is an actual piece, about 3 inches x 4 inches, of The Gravedigger truck body mounted on a plaque with a certificate of authenticity and a photo of The Gravedigger in action at a show. It means the world to me. It represents my love of mechanical things, which led me to get a degree in welding. It represents a great vacation and birthday with my family. Finally, it reminds me that even when things go wrong, you can find a way to turn things into a positive if you just don't give up, like turning trash into treasure.

## REWRITTEN MACBETH (1)

Gabriel Barnes—BCC Student

(Macbeth, alone in his chamber)

I have always heard that the top is a lonely place, but lonely is no bother. Nothing is a bother to me anymore. I have killed all of my hindrances, so life should be fair. Have I harvested any guilt from my heinousness? They would enjoy that, the sunken souls in the wake of Macbeth ... sometimes I hear their cries, muffled by death and their waning existences.

Has this path given me any regrets? Indeed, do I feel anything any longer? At one time, yes, but no more. Nothing can phase the great Macbeth. O, fantastic Macbeth, thou has done us all a great service as king. Thy highness, and I do mean that, there is no higher. No man, no green thing either, nothing. Thou are Icarus, but thy wings shine of resilience. Fly and see the peasantry below thee. The land underneath is thine: the ground, the sea, all. Scotland is nestled like a babe in thy clutches.

My country needs a man like me, so I mustn't give in to these fantasies. I hear what the spell casters say, but no one shall end me. Let the wood march up my hill; I shall set it to blazes on spot. Let swords wielded by the impurely born meet my own; I shall humble thee by razor's edge. Let all that is between stars and sky plummet to Earth while Hell pries itself from Earth's innards. I am Lord Macbeth, and my bearings shall never bend or uproot. I am alpha and omega. Nothing

shall make me kneel.

All the control a man can dream of, but still no grasp on death. When life's fire is extinguished, no mortal may reignite it. My fair queen has been subdued by nature's ultimate force, a disease beyond the body being the abductor. She rejoins the child of ours that was; Heaven shall find room for them both. Wait, sweet souls, for I will join you soon; your sire will complete the trifecta with calf and dam.

The sound of tarnished allegiances rings loudly through this silent throne room. The room was once filled with those who feasted with me; they now occupy the dirt. Everyone can be king when he governs himself. An army awaits me, but not to be led. If they wish my head on a pike, they shall labour for it. There is only thee, Macbeth; fight for what is left. May God be with me.

Life is but a blink  
So I shall square until thou art weary.  
The end is soon for another king,  
And, just as Duncan's, it shall be dreary.



## REWRITTEN MACBETH (2)

Michael McDuffie—BCC Student

(A magistrate, speaking before judges)

My Lord, we have all witnessed the wrongdoings of Macbeth, the fair thane turned murderer made with his fate. We have seen him strike the life from all who dared to stand in his way. Hearken to my plea: Macbeth should not be held as the murderer of Duncan, Banquo, or the family of Macduff—but as the sword swung by Lady Macbeth on her quest for Scotland's power.

Macbeth's dame was stricken with the despair of losing her only child. When the wild dreams of the unholy witches entered her mind, she became made with greed for power she did not possess. Macbeth was a worthy thane and caring husband, swayed with ease; he had no spur, no conviction from above or within himself to take a stand. He was no greater than a flower in the summertime breeze.

Upon completing the bloody deed of striking down Duncan in his sleep after turning his loyal servants to drunkards, the lady was stricken with guilt from the ordeal she created. No matter the yelling and moaning she could do, she could not undo the deed. This drove her mad, leading to her own death. She tried to turn Macbeth back, but his fragile mind was too shattered by what his lady had convinced him to be his fate. He, too, was mad.

The lady's greed killed not only men but women and children. In a fit of madness brought upon him by his wife, Macbeth ordered the killings of Macduff's bloodline, the greatest of all travesties. If only the lady had never been told of the false prophecy woven by the three witches, all would still walk this land with us. May God shed mercy on the soul of the foul Lady Macbeth, for her soul was certainly damned to Hell once it left her body in that castle she falsely commanded. And may God show compassion to Macbeth and those other poor souls who fell prey to the Lady's madness.



## INKQUILL ON A SHELF

Ginger King—BCC Staff

## REWRITTEN MACBETH (3)

Garrett Frith—BCC Student

(As the scene opens, Macbeth enters to see Lady Macbeth lying dead in their bed. Slowly, Macbeth approaches, sits next to her, lifts her cold hand in his, and begins to speak.)  
As thy candle burns out, as thy warmth begins to flee, I am filled with questions as a flooding river is with water.

Was I right? Were “we” right? Was all the result of fate?

From alpha to omega, I believe it was fate.

Fate that I—like Adam—be not tested, nor seduced, but victimized by my own wife, my own flesh?

The weird sisters tempted my dear love with a crown-kissed apple, which she hastily ate and fed to me.

It is said that my wife is like a graceful doe, but my wife is neither doe nor sheep. She has no teeth—rather daggers.

Not fur, scales.

Not passion, but lust, bloodlust, at that.

I am but a mere man, sculpted from flesh. How could I see the Devil behind her eyes?

How could I see that the snake in the Garden of which Thou spoke would be but mine own wife, whose venom leaves its victims in a powerless trance?

Nevertheless, both man and woman were found guilty as the snake and expelled from the Garden.

But I? Guilty? Of what, I beg?

Treason? No, no, my love.

Duncan was but a man, as I—

And earthly crowns only give weight when moral men bow. Duncan's land was cursed with war, and the farmlands fertile with fruit fed by blood. Treason to a hollow crown is not a sing, but a sign of courage and love of his people.

Murder? No, my love.

If mighty warriors burn for their courage, then Hell has held my hand since birth, dare I say since conception. What I did to Duncan was not murder as Cain did Abel, but relief. I relieved him of his hollow crown, I relieved the land and its many people of war, I relieved the blood soaked soil in his name. For Duncan never was worthy to have such dastardly plans and actions play out for his enjoyment. He should never have harvested the fruit of our people's actions.

Were we right? My love, there was no "we." The only "we" thou spoke of was thee and Lucifer himself when thou conceived such unholy thoughts. Such agreements in the shadows should never have seen light, should have never left thy tongue with which thou kissed me. Thy desperate actions left your lord's mind in pieces and thy hands eternally red.

(Macbeth turns Lady Macbeth's palm up, exposing all the scratches from trying desperately to clean her hands.)  
Was I right?

I was right to question; I was right to reconsider; I was right to worry. The only sin I have committed in this deed is that I have fulfilled the weird sisters' prophecies. If the wage of sin is death, the only one I have committed is fulfilling a truth.

Then I pray that God have mercy on my soul.

(Macbeth gently lays her hand across her heart, rises, and exits the stage.)



## **ROLLING HILLS**

Karen Kresmery—BCC Alumna

## THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Joyce Bahhouth—BCC Faculty

Over the years, there were numerous times when I felt hurt by what others said or did to me. I felt angry, uptight, emotional, and sometimes... unforgiving. The result was a long-lasting feeling of bitterness that I just found very hard to overcome.

Lately, I realized that I have changed. Those emotional moments have decreased significantly over time. What used to anger me and upset me for days or weeks may now upset me for a day or two...or not at all.

What happened that changed me so significantly? True, I grew older and more mature. True, I now have many issues to worry about and thus, cannot allow one insignificant event to drain my energy. But most importantly, I learned the power of forgiveness. This power has given me a peace of mind that is beyond any description. I look back at past events that created fury, ruined relations, and slowed down my growth and realize how wrong I was allowing my emotions to reign.

I have no power over every person's behavior. I certainly cannot change anyone's attitude when I am angry. I can, however, forgive them for the pain they caused me, analyze the reasons for their behavior, and work on improving my skills, my values, my performance, and my positive impact on others. The result is that I can sleep at night. I can think straight and stay focused. It still hurts me that not everyone

shares my values, but the most effective way to create change in others is by forgiving them for their behavior and modeling the behavior I wish they would adopt. If this is not power, then what is?



## SUNLIGHT

Karen Kresmery—BCC Alumna

## LIMITLESS IMAGINATION

Erin Pait—BCC Student

One of the difficulties of recalling how I learned to read is that I was home-schooled all my life, so all grades are blended together. Thus, when I did think of something, I didn't know how old I was because, in my memory, there is no difference between kindergarten or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. One of the earliest memories I have of books is my mom reading to me and my three siblings, all the time, hundreds of books. We would all bring her a stack of books we wanted to hear, and she would read as many as time allowed.

When I was very young, probably around five years old, I really learned to read, using Abeka books and Dick and Jane. The pictures are the things I remember most, for the pictures told the story while the words just went along with them. I still feel this way about stories. In my opinion, the description, the setting, and the characters are what make a good book. (Only a good writer can bring people and places in books to life.) The pictures gave me room to make up my own stories. Not until I was about eight did I really start to read books. I remember picking up a Pony Pals book at my grandma's and starting to read it. I read that book over and over, until I had it memorized. My mom started to buy me that series as well as other animal series, like *Animal Ark*, *Happy Go Lucky*, *Sheltie*, and *Hank the Cow Dog*. Over the next few years of my life, I read hundreds of books. Every time my family would go to town, we would stop by the bookstore, and I would look for books from the series I read that I didn't have. (I still buy

these books when I see one I don't have.) I still love to read although I don't have as much time on my hands as I used to. The latest books I've read are Dee Henderson's books, which are mostly suspense, romance, and crime books. Henderson does an exceptional job in developing characters.

One thing I loved to do while growing up, and still do, was making up stories. One or both of my brothers and I would play outside and come up with extravagant stories using characters from books we read and movies we had watched, as well as plot ideas from both. I have never met anyone else with such vivid imagination as my brothers and I have. We spent hours and hours making up stories. Unlike most kids, we didn't need "props" to go with our stories; our imaginary swords or bow and arrows (or whatever weapon was needed was based on where our story took place) were far more sophisticated and realistic than anything money could buy. Over the years, I have made up hundreds and hundreds of stories; sadly most of them have disappeared from my memory. Now when I have a story idea, I try to write it down so that I can go back to it later.

I also am an artist, always have been. I have drawn pictures as long as I can remember. I remember looking at books and wishing to draw pictures like the drawings in the book, or thinking, "If I were the artist, I could do better than that." At first, my artwork probably wasn't any different than any other child's, but as I developed so did my art. I never quit drawing. It didn't phase out. At about 12 years of age, my art talent spiked. My animals and people became more proportional and real looking.

Now that I'm in college, I will be pursuing a degree in art. I'm planning on going to the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. My dream job would be to make movies, using my art and abundant imagination to create beautiful films, and being able to show the world the amazing thoughts that have been developed in me by reading books. Watching a movie that has been based on a book is an awesome thing. Having a story to be lifted from the pages of a book and to become something that is visual and no longer locked in one's own imagination would be a feeling that is hard to describe. I want to make movies in order to release my locked imagination and show it to the world.



## **REFLECTION**

Karen Kresmery—BCC Alumna

## KEYS TO A LASTING RELATIONSHIP

Jonathan Melvin—BCC Student

Jack and Jill were married for over 65 years. Their bond formed so quickly when they were young. Other couples would gossip among themselves, wondering how these two lasted so long. Everyone knew they had a bond that could not be broken. The couple resided in a small town with a population of around 200 people. The two took long, peaceful walks through the town each day. They were called such things as “The Power Couple” and “Bonnie and Clyde.” People would shout questions about “Relationship Goals,” while the two would gracefully stroll through town holding hands. One day, a young man walked up to Jack while he was checking the mailbox. He asked Jack, “What is the key to making a relationship work?” Jack replied, “Well, Son, it takes three things to make a relationship work: communication, trust, and the most important thing is forgiveness.”

First of all, everyone has heard that communication is the key to a lasting relationship. Communication plays a huge role in most healthy relationships today although it isn’t the most important key. As a couple, neither partner should be afraid to communicate with the other. If something is bothering either partner, that partner owes it to the other and to the relationship to talk about whatever is going on. If either of the two has something in his or her heart that is a problem, the partner must not let it sit and fester. On the contrary, communication relieves a lot of pressure building up between partners. Partners can schedule or plan certain days when they come home and tell other other about their day. Another skill is to sit down around

the dinner table and talk freely and deeply with one another. Often, such conversations lead to learning things that a partner did not know about the other. Many people say communication begins to fade after time, but that happens only if partners allow it.

Perhaps even more important than communication is trust. Many people believe that no relationship can survive without trust. After all, people do not want to lie in bed at night beside their partner with suspicion churning through their mind. People begin to lose their partner's trust once they begin to lie about simple things. A couple must make it a duty always to remain honest with one another. Partners should not lie, not even about little things, because that makes their partner wonder what else they will tell a lie about. Truthfully, one never wants to lose a significant other's trust, for it is so hard to gain someone's trust again. All couples should remain honest and truthful to their loved ones because trust is so easy to lose but so hard to get back. By remaining completely honest with a partner, couples can frequently avoid suspicion and deceit.

Last, but surely not least, is forgiveness. Jack told the young man standing beside the big red mailbox that forgiveness is the biggest key to a successful relationship. The young man looked shocked at Jack's response. Jack advised, "Son, I've been married 65 years; my lovely wife and I have been through thick and thin. However, if anyone wants to make a relationship last, then forgiveness is what that couple needs. We are all humans, and everyone makes mistakes, but if we love our spouse, nothing they do should be worth losing them. I think everyone needs to learn to forgive and forget for the ones they love.

“Whether anyone knows it or not, we only get one true soul mate in life. When you find that perfect someone, remember the three keys to successful and lasting relationships. Always remember, young man, communication, trust, and most importantly, forgiveness are what every couple needs.”

Jack and Jill have been dead several years now; however, I will never forget Jack’s advice. You could say that Jack and Jill’s love for one another still lives in that young man’s memory. For, you see, Jack taught me how to keep my love for my soul mate alive. In turn, I have passed Jack’s advice along every chance I have gotten. Communication, trust, and forgiveness have made love immortal.



## **SMALL RURAL CHURCH NORTH ISLAND, NEW ZEALAND**

Kathy McGurgan—BCC Staff

## THE TALE OF SIR MARKSMITH AND THE CURSED DAGGER

Andrew Bahhouth—BCC Family  
(Age 14)

*The Cursed Dagger in a dark cave lay.  
He who touches it will find decay.  
Decay of the soul and decay of the mind  
Shall but for only the strongest bind and blind.  
Even of those who are tough  
Most will find the Curse enough  
And end their lives.  
Only the man who truly learns survives...*

The English sky was dull and overcast on 1 September, 1100. Lord Leon was riding his horse up the hill he knew all too well. It led to his splendid manor. There was one oddity lying upon it though and at this he frowned. A beggar was crouched and tears were pouring down his face. He looked up when he heard the thundering of hooves and saw, to his ignorant delight, the figure of Lord Leon approaching him. He shakily got to his feet and bowed in humble reverence. Lord Leon halted his palomino and disembarked. He walked up to the beggar with a look of disdain etched upon his visage. He spoke with a tone of malice “What is it that ye want, beggar man?” The beggar spoke in a croak, “May I please have some money to feed my family, oh great Lord Leon?” Anger boiled inside Lord Leon, for he did not like helping those who couldn’t help themselves. He found beggars pitiful and decided to make an example out of the one who lay before him. Lord Leon grabbed the beggar by

the scruff of his tattered clothes and placed him upon his horse. He then embarked on the horse with the beggar to the town square, the beggar still oblivious of the foul plot forming inside Lord Leon's twisted cranium. When the two arrived, Lord Leon flung the beggar off his horse and proceeded to disembark by placing his foot upon the beggar like a doormat. He then withdrew his sword from his hilt, pointed it at the beggar, and challenged him to a duel, giving him no arms with which to defend himself. The beggar pleaded with Lord Leon to let him leave and return to his family, but Lord Leon insisted upon the duel. The sounds of the beggar's cries carried out through the square and people's heads turned. The beggar's face suddenly became tranquil and he bowed before Lord Leon. Lord Leon, befuddled but not deterred by this, proceeded to decapitate the beggar. His skull fell to the filthy cobbled street with a dull *thunk*. The name of this unfortunate beggar was John Marksmith...

That same night, a boy and his mother were awaiting a man, a husband, a father, who never came. The mother, by the name of Kathleen Marksmith died shortly afterwards, for a nasty sickness befell her, and she had no money with which to go to the doctor. All of the savings she had, she used to feed her 10-year-old son. After the death of both mother and father during the span of one year, the boy was grief-stricken and homeless. He had to resort to theft in order to survive. He was known around his village of Prentsworth as "the dastardly orphan" for wherever he was seen, something valuable went missing. He indeed had been the cause of all of these thefts, but nobody in that village ever stopped to think

about the boy, his family, or where he slept at night. Sadly, this boy slept in the barn of an elderly couple who seldom visited it. It was the very definition of squalor: filth, shabbiness, and foulness beyond comparison. The boy's ruffled black hair was full of grime and filth, and his handsome features were covered in the smut of the village. He hid all of the valuables he stole in his pillowcase: a tough sack used to haul soil around the farm. He had collected plates, an empty journal, and his most prized possession: a wooden dagger, ornately carved with a sharp point at the end. He did not put this valuable in his pillowcase. He instead slept on top of it every night, for every night, he dreamed of wielding a real dagger and fighting for the honor of his country, killing the man who had taken away his father, his beloved father who had taught him, laughed with him, and cried with him. Although most knights carried a sword, the young boy found a true fascination with the dagger: its ornate carvings, fine point, and splendid curve. He was a unique boy.

One day, when the boy was 15 years old, the elderly couple he knew to own the barn walked in on him practicing to fight with his wooden dagger. They were stunned, not only by the boy in their barn, but also by the swiftness and skill with which he was wielding the dagger. They were effectively at a loss for words. The boy saw them out of the corner of his eye, halted, and turned slowly to face them, afraid of what they might do. The elderly man turned to leave the barn and kindly beckoned the boy to follow. He did so, quite uncertain of what the man's intentions were, but somewhat confident the man could be overpowered if necessary. The boy was led to the house of the elderly couple. The man gave him food, a

bath, and a fresh pair of clothes which were slightly too big.

All the while, the man was silent and the boy clutched the dagger tightly. Finally, the man spoke. He said “Young man, why is it that you live in the squalor of the old barn alone? Why aren’t you with your parents?” The boy sadly recounted the sad tale, which he knew all too well as the story of his life. A tear trickled down from the elderly man’s eyes as he heard of the deaths and hopelessness that had befallen the boy. In the days that followed, the elderly couple took care of the boy and taught him the ways of the world, which his parents weren’t able to teach him. They did not condone the boy’s history of theft and decided to raise him as their own child. And so, the elderly couple took care of young Marksmith until he turned 18 years of age. Then, Percival Marksmith left the village of Prentsworth, his home, in search of a new place to establish a better name and reputation.

Off Percival went, walking, for he had no horse, in search of a foreign land where he could become a knight and fight for the good of the country. Such a land he found after about a month of meandering along pathways, seeing new villages, and meeting new people. This land was quite majestic. Hills and valleys, rivers and lakes, and the most wonderfully blue sky Percival had ever seen were all surroundings of an unimaginably ornate yet strong and well-built castle. Percival approached the wonderful structure with awe. It had white marble turrets, a strong wooden drawbridge, and an unsurpassable moat. Percival waited for the drawbridge to open so he could request a meeting with the ruler of the estate and its lands. The drawbridge eventually fell and out

came a dozen white horses ridden by men in shining armor. They halted when they saw the man before them, and all held their swords at the ready. The leader of the group marched ahead of his companions to see who was standing before them. He asked Percival, "What is your business here, stranger?" Percival said, "I would like to become a knight as honorable as ye and fight for my country." The men broke into raucous laughter, for Percival Marksmith was definitely not well-built and appeared to have the dexterity of a doormat. The leader disembarked his horse and approached Percival. He said, "Young lad, we'll duel. If ye win, ye can be one of us. If ye lose, we'll hang you upside down from one of the turrets ye've been gazin' at. Now, pick your weapon." Percival said, "I would like a dagger." Shocked by this odd request, the knight handed him his own. The other knights formed a circle with the two combatants at the center. "Begin!" yelled the lead knight, and so they did. The knight swung his sword at Percival; Percival ducked and slashed his dagger through the knight's armor at his shin. The knight howled more in shock than in pain. "Yer sly, aren't ye? We'll see how sly ye are once I'm done with ye," the knight said through gritted teeth. "We'll see how long ye can stand without howlin' like ye just did when I'm done with ye," Percival retorted. This received an "Oho!" from the crowd. The knight swung again. Percival ducked and rolled. He then did a reckless move: he threw his dagger at the knight. The dagger actually pierced the knight's armor and sank into his back. Percival rushed forward and removed the dagger from the knight who lay before him, sprawled on the ground. The knight did not rouse. Percival had won. The spectators stood shocked as their leader had been defeated. One rushed over

to the knight, felt his pulse, and sighed. Percival's opponent was not dead. He was rushed to the medic, who was able to heal him. The knight did have to remain in bed for a fortnight before he could get back to serving his country. Percival sat beside the knight, saddened that injury had occurred because of him. The knight laughed when he saw Percival's expression. He said "Why are ye sad? Ye beat me and now ye have a spot fighting for yer country. Cheer up." Percival replied, "I suppose I've never hurt anyone like this before. It just shocked me to see ye lyin' there and not gettin' up." "My injuries should be the least of your worries, fair knight," replied the knight. Then, the king walked into the room. His robes were grand and his crown gleamed in the faint light. His expression was mild, undeterminable. He looked at Percival, and told him to kneel. Percival did so. Then, the king knighted Percival and told him to go to the castle, where a warm room would await him.

During the weeks that followed, Percival became friends with the knights of the castle and they went on quests together to fight for the honorable king. One day, Milo, a fellow knight, brought up a legend when conversing with Percival. It was called the Legend of the Undefeatable Dagger. It went like so:

*The Undefeatable Dagger in a dark cave lay,  
He who touches it will shout "Hooray!"  
For he will win  
Any battle he fights in.  
Defeating the bad  
And helping the sad,  
He who wields the dagger will be glad!*

Percival was immediately engrossed with the idea of wielding the Undefeatable Dagger. He set out to find it, knowing nothing about its location except that it was found in a dark cave. Everyone at the castle was shocked to see Percival, the honorable knight, disappear without a sign. However, Percival thought not of them. The dagger was the only thing in his mind. After months of searching empty caves, he eventually stumbled upon something gleaming in a cave, not due to any exterior light whatsoever. It was gleaming of its own accord. Percival approached it with high hopes. He grabbed hold of it, and he saw, with extreme jubilation, that it was indeed the Undefeatable Dagger.

Then, suddenly, Percival collapsed. He was unconscious for a few days. When he awoke, the light of the morning sun was shining down upon him. He got up, slightly dizzy, and then remembered that he had found the dagger. Joy rose in his heart. He looked down at his hands, and in his right he found the dagger, palpitating. Its gleam was as strong as ever. Then, he heard a raspy, sinister voice in his head: *If you do not shed blood for me, we will both die. My life is now entwined with yours. If you wish to be ridden of me, you must kill yourself. Only then will I leave. If not, then go and kill for me. I need to feel human blood on my blade or else my life will end and so will yours.* Percival could not resist the temptation. The dagger was possessing him. He couldn't fight it. He didn't want to die. Thus, he set off to a nearby village. He found a peaceful man meandering down a path. Percival set off at a brisk pace after him. When the man turned into a hut and went to close the door, Percival stuck his foot out and prevented the door from closing. His visage had turned sinister. He had to kill the man. He took the

dagger and sank it into the man's heart. The man fell to the ground with a thud. Shock still emblazoned on his pale, bloodless face. *Yes. Yes. I feel wonderful!* The dagger had spoken to Percival. Percival then left the man, no longer sensing anything. He became a shell. No emotion whatsoever. He killed the innocent when the dagger asked him to and enjoyed the periods of rest between the murders. His thoughts became contorted. He actually shared similar jubilation to that of the dagger when he killed. It was undefeatable. He would never lose a battle with it. And the blood, the blood, it felt good to draw blood. The sensation that he felt when he saw blood was unimaginable jubilation, like the dagger. He now lived in the cave where he found the dagger. It was his home. He had no desire to return to the castle. The cave had a charm of its own. He enjoyed the darkness and the stench of blood that now wreaked it. He would never dream of leaving the cave. After a year or so, Percival couldn't even remember his name. All he could think of was the dagger and how wonderful it made him feel. He was consumed by it, controlled by it, and would never even dream of killing himself. It had to stay with him: it had to! There was no distinction between Percival and the dagger. His soul was its and its soul was his. Percival was happy.

One day, the dagger requested Percival to kill in its usual raspy voice. He went out to a new village with joy. The village that he used to kill in now knew what he looked like. His ragged form and filthy black hair were known to be a sign of trouble. An alarm would sound every time he was seen. It would be difficult to kill there. The new village he was going

to was called Prentsworth. He wondered who would be his next victim. He passed an old barn that seemed vaguely familiar to him. He couldn't remember from where though. He saw a young woman of about his age cleaning out the barn and tending to an extremely old couple whom he also remembered, but knew not why. She appeared to be their granddaughter, for she tended to them with care and smiled. Percival liked her smile. Her brown hair and green eyes entranced him. She eventually looked over his way, and he immediately vanished into the shadows. He did not want her to see him. He did not want to kill her either. This was odd. He didn't understand why. He'd killed women and children before, but she was someone he honestly did not want to kill. Then the dagger spoke and it spoke a horrible message: *KILL HER.*

Percival couldn't do it. He just couldn't. He ran from the vaguely familiar village in a hurry. He retired to his cave. Now, it did not seem like the best place to live. Percival wanted to live in the house next to the barn. He wanted to live with the woman he'd seen. He couldn't though. It was his destiny to kill whomever the dagger wanted. He had to kill her. He had to. That night, Percival emerged from the cave and headed off for Prentsworth. The clock struck midnight as he approached the barn. He saw the beautiful young woman. She was sitting outside on a chair. She was asleep. Percival approached her; ready to slit her throat. He brought the dagger up to her neck. He was about to slice when another voice came into his head. A voice he recognized as his own from the short period of time when he was an honorable knight. *Don't kill her. She is the woman you love. The killing*

*stops right here, right now.* The dagger seemed like an imbecilic object at that time. Percival did not know why he was wielding it or following its instructions. The answer had been there all along, but Percival had been too selfish to see it. The only way to stop himself from killing was to kill himself using the dagger. He ran from the young woman. He did not want her to wake up and find his body sprawled before her. He did not want her to see the pale face of a cold-blooded murderer when she woke up. He ran to the cave.

In the same morning light that Percival saw when awoke after wielding the dagger for the first time, Percival stood wielding it, this time pointing its maliciously sharp blade at his own heart. He did not want to live and risk hurting the woman he loved. He would rather die at this instant. And with that thought, Percival sunk the dagger into his heart. Oddly, he did not die. He did not fall. Percival didn't even feel pain when the blade pierced his skin. Percival retracted the blade from his chest and a sense of freedom rushed over him. The blade's pull was gone and so was its previously everlasting gleam. Percival was free from the curse. However, the blade continued to palpitate. It spoke, this time in the voice of a calm man. *Congratulations Percival. You are more honorable than all who have wielded me before you. You have learned the lesson. You are selfless and value the lives of others more than your own. You didn't try to die to rid yourself of me. You tried to die in order to save the life of the woman you love. As a gift, you will be able to wield me as the Undefeatable Dagger of which your fellow knight spoke. I am the Cursed Dagger no longer. Let us do good in this world together.* Percival stood, shocked, wielding the

true Undefeatable Dagger. He was no longer consumed by it, but now saw it as a mere extension of his good will. He would use it to help as many people as possible, but he had one more person to kill first...

An older Lord Leon was riding his horse up the hill to his splendid manor. He saw upon it a knight in full armor sitting on a magnificent steed and wielding a dagger. He stopped his horse just short of the knight and disembarked. "What is it that ye wish, oh honorable knight?" Lord Leon asked. "Ride with me to the town square if ye will" replied the knight. Lord Leon obliged and together they rode to the town square of Prentsworth. The two disembarked from the steed. Lord Leon was curious as to why the knight had brought him to the town square. "We are going to duel. Choose your weapon" the knight told Lord Leon. Lord Leon was confused. "Why do you wish to fight me, knight?" Lord Leon asked, his tone now malicious and inquiring. "You dueled my father on this same spot over 10 years ago. You gave him no weapons. I will be more honorable than you and provide you with any weapon that you choose. We will fight to the death." Lord Leon stated "In that case, scum, I choose the sword. You wish to defy me and avenge your pitiful father. You will fail and die just like he did on this same spot: with your head bowed and defenseless." "Let us begin then," replied Percival in a calm voice after he handed Lord Leon a sword. A crowd formed around the two combatants, one younger, wielding a dagger, and the other older, wielding a sword. Lord Leon moved with amazing dexterity, slashing and slicing at Percival. However, the dagger moved with a mind of its own, blocking the attacks. *Strike* Percival commanded the dagger.

As one, the man and dagger moved and the dagger pierced the cranium of the scum known as Lord Leon. Lord Leon toppled backwards and fell. He would never rise again.

The crowd cheered and celebrated. Amongst them was the woman whom Percival longed to see. He went up to her and bowed “Sir Percival Marksmith, knight of the almighty king. It is an honor to meet you.”



## **LEGOLAS: LORD OF THE RINGS**

Erin Pait—BCC Student

## A BIRTHDAY PARTY TO REMEMBER

Betty Williamson—BCC Student

When we were living on the south edge of the Okefenokee Swamp in Florida, my mother wanted to throw me a birthday party. Little did she know that we were going to face so many challenges.

On that day, I found myself rescuing my cat that was chased by our neighbor's sow. When our small, white cat saw our neighbor's sow dashing towards her, she rushed up the pine tree and was afraid to come down. I climbed an old ladder which was not tall enough to reach the cat, held out a basket for her, and waited patiently for her to jump into the basket.

Exhausted, I went in and got ready for my friends, hoping that the day would get better. It didn't. When my friends came, we played in the backyard and were enjoying ourselves until the moment my mom brought out the cake. Years later, I still have not overcome the embarrassment I experienced while cutting the cake. It turned out that my mom had hidden a ring box in the cake and covered it with icing and coconut. As I tried to cut the cake, the knife would not cut through, which made all the kids laugh at me.

You might think that nothing else would go wrong, but this was not the case. One of the boys told me the commode was overflowing. This was enough to turn the birthday party into a rescue squad. Everyone was grabbing something off

the floor of the bedrooms and closets and taking it outside the house, while I rushed to turn off the water.

I was very happy when the day was over and the kids were gone. Since then, I never wanted to celebrate my birthday.



## **THE MAESTRO**

Cathy Kinlaw—BCC Staff

## MUSIC IN MY BLOOD

Alexandria Noel Rogers—BCC Student

When I was a little girl, my parents ran a reggae club beside our house. I would always sneak out of my bed just to go to the club to listen to the music. Although my parents would catch me and make me go back to bed, I would sneak out again. Finally, they would get tired of sending me back to bed and let me stay up at the club until I got sleepy.

When I turned 10 years old, my mom made me take piano lessons. I hated it so much I would fake sick every time just to get out of going to my lessons. Eventually, my mom caught on and threatened, "I don't care if you're dying, you are taking these lessons." As a result, every time I had a lesson, I would act up so badly that my mom would have to come and sit with me.

One day my piano teacher had a meeting with my mom and me. She told my mom that she thought I was bored because I did not need beginning lessons. Wow! My mom's face turned from brown to red in seconds. I was so scared I thought about running out of the back door that was right beside us. My mom asked harshly, "What do you mean?" My teacher tried to help her understand a little better, and told her that I didn't need to take this class because I was too advanced for her beginner's class. My mom looked very confused. The teacher explained to my mom that the first day of class, she asked all the students to show her what we could do. When it was my turn, I played "Amazing Grace" and knew how to read music.

"Amazing Grace" was a very hard song for a child to learn at my age. My mom began to look back and forth between my teacher and me. Mom was absolutely in shock and speechless for a couple of minutes. The teacher apologized, "It's not

that I don't want Noel in my class; it's just that she knows all the things I am teaching."

On our way home, my mom asked me why I didn't tell her I knew this stuff. I told her I honestly thought she wanted me to just take it. When we got home, my dad was already home. I was scared all over again because I knew I was going to get a spanking. Thus, as soon as I entered the house, I jetted off straight for my room. When I got to my room, my dad called me by my full name, "Alexandria Noel Rogers, come here, please!" I knew right then I was in trouble. I slowly made it downstairs to find my whole family sitting in the living room where our piano was located. I saw my brother and sister on one couch and my mom and dad on the other. My dad started asking me questions about what happened at the meeting with the piano teacher. I was honest. He pulled out a song book that we had and asked me to tell him what the notes were, so I told him. My dad was utterly speechless!

I explained that I was self-taught. I would go to my grandparents' house, where they had a lot of old songbooks from our church. I would take one of the books and sit on the couch for hours looking through the book and singing the songs. Since I knew the tunes in my head, I would go to my grandparents' old piano and work until I picked out the notes and chords. Music filled my life. In the afternoons after school, I would go to my room and listen to my radio for hours. More than anything else, music—listening, singing, playing — became a way for me to escape reality. Music is my literacy.

## CRASHING THROUGH THE CEILING

Tommy Rains—BCC Staff

It was midday and the attic was toasty. I had been working for almost two hours installing hardware cloth in a friend's attic to close an opening. I was soaked in sweat and exhausted. I did not take a break and was in a hurry to finish and get cleaned up so I could go to the County Fair. After finishing, I turned to walk the length of the attic and exit through a closet when it all happened.

My right foot slipped off a crosspiece and went through the sheetrock. I fell. My knee went through, then my legs, and then the remainder of my body, until I caught myself (one forearm on each ceiling joist) and hung there, like a monkey. I was still hanging there when my friend came running to see what the crash was all about. Fortunately, I was unhurt. Feeling responsible for the damage, I offered to pay for the ceiling to be repaired. But her reaction to my destruction was not what I had expected. When she saw that I was alright, she seemed to be happy. It turned out that I fell through the ceiling above her garage. She had been storing Christmas decorations in the garage, which was too full to accommodate the car. The hole I created turned out to be in the best place to install attic stairs.

Thus, instead of being upset with me for crashing through her ceiling, she seized the opportunity and sent her husband to Lowe's to buy a set of attic stairs. All I can say is that God certainly looked after me that day. Not only did this accident

leave me with no injuries, but I actually made my friend happy by crashing through her ceiling.



## **BABY BLUES**

Jeanne Butler—BCC Staff

## GRAVE GOODBYES

Allana Carroll—BCC Student

His head dropped heavily into his hands, as tears began to fall rapidly down his face. Soon, he felt a large hand drop onto his shaking shoulder. Discreetly wiping his eyes, the teenager followed the hand up into warm eyes, the color of dark coffee. The man in front of the teenager was large, maybe around 6' 4", and well-muscled. However, his size did not capture the teenager's attention as much as the man's smile. It was a soft smile, like ones that moms give to their children, with perfect white teeth that contrasted beautifully with his dark skin.

"You okay, kid?" the stranger questioned.

In an attempt to appear like he was not completely broken, the teenager mustered a smile, thinking as he did so, that it probably came out more like a grimace than anything he was aiming for. The stranger nodded and removed his hand but kept his eyes trained on the boy before him. The stranger studied the teenager as the tired, young eyes scanned the sea of graves in the cemetery before him. The man figured he already knew the answer before he even asked but continued with his question anyway.

"Is ... where are your parents?" he asked hesitantly.

The adolescent gestured vaguely to the left, where, a few yards away, stood two graves side by side. The man winced slightly and dropped to the ground beside the boy.

Turning his head to face the mop of brown hair beside

him, he asked, “How old are you?”

Continuing to stare straight ahead, the young teenager replied, “14.”

The man nodded. He too, turned to face the mass of cold stones and said, “You know, my parents died when I was about your age.”

The young man turned to him, and the man caught a glimpse of surprise in the teenager’s forest green eyes.

“Really?”

The man turned to face him again and nodded.

“Yep. I was 15. I was playing basketball, and my parents had never been to a game. I had a little sister who needed my parents to stay home with her. But I begged and begged my parents to get a babysitter to stay with her for just one night. After weeks of begging, they gave in. I told them I was going to ride with a friend to the game and would see them afterward. However, when they didn’t show up by halfway through the second quarter, I assumed they blew it off.”

The man’s chocolate eyes started watering slightly, and he turned away from the young teen.

“A police officer walked into the game and started talking to my coach. I knew something bad had happened, I just had a feeling. Of course, I wasn’t aware that the bad news was for me.”

The man let out a dry laugh and shook his head, clearly missing the ignorance he had possessed before that moment.

“The officer walked over to me while I was sitting on the bench and asked me to follow him. He took me to the foyer of

the gym and attempted to explain that my parents had been killed in a car accident because some idiot had run a red light and hit them at sixty miles an hour.

“I was wrecked. I blamed myself for years, you know? If I hadn’t forced them to come to my game, they would still be alive.”

The man glanced at the young man to his left, who was staring at the ground, the wheels in his head turning.

“Would you want to tell me about your parents?” the elder asked. When the boy kept staring at the ground, he tried again.

“It might help a little. You know, just talking about them,” he said gently. The boy shook his head.

Still looking at the ground, the teen whispered, “If I talk about it, it makes it real. I don’t want it to be real.”

“I know, I know. I did the same thing,” the man replied softly.

Taking a deep breath, the teenager looked up at the kind man through his eyelashes.

“It was a fire. I was at work. I work the night shift at a restaurant downtown. My little brother was spending the night at a friend’s house. When the fire started, it was just Mom and Dad. They were trapped in the bathroom and -- I mean the fireman said they had no chance of surviving.”

Wiping the tears that had escaped from his eyes, he continued. “It’s just me and my little brother now. We lost everything. Our house. Our parents.”

They sat in silence for a few moments reflecting on lost

loved ones.

“Oman.” The man suddenly said, effectively breaking the silence that had surrounded them.

“What?” The teenager was completely bewildered. Was that the name of the man’s dad or something?

“Oh, sorry. My name, my name is Oman.” The man, now apparently, Oman, clarified.

“Oh right of course. Um, I’m Sam.”

Oman grinned, showing off his perfect set of teeth again, and shook Sam’s hand.

“Well it’s nice to meet you, Sam!”

Laughing slightly at Oman’s enthusiasm, Sam replied, “You too, I guess. It’s nice to put a name to a tragic backstory.”

Oman laughed at the quip and shook his head. A glimpse of the sky caught his attention as he realized how dark it was getting.

“I think it’s time we both head back, kid. It’s getting dark.” Sam cast a quick glance to the sky, confirming that it was, indeed getting dark.

Nodding in agreement, Sam turned to Oman and said seriously, “Thank you, Oman. Really. I feel a lot better right now. I know tomorrow is just going to be miserable again, but you made me feel good for a few minutes, so thank you. It also feels good to know that I’m not the only one in the world, you know.”

Oman smiled at the young man and said gently, “I know

how miserable life seems after losing the people you love most. Even if you weren't here for your parents, it was obviously someone you love. I thought there could be a chance I could help."

Sam smiled gratefully and nodded.

"Oh, and Sam?"

Sam glanced up inquisitively.

"Yeah?"

"I know it really doesn't seem like it now, but the pain won't be like this forever. Don't get me wrong; it'll always be there, but eventually you get used to it. It'll get better." With one last pat on the shoulder and a million-dollar smile, Oman stood and walked into the maze of stones.



## **PARADISE**

Karen Kresmery—BCC Alumna

## LESSONS LEARNED

N. Frank Tolliver—BCC Student

This can't be good. Why won't they ever listen? If only I had walked in a few seconds sooner. These are just some of the thoughts that run through my mind as I watch the horrific event unfold before my eyes. The two upside down Nike stripes reflect the light in such a way that they seem to be two glowing, menacing eyes glaring back at me--threatening eyes that represent disaster the moment they are no longer eye level with me. I don't have long to wait. The process has already begun, gaining momentum like a meteor caught in Earth's gravity. Immediately I know where it is going to impact and that it is probably not going to end well.

Speaking for all dads, kids can be an adventure. Children can come up with ideas and perform feats that most of us would think unimaginable. That is, until the carnage left behind reminds us that anything is possible. For me, being a father of three multiplies the chance of a catastrophe exponentially. The oldest is Sally, my first experience with parenthood. Being only 18 years old myself, Sally and I would learn a lot of lessons together. She knows nothing about life and I know little about teaching it to her. This is going to be exciting.

Next comes Jenny. Sally is 3 years old by the time Jenny is born. Sally and I have learned a lot in those three years. Now that Sally is nearly grown with her 4<sup>th</sup> birthday approaching, and at the ripe age of 21, I have finally learned and experienced everything life had to offer. The two of us are

ready for this new challenge called Jenny. Sally has come a long way. She can run endlessly. Her lungs must pump oxygen at a rate unknown to the scientific community. Incredibly that isn't her only extraordinary skill. She has also learned to speak. Sound seems to come from her tiny mouth continuously, each day learning new sounds and words. Each day she spends hours of rigorous practice using these sounds and words until they are perfected and integrated into her immense vocabulary. Little Jenny learns from Sally as fast as her miniature brain can process, watching Sally's every move and taking mental notes on how to do these impossible maneuvers when her number is called. Mimicking every sound, hours of rigorous practice. She is coming along.

One year and five months after Jenny comes Billy. There is no doubt Billy will benefit from the tutelage and leadership of his older sisters. Like his sisters before him, Billy takes mental notes on tactical maneuvers like how to bring objects that are high up down to his level and how to distribute food across the widest possible surface area. These skills are essential and necessary. Sally and Jenny mastered them. Billy will do no less. Now he is two years old. His enhanced lungs are fully developed. If measured I'm sure he could run miles before taking a breath. His sounds are loud and strong. The three of them together prove to be quite formidable as I am about to find out.

Whoomp...whoomp...whoomp is a noise I have grown quite familiar with. Despite my countless attempts to prevent this sound from occurring, it always returns.

Whoomp...whoomp...whoomp...24 years. (I'll be an old man soon.) All I learned from Sally, all of it is now useless. Maybe I should have gotten in my hours of rigorous practice along with Jenny and Billy. Obviously, I'm not as good as I thought I was or I missed something valuable along the way. What I soon learn is that sound is here to stay. Whoomp...whoomp...whoomp...class is in session.

Whoomp...whoomp...whoomp.... Sally's Nikes hit the mattress with mathematical precision. Judging from the sound between whoomps, the distance between the reflective bottoms of the shoes and the bed has to be at least 50 feet. Kids are really amazing. Jenny the good student. Rigorous practice. Not quite ready to climb up to the big platform, yet works hard on the floor. Making her best attempts to achieve the height of 50 feet but without the use of the mattress. Billy, although the youngest, is very good at the mental notes portion of class. Rigorous practice--not so much. His choice is to skip the floor exercise Jenny is so meticulously working on, making sure to gather every ounce of possible strength before each hop. He wants the big platform. He wants Sally. Unfortunately for Billy, only Sally possesses the advanced power and knowledge it takes to climb to such great heights. Usually after several failed attempts, Billy will return to floor exercises with Jenny.

The whoomp is getting louder. Jenny seems to be gathering new-found strength. It sounds as if her next powerful hop could rupture the floor. Even Billy is in rare form, stomping his right foot hard enough that surely it will leave a permanent footprint wherever it comes crashing

down. Class is in session and I have to put a stop to it.

Stopping the noise for a brief time is not hard. Making it go away and not come back is the challenge. This is one of those times to make the noise go away. I get up off my couch and walk towards the classroom, which is actually my bedroom. When I walk into the classroom, my plan is to strike fast and direct. Disrupt the class and run them out! I am too late. Sally has achieved a new height and displayed an acrobatic ability that is gold-medal worthy. I have spent a lifetime with Sally. How could I not realize what an exceptional gymnast she is? Suddenly I am looking at upside down Nike stripes instead of Sally's eyes.

For the grand finale, Sally decides that she will leave the platform in this position. Now instead of landing feet first on the bed mattress, she will land head first in a fantastic splash on the floor with her students. I watch in panic and awe. Before I can run over to little Sally, she is already back on her feet and mounting the platform once again. The smiles and laughter prove no doubt that Jenny is proud to be the younger sister of such a gifted athlete. Billy has already begun attempting the maneuver. I thought for sure a move like that would have broken her neck. I guess kids are also born with indestructible skeletons along with their other abilities. It is sometime later after Jenny and Billy successfully complete the same maneuver that I realize the lesson in class that day might not have been the art of the jump but the art of the fall.

## MY GAME CHANGERS

Sara Neeley—BCC Faculty

Clean up after yourself, both literally and figuratively.  
Others don't want to deal with your trash.

Speak more than one language; cultures are revealed in  
language.

Play at least one musical instrument.

Dance weekly.

Read poetry; seek unfathomable depths in few words.

Punctuate correctly; the truth is in the details.

Question all rules and all authority first; then decide.

Protest injustice fearlessly everywhere you encounter it.

Eat only plants. You will live longer, your body will thrive,  
and nothing will die to come to your table.

Share your laughter with others daily.

Get over yourself; you are actually not very important.

You are more than the sum of your parts; your career or  
occupation does not define you.

Share your home and your life with a pet.

Be a *Star Trek* voyager: boldly go where no man (or woman)  
has gone before.

Meditate daily. Look inward and outward.

Mate for life.

Love something more than you love yourself.

Let go of anger and hatred; they destroy the soul and the body.

Send your message out to the universe. She is listening.

Grow old with fire! As the great poet Robert Browning proclaimed, “The last of life for which the first was made.”



## **OLD STORE: CLEAR RUN**

Ray Sheppard—BCC Faculty

THE INK QUILL  
LITERARY ANNUARY MAGAZINE

POETRY

Poetry  
poetry

POETRY



## RING

Ginger King—BCC Staff

I've been a lot of places  
Done a million things  
Still would've rather  
Heard a baby rattle ring



## BEACH BOYS

Cathy Kinlaw—BCC Staff

## CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

Mary Murphy—BCC Faculty

I still remember sundresses and bare feet, climbing trees  
and chasing dreams

Swinging high and jumping far, swimming deep with no  
fear at all

Fireflies and street lights, running and laughing

Ditch banks and rivers filled with many mysteries

Bike rides for miles to get a pickle and a drink

Close friends and family parks and play

Memories I cherish of my childhood days

Leader of the pack and purple boom box

Tossing and turning with my sister a lot

Sweet plums from the Piggly Wiggly

Donuts and hot chocolate from the Krispy Kreme

Church on Sunday, Supper at Granny's

All the best of childhood memories

## IN GOD'S HANDS

Mary Murphy—BCC Faculty

I will not let my Lord down  
With my new life I have found  
He gave me a second chance to play  
I will stay loyal to him today  
Never straying from my mission ahead  
Facing life's challenge instead  
He has spared my life to complete my task  
And with my faith I wear no mask  
I have a purpose beyond my own  
My life is only on loan  
One day I'll pass through the pearly gate  
To prove my Lord held my fate  
I was spared so others could live  
To show them God will forgive  
All is true in His name  
Earth no longer just a game  
It's a test of faith to the Lord above  
A proof of his everlasting love  
He has opened my eyes to a greater land  
I am safe FOREVER in God's hands

*Erasure Poetry Inspired by visiting author Professor  
Beth Copeland*

*Erasure Poems are new poems created by “erasing”  
words from original poems by someone else. The  
resulting poem is much shorter than the original;  
likewise, the new message is often entirely different.*

**FROM: “LOVE LETTER (CLOUDS)”  
BY SARA MANGUSO**

Sara Neeley—BCC Faculty

Waking up—

A bullet tearing through the middle of my body—

Falling through a cloud—

Forgetting it all—

Falling in time—

Shear away from the moments before and the moments  
after—

A planet floats there—

Fists around the universe—

Nothing but ice-gravel—

**FROM: “WINDCHIME”  
BY TONY HOAGLAND**

N. Frank Tolliver—BCC Student

She goes out to hang the windchime  
It’s six-thirty in the morning

Windchime in her left hand  
She’s trying to figure out

She must have been standing in the kitchen  
When she heard it  
The wind blowing through the sound the wind chime  
wasn’t making  
Because it wasn’t there

Till death do us part  
I can see what I would miss  
Her, ankles, her scrunched forehead  
Her little kissable mouth

**FROM: “LOVE EXPLAINED”  
BY JENNIFER MICHAEL HECHT**

Yakima Ferguson—BCC Student

Guy says, promising to remember who I am.  
I wanted to get married  
Fulfillment of several things.  
Diamond ring?  
A thing set out to get  
Who'd have guessed?  
I like pleasure expected,  
Steady surprise and tumbled on earth,  
Her lover holding  
Asked, “Am I your first lover?”  
“Could be.  
Until something new is in us.”

**FROM: “VARIATIONS ON THE WORD LOVE”  
BY MARGARET ATWOOD**

Cynthea Landreth—BCC Student

It's the right size for those warm blanks in speech,  
For those red-heart-shaped vacancies on the page.

You can rub it all over your body.  
You can cook with it too.

It has only four letters,  
Too sparse to fill those deep bare vacuums between the  
stars.

This word is not enough,  
But it will have to do.

It's a single vowel in this metallic silence,  
A finger grip on a cliffside.  
You can hold on or let go.

**FROM: "WINDCHIME" BY TONY  
HOAGLAND**

Sara Neeley—BCC Faculty

To hang—  
The crossbeam, hammer,  
Nail gripped tight  
Nothing happens

Asleep, wind blowing  
Till death scrunched  
The little kissable mouth  
With the nail.



**FROM: “LOVE EXPLAINED” BY JENNIFER  
MICHAEL HECHT**

Edward Sutton—BCC student

I try to remember who I am,  
How insane the quest is;  
This metaphysical refraining is in fact the quest.

My expectation  
Grows patterned in its steady surprise.

You say you’re whom?  
Your face looks familiar.  
Something new is in us,  
And in our conversation.

**FROM: “VARIATIONS ON THE WORD  
LOVE” BY MARGARET ATWOOD**

Raenesha Hunter—BCC Student

Add lace and you can sell it.  
We insert it on a printed form  
That comes with no instructions.

The word love,  
Rub it all over your body.

They shout it—love, love—  
Their glittering knives in salute.

Then there's the two of us  
To fill those deep bare stars  
That press on us.

It's not love, but fear.

**FROM: "A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM" BY  
EDGAR ALLEN POE**

Fabiola Taylor—BCC Student

Take this kiss,  
Part now.

This much let me avow:  
My days have been a dream;  
Hope has flown away,  
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand tormented, holding within.  
I weep  
I can not grasp  
I can not save  
Is all a dream within a dream.

FROM: “BLACK SHEEP”  
BY DELICIA GADDY

Delicia Gaddy—BCC Student

Loneliness, desperation  
Why must I be that?

Homelessness; newborn crying  
What’s going on?

Depression on my face  
Dying inside

No one cares. . .  
Am I okay?

Responsibility, frustration  
Wanting to leave this earth

Fourteen years old I die  
I can no longer tolerate The Black Sheep

—*End of Erasure Poetry*



## THE MAN MY SISTER NEEDS ME TO BE

Ja-Bril Baker—BCC Student

They won't bother us in the graveyard  
I felt ready, but the early exposure flanked me with mixed  
emotions  
Losing someone close to me divides my brain  
The fire inside me makes it impossible to be the same  
But I'm still me  
Only as much as my brain lets me be  
Even though my heart rests at the bottom of the sea  
I am the same man my sister needs me to be



## GREENFIELD VILLAGE

Erin Pait—BCC Student

## THE MIRROR

Andrew Bahhouth—BCC Family  
(Age 14)

The sinister eyes stared  
From the shadowy recesses of his face.  
He looked like an animal snared  
And chained and shackled into place.  
Pure sorrow was the sight that I saw  
When I looked at him.  
Like a raven's caw  
The sound of his voice was grim.  
He was poor,  
Not lacking cash,  
But instead following its lure  
And watching his family fall to ash.  
As I looked into the mirror,  
I saw this future growing nearer.



## THINK

Andrew Bahhouth—BCC Family  
(Age 14)

I always want to learn. There is a curiosity inside me that  
will burn until all that is hazy becomes clear.  
Knowledge is so near at this age.  
Instead of learning something pivotal  
People stick to worrying about the trivial.  
Friend requests  
Ranking friends from worst to best.  
Wondering what to text and what emoticon to use.  
The only con I see is the one clear before me.  
People apply it to themselves.  
They empty their shelves of knowledge  
And fill them up with non-pivotal, trivial, equivocal  
information.  
And to what use?  
None.  
Folks have let their brains run loose  
And throughout time, those brains floated away until they  
burned in the sun.  
Come back to ground.  
Become sound and gain,  
Gain glorious gifts from the treasure that is your brain.  
And think thoughts so profound  
That even yourself you will astound.

## LOOKS

Andrew Bahhouth—BCC Family  
(Age 14)

What do a person's looks say?

Do they say how well they cook or if they like books?

Do they say if one is nice?

Can you imagine what the world would be if it was based  
off of looks?

You don't have to. Just look around.

This reality will astound many a person who have failed to  
see.

True looks aren't those observed by the eyes.

No. Those looks are merely a disguise.

To truly see someone is to see who they are,

Not who they appear to be.

Makeup or shoes or hair tell you nothing

It's ironic, you know.

How far people will go to look nice.

They will add all the bells and whistles

Just to get a few whistles.

Taking selfies all the while

In order to beguile their friends into thinking they look  
good.

This obsession leads to regression in humanity.

This vanity and false sense of self-worth makes you look  
more like a fool,

Not cool, not wonderful.

It leads to insanity.

So take a good look in the mirror

And maybe now you will begin to see clearer.

## CHESS

Andrew Bahhouth—BCC Family  
(Age 14)

The world runs like a game of chess.  
The rulers do as they please  
And the servants clean up the mess.  
There are battles here and there  
Very few being decisive.  
The only ones who fair well  
Are the incisive.  
Knights charge gallantly  
Only being able to move in formation  
And infallibly give away their location.  
Rooks are colossal  
But their wits resemble those of a fossil.  
They can intimidate  
But with some thought are easily eliminated.  
Bishops are clever,  
Never revealing too soon.  
Being bold and brave, never!  
But out of most able to make a buffoon.  
The pawn does what it is told  
With little thought for its life.  
Its mind has turned to mold  
And its body ever enduring strife.  
But if a fortuitous pawn comes along,  
Then it has the potential to become strong,  
For power it may seize  
If it reaches the end like a mouse its cheese.  
When this occurs,

Trouble stirs.  
The pawn becomes the queen  
And turns from nice to mean.  
It rules over all  
With the similar gall of its predecessors.  
The king is the last role,  
The ruler of the lands.  
Even the most clever disguise  
Won't protect him from murderous hands.  
In an instant, he is trapped  
All of his escape routes are mapped and capped.  
CHECKMATE

## THROUGH THE NIGHT

Willie Allen—Friend of BCC

The sunshine has left us; we lie down for rest  
At this time each day, we ponder, perhaps confess.  
Has the time been spent wisely; have we given our all?  
This day was ours, but have we let it slip, slide, and stall?

Mind slips into houses where it dwells alone,  
Not one visitor allowed in this very special home,  
Of rooms packed with clutter that only one may share.  
Rooms have no windows to outside, so no one can stare.

Residents chase each other from room to room,  
As though guided by lights that soon fade into gloom,  
Dreams of daylight bid for their own time in the midnight,  
But surrender they must to the power of subconscious  
delight.

## THE CHAIR BY THE WINDOW

Willie Allen—Friend of BCC

Wrinkled by the sun, calloused by time,  
Sitting by the window, she ponders the lines.  
Life has dealt her being, ‘just a poor farmer’s wife,’  
To bear his children, and walk with him through life.

No luxuries to work for, each day is a grind.  
To just eke out a living... that occupies her mind.  
Three children she’s birthed in three years less seven days,  
It’s all passed so swiftly, like a dream; it’s all been a haze.

Up before sunrise, before a blazing wood stove,  
A simple meal to prepare, before sharing the day’s load,  
Three babies in diapers must be clothed, bottled, and burped,  
Off to day’s task, hoeing or sowing, sometimes worse.

Twelve o’clock finds her back in front of fire,  
No time to rest, no time giving in to her body tired,  
It’s cook, and then eat, and all to quickly back to day’s task,  
Day after day, year after year, how many more can she last?

The evening comes too slowly; she gives it her all.  
Then chickens to be fed, a cow to be milked and stalled,  
Sitting on the back steps, exhausted, she ponders the hard  
lines,  
Being a ‘poor farmer’s wife’ deals her one trying day at a time.

## YEARNING

Willie Allen—Friend of BCC

They yearn for a quieter, more meaningful life,  
Having more value, substance, and joy, much less strife,  
When children could roam their neighborhood free,  
without fear.

Community parents kept watch over them because they  
were dear.

They walked to school, and then walked home.  
The roadside was not hostile; they were never alone.  
School was not a battleground, but a place one could  
thrive.

Teachers were highly respected, and obeyed, or discipline  
arrived.

Christmas not so commercial, “merry” was in style.  
People were happier, Mary, Jesus, and Joseph not yet in  
exile.

They were welcome in city square with shepherds and  
wise men.

Children played the characters in public schools and  
churches back then.

Christmas trees decorated home and business that day,  
Evidence of the holiday graced every space, never far  
away.

Christmas celebrated the birth of the long-awaited Christ  
child with joy;

Not just another day free from work or school, it was a time to worship this Boy.  
But those days are gone now, lost in memory and time.  
Gone forever, I fear, killed by “progress,” a more secular kind,  
But Christmas can never be replaced, by the cheap substitutes of now.



## MISSING YOU

Xavier Rha'mel—BCC Student

THE INK QUILL  
LITERARY AND ART MAGAZINE

ART

Art  
Art

ART  
ART  
ART





## **PENSACOLA PARADISE**

Andrea Carter-Fisher—BCC Staff



## **BAY OF PLENTY**

Kathy McGurgan—BCC Staff



## TEA ANYONE?

Diane Vitale—BCC Staff



## FALL HARVEST

Diane Vitale—BCC Staff



## END OF SUMMER

Diane Vitale—BCC Staff



The inspiration for my black and white photograph was Dorothea Lange's photographs from the Great Depression.

## **OVERALLS**

Madison Byrd—BCC Student



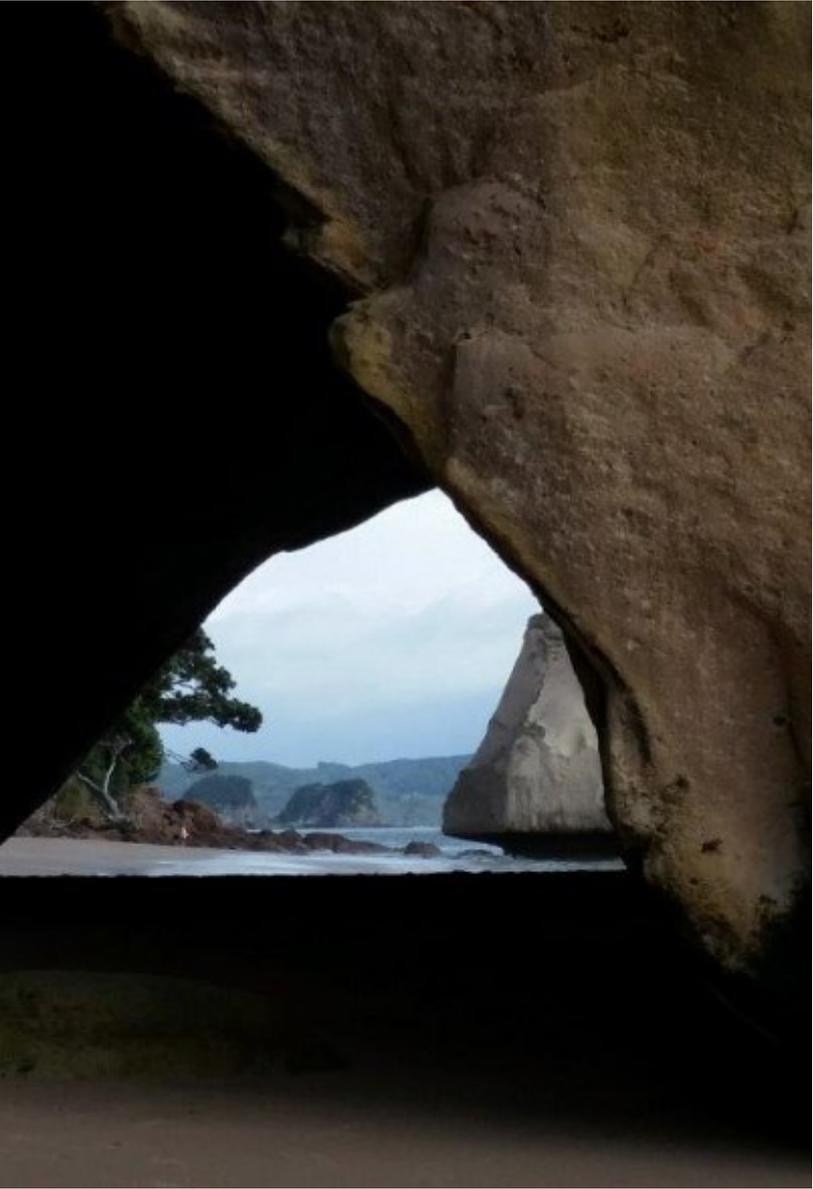
## POHUTUKAWA TREE

Kathy McGurgan—BCC Staff



## WELLINGTON HARBOR

Kathy McGurgan—BCC Staff



## **CATHERDRAL COVE NEW ZEALAND**

Kathy McGurgan—BCC Staff



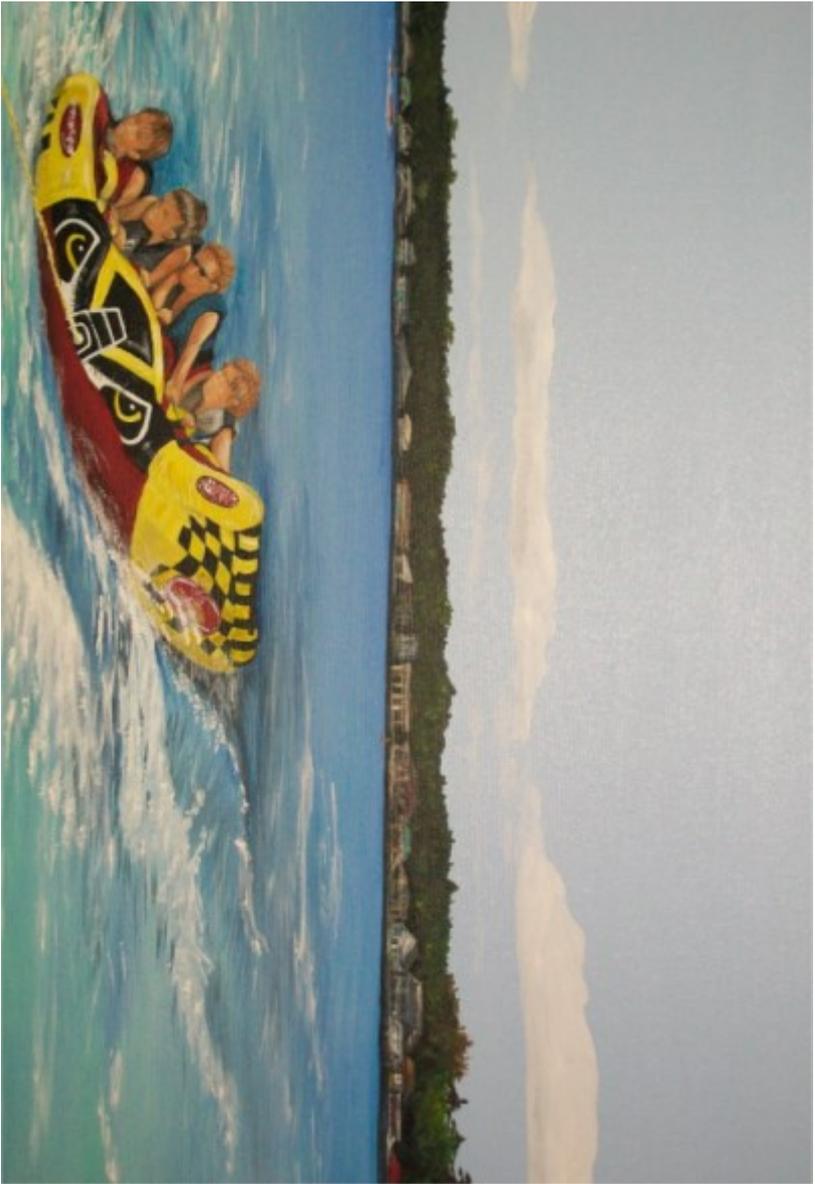
## WATERCOLOR

Erin Pait—BCC Student



## TOGETHER

Laura Newman—BCC Faculty



## TUBING

Cathy Kinlaw—BCC Staff



## **BOTTLES IN WATERCOLOR**

Cathy Kinlaw—BCC Staff



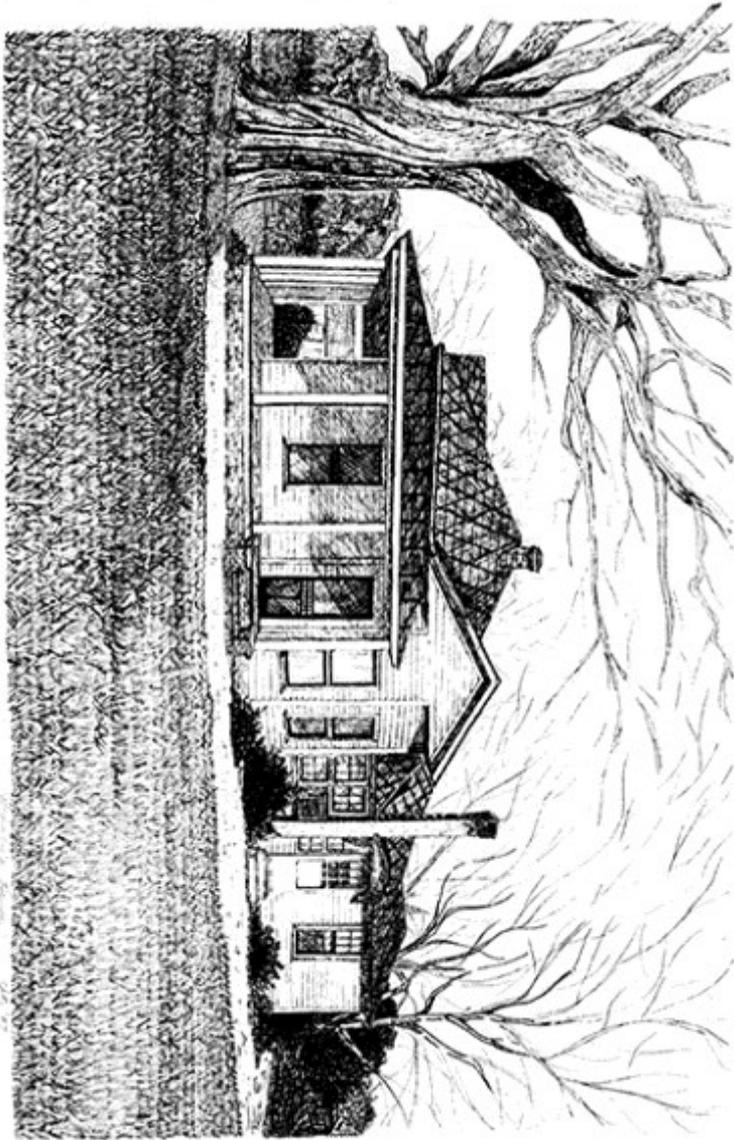
## TAWAS POINT

Erin Pait—BCC Student



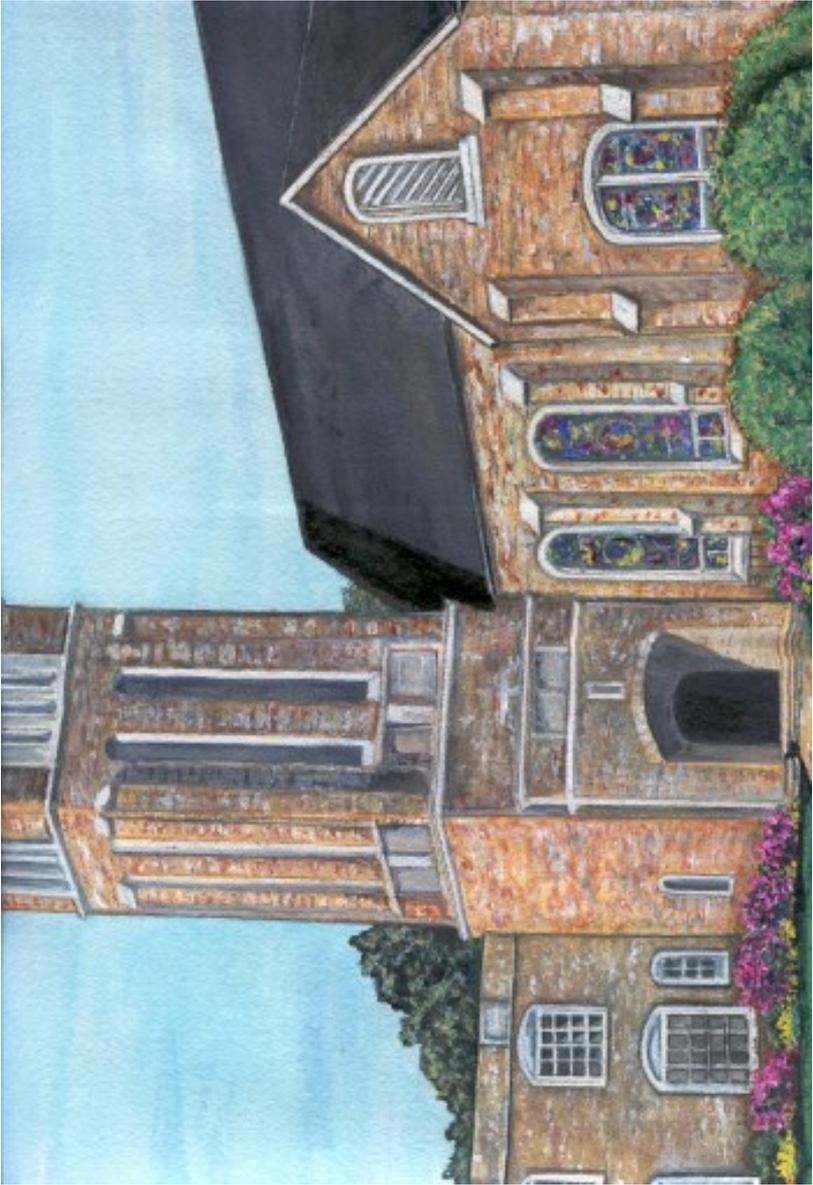
## **AUTUMN DOGWOOD**

Erin Pait—BCC Student



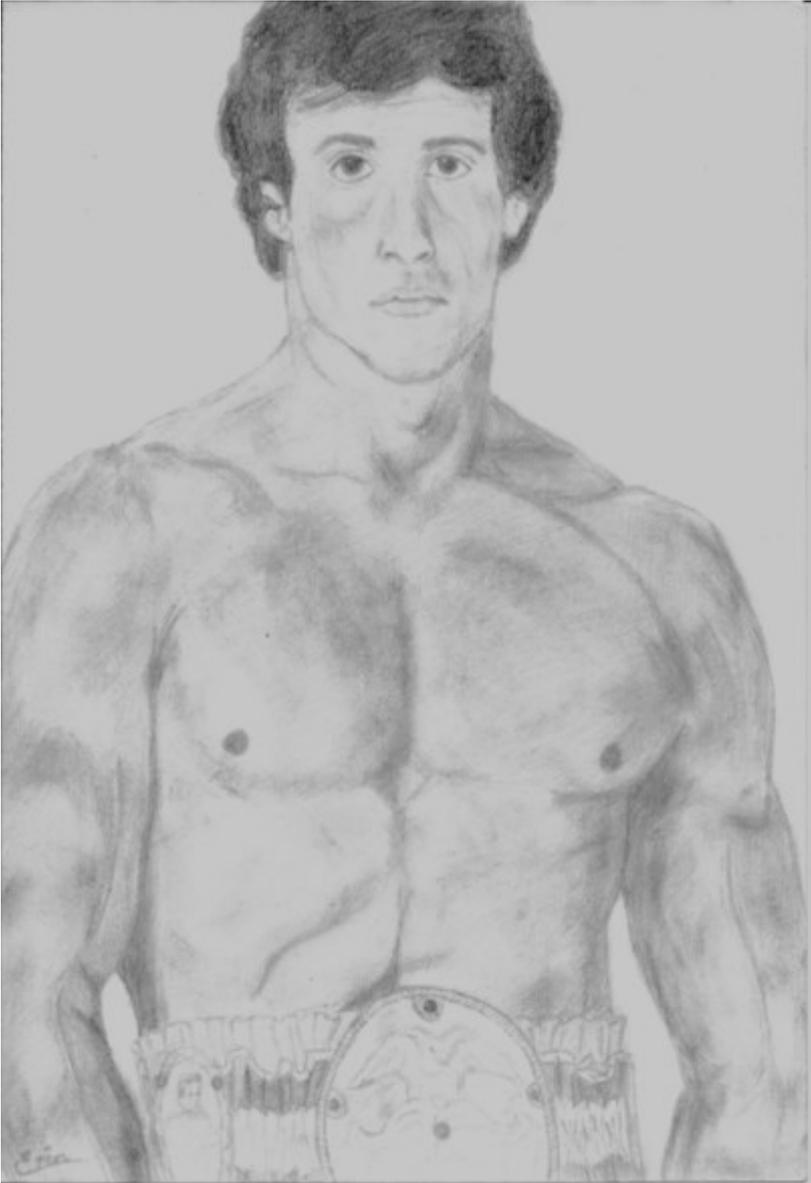
## GRANNY'S HOUSE

Cathy Kinlaw—BCC Staff



## TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Cathy Kinlaw—BCC Staff



## **ROCKY BALBOA**

Erin Pait—BCC Student



## FIGHT YOUR TEMPTATIONS

Xavier Rha'mel—BCC Student



## CONCUBINE

Xavier Rha'mel—BCC Student



## **PAINTED LADY**

Xavier Rha'mel—BCC Student



**DON'T BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU**

Xavier Rha'mel—BCC Student



## DROWNING IN SORROW

Xavier Rha'mel—BCC Student



## CAT-NAP DREAMS

Mary Butler—BCC Alumna

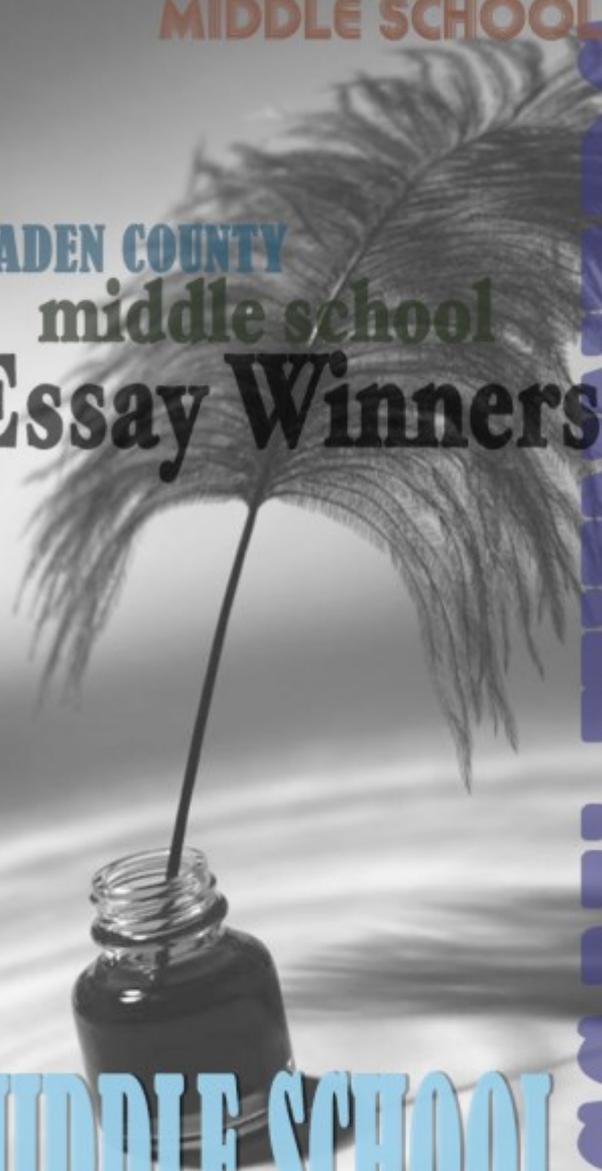
THE INK QUILL  
LITERARY ANNUARY MAGAZINE

ESSAY WINNERS  
MIDDLE SCHOOL

BLADEN COUNTY  
middle school  
Essay Winners

MIDDLE SCHOOL

ESSAY WINNERS



## MY PERSONALITY FROM THE PAST W.E.B. DU BOIS

Sibella Mabel Jessenia Woodruff—  
Elizabethtown Middle School

I believe that the past determines the future. Some people played a very important role in the past and left a strong impact on others and history. Because of them, the segregation of public places like schools and universities has ended and laws against forced child labor have been decreed. My future and my personality have been shaped by such people.

W.E.B. Du Bois was an influential civil rights leader, scholar, co-founder, writer, and journalist. He was also a well-known political activist in America in the early twentieth century and has been called the “Father of Pan-Africanism.” He was the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University and was a well-known spokesperson for African Americans. He also helped co-found the NAACP in 1905. If I had a chance to go back to the past, I would talk to him about our African-American culture and independence. I would learn about his views on how to help America change its ways and remain strong and proud.

I wonder what an intelligent man like Du Bois would think of decisions made by our world leaders today, all the bills that are being passed, the wall that is being built to prevent undocumented Mexican immigrants from entering the country, and the relationship with third world countries. It would be a joy to sit down with him and see

what topics would be enticing to him.

I wish I could talk to him to find out what he might do to change our nation's decisions about immigrants, social classes, politics, violence, and corruption. Some people never accept change though change makes a difference.

I wish I could talk to him because he was a man known for his insight and independence. He came through segregation when the United States was faced with a lot of problems. I wonder if I can follow his inspiration using peaceful methods. I think W.E.B. Du Bois has made a difference in my life and a difference in this world because he believed that "A little less complaint and whining and a little more dogged work and manly striving would do us more credit than a thousand civil rights bills. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships."



## **JOHN F. KENNEDY: “THE MAN TO BE”**

Jacob Priest—Clarkton School of Discovery

A famous American once said, “My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” This famous American was John F. Kennedy (JFK), the thirty-fifth president of the United States. If I were given the opportunity to be an important personality from the past or the future, I would be JFK who was known for his bravery, loyalty, dedication, and charismatic leadership skills while in office and throughout his life.

Bravery is having a courageous character or behavior. JFK used bravery during his campaign and presidency. On September 12, 1960, candidate Kennedy gave a brave speech on his religion to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, a group of Protestant members from Houston, Texas. During this time, many Protestant members believed he would not be able to fulfill some duties because of his Catholic background and his inability to make these decisions separate from the Catholic church. He later proved he could and became the first Catholic president in American history. I respect this courageous spirit and hope I can be as brave. Without bravery, JFK could not have led our country as effectively, nor would he have stood up for his beliefs.

Loyalty is being faithful to commitments or obligations. JFK showed loyalty to the United States through his actions. On May 25, 1961, JFK stood before congress asking for seven to nine billion dollars to fund sending man to the moon.

President Kennedy's speech in front of the congress accelerated NASA's space program even though he died six years before the moon landing. I, too, want to be loyal to my family, church, and friends as well as to my future employer.

Dedication is complete and wholehearted devotion. JFK's incredible dedication to his country and to bringing countries together manifests itself through the establishment of the Peace Corps, a volunteer program that sends young Americans to other countries in an effort to promote world peace and create allies throughout the world. Like him, I want to be dedicated and committed. I will be committed to any task assigned to me as a student, a family member, a community member, an athlete, and later as an employee.

A charismatic leader has the ability to inspire and motivate followers to perform at high levels. Kennedy showed charismatic leadership during his presidency by urging others to participate in public service. His speeches were an inspiration to many who devoted themselves to serve their country. As a Junior Beta Club member at Clarkton School of Discovery, I can persuade my fellow members to become charismatic and devote themselves to service work within our communities.

At times, President Kennedy was a wise leader. The United States had a failed attempt to overthrow dictator Fidel Castro in April, 1961. This event later became known as the Bay of Pigs Invasion. In July 1962, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev reached a secret agreement with Cuba to install Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba to prevent any

invasions. Three months later, JFK sent a U-2 spy plane which photographed nuclear missile sites being built in Cuba. An attack on the site could have caused a nuclear war. On October 22, 1962, JFK ordered the establishment of a naval blockade in order to block the missiles from coming to Cuba. President Kennedy displayed great leadership and diplomacy to stop this from becoming a catastrophe. I strive to become a wise leader and apply my leadership skills in my school and community.

In conclusion, JFK would not have been the president we know today without carrying these traits. I want to be like John F. Kennedy, known for my traits in my school, community, and personal life.



## **THE STALLION**

Erin Pait—BCC Student

## IF I WERE LOUIS PASTEUR

Sayvi Fuentes Eleria—Elizabethtown Middle School

Imagine a world without vaccines that help us fight deadly viruses and diseases. Louis Pasteur, a French chemist and microbiologist born in 1822 in Dole, France, came up with pasteurization and created vaccines for rabies, anthrax, TA, and smallpox, which were deadly viruses at the time. His first patient was a nine-year-old boy who was bitten by a rabid dog. Pasteur used the cure on the boy and saved the boy's life. I chose Louis Pasteur because he never gave up until he got an answer.

Pasteur inspires me to become a scientist with strong critical thinking skills. His popular process of pasteurization stirs in me the desire to do the impossible and make a name for myself. Pasteur never gave up and cared what people thought of him. He discovered that paratartaric acid had the same composition as tartaric acid and bacteria can be killed at boiling and cooling points. I love working with research and experiments and would like to find a cure for cancer and other diseases. I know it is going to take a lot of dedication and time to become a scientist, but I am willing to give it a try and never give up.

Pasteur developed the germ theory through experimentation and eventually convinced most of Europe of it. He demonstrated that organisms, such as bacteria, were responsible for the souring taste in wine, beer and milk. He also saved the silk industry by discovering that microbes were attacking good silkworm eggs, causing an

unknown disease.

If I were Louis Pasteur, everything would be possible. Pasteur made me realize that I should seize every opportunity to make a change. Like Pasteur, I would like to leave a legacy behind me. Like Pasteur, I want to help cure the world from illnesses and diseases.



## **CLEAR RUN, SAMPSON COUNTY**

Ray Sheppard—BCC Faculty

## ODELL BECKHAM JR.

Jermaine Spivey—Bladenboro Middle School

The person who inspires me the most is Odell Beckham Jr. because he strongly believes in himself. Beckham, who plays for the New York Giants, a National Football League, addressed his team in 2015 by saying “call me spider man or O.D.B, but whatever you do, just know that Odell is the future of the National Football League.”

Odell Beckham Jr. is a wide receiver who was selected 12th overall in the National Football League draft by the New York Giants. What inspires me the most about Odell is that even when he is losing, he never gives up. He never heeds criticism. He was harshly criticized for his haircut. This did not bother him at all. As a result, many people all over the world followed suit and got the same haircut he has.

If I had the money Beckham has, I would give money to all hospitals for cancer research. Also, I would help homeless people by giving them money or buying them a house. I want to give the people that don't have food or clothes what they need. If I could, I would help unemployed people find jobs. I, too, want to be known and inspire others. I want to be known as the person who gave away all what he had in order to help others survive and lead better lives.

## IF I WERE NEIL ARMSTRONG

Joshua Benson—Bladenboro Middle School

If I were given a chance to be an important personality from the past, I would be Neil Armstrong. Neil Armstrong was the first man to walk on the moon. To be able to have the opportunity to embark on such a tremendous and terrifying mission would have been such an honor. I would have chosen to be Neil Armstrong because he, along with Buzz Aldrin and Mike Collins, did something very inspirational.

Armstrong accomplished something that many people had dreamed about for years. When he landed on the moon, he proved that if you work hard enough for something, you can accomplish it. Armstrong inspired millions of people around the world, and he is still inspiring people today. I have always enjoyed watching the stars and looking at the different planets. To be chosen as the first person to do something like this, something this incredible, to go to the moon, had to be unbelievable for Armstrong.

Armstrong showed remarkable courage with traveling to the moon. He had no way of knowing the outcome of his mission. Would he survive breaking through the atmosphere? Would he stay on course and make it to the moon? Would the Apollo 11 have any malfunctions and he be trapped in outer space? Would he burn up trying to reenter the atmosphere? Would he ever come back home?

These had to be some of the questions that ran through Armstrong's mind. Also, astronauts had to endure much physical training to get their bodies ready for traveling through outer space.

People travel to outer space for many different reasons, such as to discover something new, find life on other planets, or discover ways to sustain life on other planets. Some people wanted to go to outer space for security reasons. Satellites are used to monitor the military movements of other countries. Meteorologists monitor the weather conditions with satellites in outer space. Many lives have been spared throughout the world from having time to prepare for the upcoming weather conditions like a hurricane or severe thunderstorms. Many small asteroids break up in the earth's atmosphere each year, but with the help of satellites monitoring the world, we could be prepared for a large asteroid that could potentially destroy our planet. I want to be able to find more ways to make people safer. What Armstrong found on the moon helped create different technologies, like memory foam and better digital images to see precise images of the moon.

These are some reasons I would want to be Neil Armstrong. I want to be able to make discoveries and help invent technologies to make people's lives easier and better. I want to be a part of something that can change the world. I want to discover something new that can create new technologies and improve old technologies. I want to inspire people and show them that they can do what they want to do. I want to help revolutionize the world.

## IF I WERE THE MAN WHO DEFIED ODDS

Larson Cashwell—Clarkton School of Discovery

If I ever had the chance to be an important personality, I would be my dad. Just think, one day you wake-up perfectly fine, but when you go to bed, you're fighting for your life. Kyle Cashwell serves his community and surrounding areas by telling his testimony to local church groups and functions. Many traumas around our area like my dad's would die, but because of the amazing team at Duke and the grace of God, he is alive and well today. Cashwell gets around with an above the knee prosthetic and hopefully in the near future an above the elbow arm transplant.

On October 20th, 2014, Kyle Cashwell got off work at 6:00 a.m. from his almost 18-year long career as a certified paramedic. Cashwell, who farms and has his own sawmill business, had some wood to saw and corn to pick. When Cashwell's partner went to go get them lunch, Cashwell checked his equipment and saw morning glories stuck in the header. When he reached into the machine to grab them, the machine cut-on and grabbed his hand. At that time, his right foot was on the side of the machine. He lost his balance and fell onto the PTO shaft of the machine, which threw him forward, making his right foot go into the machine. Cashwell called 911 and asked for a helicopter. When the helicopter landed, he was airlifted to Duke Hospital in Durham, while a prayer circle formed on the ground filled with relatives, coworkers, and many more people Cashwell had helped for the last 18 years.

When Cashwell got to Duke, he was immediately put in emergency surgery to give blood and to try to salvage his arm and leg. Within the first week, Cashwell lost both his arm above the elbow and his leg above the knee. By the second week, Cashwell was fighting for his life again. He caught a poisonous fungus from the dirt only found in our area. The next 70 days Cashwell spent in Duke fighting his battle with depression, PTSD, and the feeling that there wasn't a place in the world for him.

Just think of it; one day you're able to lift 200 plus pound people and the next, you are not able to lift your head off the bed. Did you know 1 in 10 Americans have depression and the number of cases of clinical depression grows 20% every year. These people could just be anyone: friends, family or by-standers. This was Cashwell until he saw me in a school program after his accident. Cashwell cried the whole time and at that moment realized that God meant for this accident to happen to show him he was needed.

Overall, my dad is my role model and the role model of many people. I also believe that you need to remain close to important people to you because you never know when they could be taken from you. I also know if you're depressed and feel like no one cares or no one else understands, you are wrong because there is always someone who cares about you and understands.

## IF I WERE SADIE ROBERTSON

Katie Evans—Clarkton School of Discovery

If I were given the chance to be an important personality from the past or the future, I would choose to be Sadie Robertson. When you look her up, you see that Sadie Carroway Robertson is an American reality television star on the A&E show *Duck Dynasty*, but it leaves out the most important thing to me. Sadie Robertson is not only a television star, she is also famous for putting her faith in God first. It inspires me how she handles fame and stays grounded in God. As incredible as all of her achievements are, especially for someone so young, she is quick to explain that she could not have planned it on her own, but rather owes all her success to God.

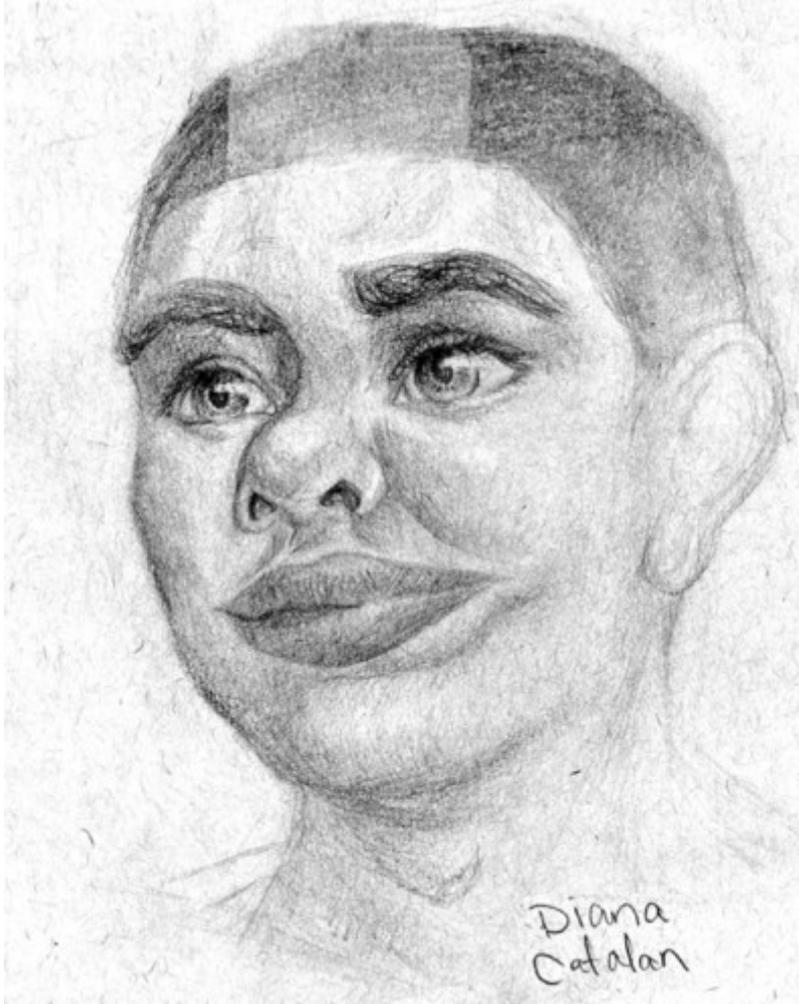
Sadie Robertson, now 19, has done her best to steer clear of using her celebrity for self-promotion, and instead, is using her platform to inspire others. She has a website called “Live Original,” and she also has a book called that; its purpose is to promote confidence to young girls. In 2016, she launched her 16-city Live Original Tour where she embarked to spread her message of positivity and self-confidence to her peers. She urges her fans to “dream big and do something!” Every girl struggles with self confidence, and Sadie, through her messages to young girls, has changed my life.

Girls struggle with jealousy, comparing themselves to others. They struggle with worry, and when they are in the mirror, they pick out a flaw, but Sadie is here to tell us girls that she struggles with the same insecurities just like any

other teenage girl. She tells us girls not to dwell on our imperfections and try to reach superficial goals, but instead to talk to God, try something new, open the Bible and pray about our issues. Sadie also went on Winter Jam tour, which is Christian music's largest annual tour in which she visited 47 cities in three months. This gave me a chance to see her on stage spreading a great message to us, which made me love what she does even more.

Sadie has spoken to my heart in ways every girl wants to hear. She wants girls to know they are priceless and beautiful in God's eyes. I will always look up to Sadie who never fails to encourage me and inspire me. She puts God first in everything she does and she believes every single one of us can change the world. She has reminded me that I do belong and that I am unique and beautiful. She has done a lot for me in my life, and I know she has impacted girls all around the world.

I choose to have her personality because of her strong relationship with God, and, thus, every day, I strive to get closer to Him. Sadie states that "It's so easy to allow stress to triumph over your life because we allow our circumstances to determine our feelings. This year I am determined to not allow that to be my first choice, but to choose strength from God in all things." This really hit me hard and made me realize that I should implement this statement in my life. Sadie has definitely impacted me spiritually and mentally. She will always be a role model to me, and I hope to be like her one day.



## **SAINT**

Diane Catalan—BCC Student

## A REMINDER TO MY FUTURE SELF

Amelia Harris—Clarkton School of Discovery

Everybody has a goal in life. Some people want to be doctors, hair dressers, engineers, truck drivers, or even fashion designers. Some people want to go to college or start small and go big, maybe even own a business or two. I, personally, plan to do something to improve society, to start a social reform . I want the people around me to see change within our political relationships with other countries. It may sound like a big goal coming from a thirteen year old girl, but we all have something to strive for.

As your first female president, I will be accepting of all citizens regardless of their class, race, or gender. I'll break down walls of anger fortified against other nations and religions. I want to see a change — I want to make our nation a better place, not a country recognized for its hate and malicious attitude to those in time of need. As of now, I plan to make a bright future for our future citizens, leaders, and everyone around me.

I've wanted to be a major influence on society ever since I started to become aware of the harsh reality of how politicians tend to be brutal. I have wanted to change the way our politicians treat others and influence our youth.

As a thirteen year old girl, I've seen how different people act based on their parents' political view. I was curious why people's opinions determine how their children will act. I want to be the politician that rewrites the book about how

*everyone* deserves to have his or her *own* opinion. Other current events have inspired me to change the way our youth will judge others. I want to be the president that makes peace with most nations. I want to be the woman that leads our nation to justice.

Another factor that has inspired me to want to be president is how a former president, Abraham Lincoln, showed America new ideas through being president.

He freed the slaves and helped the Union win the Civil War. Not that I would have to deal with freeing slaves as president, but hopefully I will also present progressive ideas to my nation. An example of one of my ideas to exhibit as president is to show how we need to know more about a nation's culture and history before we overreact when dealing with its people. I also want to show that all people have rights and can say their opinion without receiving constant backlash.

In the future, I will proudly present our nation to the world as its first female president. Hopefully, it would be an honor to be able to do so. I will endeavor to be an honorable leader and to inspire our future leaders to be noble and honest, to be proud to be Americans.



## WHO WOULD I BE?

Nick Norris—Clarkton School of Discovery

If I were given a chance to be an important personality from the future, I would want to be the Nobel Prize winner who developed a material used to prevent deaths from automobile and other transportation accidents. Often considered the most prestigious award given each year, a newly created Nobel Prize in engineering would be awarded for the first time in history due to the revolutionary impact the development of this new material would have. The person who works through the processes to develop a new material that would save millions of lives is who I would want to be in the future.

Engineering is a great passion of mine. Learning how things work and how they can be improved upon is fascinating. I would want to be the person going through the development and testing phases of a new material like none other. To be in the lab and field testing the new design would be a great privilege. Going through each step, having setbacks, and learning from each one in order to perfect the components of the new material is something I would really enjoy.

The black boxes that typically survive during an airplane crash would serve as the inspiration for the newly designed material. It would be lightweight and non-malleable. Imagine a material that when it collides with another object all impacts are absorbed within its components which are then spread throughout the material itself. There would be

no effects felt by the individual who is surrounded by it. The forces of a collision between two or more objects would be negated and cancel each other out. In addition, if the material makes contact with any other material, it would absorb impact and never change form, protecting those it surrounds. To accomplish this feat, given my knowledge of what is presently possible, would be nothing short of an engineering miracle and could potentially change many professional fields and the world.

It would also be exciting to be involved in the development of even greater engineering technologies which would likely occur as a result of this award-winning material. Being considered an expert in the field of engineering as a Nobel Laureate would open many doors not afforded to all. Given this, I could accomplish much good and leave a legacy of excellence, creativity, and ingenuity of which school children will read about in their texts for years to come. Hopefully, I would inspire others to enter the engineering field focusing on developing processes and materials that have a global impact.

Simply knowing that I could work each day in a field of study that I love and that as a result of my dedication and ingenuity, millions and millions of deaths would be prevented is more than I could ever hope for. To be the person who is responsible for creating and engineering such a material that would be used for the greater good would be a lifelong dream. This world-altering person is who I would want to be if I had a chance to be an important personality from the future.

## MICHELLE OBAMA

Stephanie Hernandez—Tar Heel Middle School

Have you ever felt you needed to seek your goals regardless what others think? Michelle Obama has inspired me to do what I like the most. One of my favorite and most inspirational quotes by her is “Stay true to yourself and never let anyone distract you from your goals.”

One of Michelle Obama’s many accomplishments was in 2010 when launching “Let’s Move!” bringing community leaders, educators, medical professionals, parents, and others to address the challenge of childhood obesity. Her self-confidence, which many girls my age lack, inspires me because she is not afraid to speak her mind or show her displeasure. She loves giving back to her community.

Michelle Obama’s speeches inspire my career choice. The “Emotional Speech,” which was her last speech as the First Lady and left many crying, was the most inspirational. Two quotes stand out to me: “For all young people in this room and those who are watching, know that this country belongs to you — to all of you, from every background and walk of life. If you or your parents are immigrants, know that you are part of a proud American tradition.” “I want our young people to know they matter, that they belong, so don’t be afraid. Do you hear me? Young people, don’t be afraid. Be focused. Be determined. Be hopeful. Be empowered. Empower yourselves with a good education to build a country worth of your boundless promise. Lead by example with hope, never fear, and know that I will be with you,

rooting for you and working to support you for the rest of my life.”

I, too, want to be a motivational speaker. I, too, want to have an awesome personality, be caring, friendly, kind, and comical. I, too, will have a bright future and will inspire others, just as Michelle Obama inspired me.



## **TINY WONDERS**

Jeanne Butler—BCC Staff

## JOHN GREEN

Shelby Pharr—Tar Heel Middle School

“What is the point of being alive if you don’t at least try to do something remarkable?” This inspires me to do something important. I want to visit several countries in order to discover what is beyond these borders, find out for myself the wonders of the world, appreciate their beauty, take risks, and tell my own story, just like John Green.

John Green, author of *The Fault in Our Stars*, has taught me that love can come from anywhere and everywhere. I admire his creativity and his belief that life is more fun when you take risks. His books have impacted many people including me. I also find John Green remarkable not just because of what he has written but rather because of his numerous accomplishments. He has helped many people and donated to many charities including Shriners Hospital for Children. He has served as a chaplain at a children’s hospital where he has comforted children at their worst times. He has also hosted *Horrible Histories* on YouTube.

John Green is compassionate with children, perseverant as an author, authentic, warm, and dedicated as a person. I want to strive to become as great of a person that has all of these qualities. He has taught me to love people for who they are and not for what they are. He has inspired me to try to see the good in people and helped me admit my flaws before I looked for them in others. I hope one day I can see that all people are beautiful in their own way.

Truly, John Green has a beautiful soul and is very influential in my life. He has changed lives, inspired souls, and stolen tears. I don't have any of his characteristics, but I have a clear picture of whom I want to resemble. I want to be able to tell others that regardless of how many people hate them, there will always be someone who loves them. They can be successful and accomplish a lot by being who they are, taking risks, enjoying life, and loving each other.



## **EARLY MORNING LADY BUG**

Erin Pait—BCC Student

## MY INSPIRATION

Gloria Guerra—Tar Heel Middle School

Have you ever wondered how many good people there are in the world? Only a few people have. To me, being kind, loving, and having a heart are traits that define good people. Angelina Jolie is one of those people I would want to be if I were given a chance to be an important personality from the past or the future.

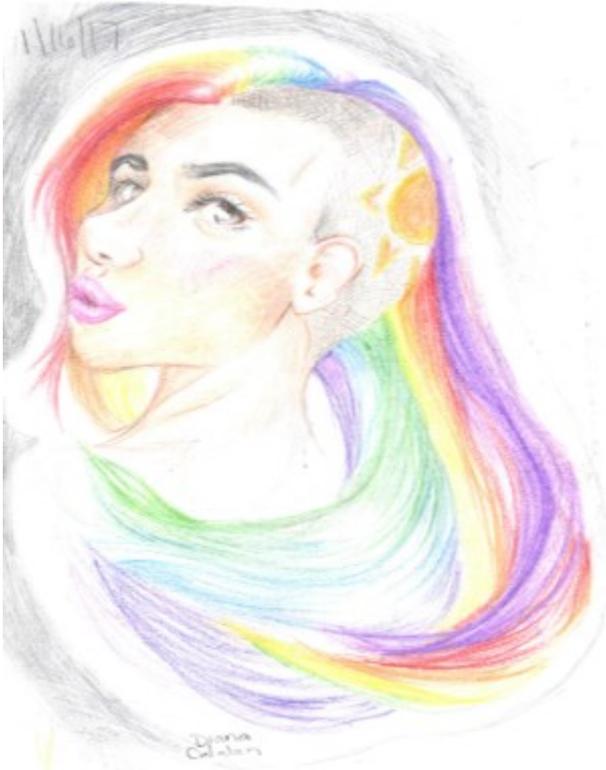
Despite her fame as an Oscar winner, a recipient of three Golden Global awards and two Screen Actors Guild awards, Angelina Jolie has many humanitarian accomplishments. She received the first ever Citizen of the World Award by the UN Correspondents Association. She also received the Global Humanitarian Award by UNA-USA in 2005 for her work with UNHCR to assist refugees. As she received that award, she said, “Working with refugees was the greatest gift, and the greatest life lesson I could ever receive.”

Angelina Jolie’s acting career has changed her life not just on the big screen, but in her personal life as well. She filmed *Tomb Raider* in Cambodia. This movie changed her perspective on life because there was so much history that she had not learned in school. Jolie received the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award for her work on behalf of the forcibly displaced victims of sexual violence. Jolie is a mother of six children; three are her biological, and the other three are adopted from Cambodia.

Jolie’s heartwarming actions to help those who have very

little to survive from day to day has inspired me to pursue my passions and make a difference in people's lives. Jolie is making the world a better place to live in, one good cause at a time; I want to pursue a career that will allow me to visit poor countries where I can improve the economy and help the less fortunate by providing them medical needs and food.

Angelina Jolie is kind, compassionate, and perseverant. She is my role model to follow, but I need to be who I am and become known for my traits.



## **SUNSHINE**

Diane Catalan—BCC Student

# VISITING AUTHORS

A quill pen with a dark, feathery tip is positioned diagonally across the center of the page. Below it, a small, dark glass inkwell sits on a light surface. The background is a soft, light gray with a subtle texture.

Visiting Authors  
visiting authors

VISITING AUTHORS

VISITING

## LOST RINGS

Beth Copeland—Visiting Author

Maybe her hand refused  
to relinquish its gold

worn thin as a prayer over 66 years  
of loving him. Maybe someone

stole her rings before  
she was moved from hospital

to morgue or maybe  
the mortician didn't

notice them as he pushed  
her frail body into the concrete

chamber. Are we breathing  
her gold and carbon

dust? Is her diamond  
falling as we lower her urn

into dirt? Does she look down,  
amused that we mourn  
the loss of rings that cost  
so little, a chip

of stone, mere tokens  
of what they shared? When he stopped  
to clear the Plymouth's

windshield, his wedding band slipped

from his finger. He couldn't  
find it on the road. The next day,

he drove back—there  
it was!—in a stream

of melted snow, scratched  
by the plow and tire

chains. He'd run his thumb  
over nicks as he told

the story of what  
he'd lost and found

until the rough  
spots were worn smooth  
as water.



## ONIONS

Beth Copeland—Visiting Author

She chopped uncut bulbs like skulls  
dug from dirt, shrink-wrapped

in brittle skins on a pig-shaped  
cutting board's pine

knot eye as she stared through steam  
at white camellias

beyond the fence, dabbing  
her brown eyes with the hem

of a gingham apron. While I slice  
through this season's layer of grief

and peel away another  
onion within

the onion—Mother won't  
glimpse flamingo

pink azaleas or rain  
drenched Rowdy

Red tomatoes or maples  
that bleed and blaze. My bones

relive the morning  
we lowered her

through falling snow. I pull rings  
from rings, wondering when

I'll reach the pearl  
white bud at the core

where the girl within  
weeps.

## ACROPHOBIC

Beth Copeland—Visiting Author

Not a fear of falling, she whispers  
through gritted teeth, hands white  
knuckling the steering wheel as we drive  
through a downpour across the bridge. Below  
the Savannah swells like mercury beneath  
steel spanning Georgia to South Carolina.

Not afraid, she sighs, when we reach  
the other side, of being pushed  
or losing my balance. Afraid  
that when I'm standing on the edge I might  
look down and jump.

## WATER INTO WINE

Beth Copeland—Visiting Author

My octogenarian Southern Baptist parents wouldn't  
know Rothschild from rotgut but love a little

vino before bed. She sips a thimble  
sized cup and titters, I'm tipsy, while he

bellows, Bottom's up! and chugs  
Two Buck Chuck. She hides

her illicit cache in a cupboard beneath  
the steel sink. What if church

members drop by and spy Richard's Wild  
Irish Rose, Ripple, or Pagan

Pink? After supper, they recline  
in matching velour Lazy-Boys, lost

in Matlock and Dynasty, drowsy  
with dreams of mountain

streams and jugs of sweet  
Muscadine.

## CAROLINA MONSOON

Beth Copeland—Visiting Author

Rain without you falls	Rain falls in sheets from	That tarnished silver summer where an empty
from eaves filled with moss. You're	gutters stuffed with brown	nest reminds me you dried under longleaf
gone but called to ask if I was	soggy leaves. Before you died, I	pinetrees. You said, Don't.
driving <i>I'm so worried</i> . I'm	lived through a storm. It's	you lived outside? No,
okay. <i>Aren't you with Phil?</i> I'm	raining, Mother. I'm homeless	in a cabin. Don't you remember? <i>Now I</i>
not. <i>Oh, I forgot.</i>	alone. <i>You're married on the moon.</i>	<i>know where you sleep.</i>



## BETH COPELAND BIOGRAPHY

Beth Copeland lived in Japan, India, and North Carolina as a child. Her first full-length poetry book *Traveling Through Glass* received the 1999 Bright Hill Press Poetry Book Award. *Transcendental Telemarketer*, her second poetry collection, was published by BlazeVOX books in 2012 and received the runner up award in the North Carolina Poetry Council's 2013 Oscar Arnold Young Award for best poetry book by a North Carolina writer. Her poems have been widely published in literary journals and have received awards from Atlanta Review, North American Review, The North Carolina Poetry Society, and Peregrine. Her poems have been featured on PBS NewsHour and have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is employed as assistant professor of English at Methodist University. She lives in a log cabin in rural North Carolina with her husband Phil Rech.



## COLD RUNNING CREEK

Zelda Lockhart—Visiting Author

### **Synopsis *Cold Running Creek* by Zelda Lockhart (2007)**

During one of the most tumultuous times for the North American continent (pre and post Civil War) three generations of women both Native American and African American, struggle to be free.

Raven, the main character of the first two chapters of the novel, is the daughter of Choctaw Native Americans who have escaped the relocation from Mississippi to Oklahoma Territory in hopes of negotiating their rights in the political maze of their changing landscape. In the event of faltered plans, her mother and father, *ishki* and *inki* have charged Raven with the responsibility of her two younger siblings. The three children are the sole survivors of the resulting tragedy.

Though eventually Raven marries a half French, half Choctaw man of prominence, and becomes the proud Misses of LeFlore plantation, she bares the initial, seemingly indelible wounds of the novel, and extends those to her daughter, Lilly, a half black half Choctaw infant who Raven raises as the full-blood heir to LeFlore.

As the upshot of a second political miscalculation of American conquest, Lilly is captured and sold into the last

three years of slavery. Though her actual bondage is short, her escape from her own enslavement spans to mid-life. She is always waiting for something to change. One day she abandons her two daughters and commits a dreadful act against her husband. Though horrifying, her lashing out is the very catalyst for her freedom. In an ending that peaks to a crescendo of redemption, Lilly's salvation brings with it freedom for two generations of male and female ancestors of both Choctaw and African heritage.

*Cold Running Creek* is enlightening in its untold historical truths, and relevant to all time with its soul-stirring revelations. With a chorus of swamps, voodoo, floods, creeks and rivers, *Cold Running Creek* is rich, passionate, and leaves the reader breathless.

**Excerpt from *Cold Running Creek* by Zelda Lockhart (2007, pp. 46 - 51)**

This excerpt offers the circumstances of the birth of Lilly LeFlore. Conceived of an affair between Master Grey Fox (half-Choctaw, half-French son of Jaque LeFlore) and of Grey Fox's oldest slave, Josephine. Just before the onset of the Civil War, Josephine's secret of having given birth to Master Fox's heir is but one of the tensions that brews beneath the soil of this Mississippi plantation.

**April 21, 1851,**

LeFlore Plantation, Mississippi.

Josephine's baby was swaddled in light cotton, almost the

weight of gauze. The days were cool in the morning, but stifling by noon. The baby girl's skin was honey colored just like her father's, her cheeks two semicircles that squeezed her tiny nose when she fixed her face to cry at night, but Josephine coaxed her purple nipple between the child's searching lips and kept her quiet. The next day the child slept, having been kept awake all night by Josephine's thump, pinch, tickle. In the day, the blankets were hung over the windows, the baby placed quietly in the little trough crib, and off Josephine went to the fields for early summer planting.

Josephine was so tired the next day. Every time she stood from breaking the clumps with the dirt rake, dizziness threatened to lift her up out of her body. She may as well have been a ghost. She did not remember dropping seeds into the last three holes she'd prepared, but she was sure she had as she drifted between dream and awake. She saw her new baby's face in each of the tiny rocks she flicked away from tilled soil with her cracking fingernails.

"Mama Josephine." Lula, the young girl who helped with the labor some nights before, spoke into the dream space. "Best wake up, Mama Josephine."

"Hush, child, I ain't sleepin." Josephine's voice was hoarse as if morning had not been driven away by noon.

The girl kept poking the smoothed poplar stick into the mounds, and dropping seed from the grain bag. She kept her pace slow and watched Josephine in her side vision. "The

baby girl, she feed good last night, Mama Jo?"

"Yes, sure 'nuf." Josephine bent back to the sun and squeezed the tired muscles of her back. "Gonna keep her long as I can." Josephine's face was chestnut brown against the flawless blue sky.

"Sure 'nuf Mama Josephine," was all Lula said when she saw the way Josephine's tired face stretched out against the blue like a soul ready for rest.

Josephine took a deep breath and stepped with young Lula in the planting.

"Mama Jo, what make you think Massa gonna sell her? She ain't even been weaned."

"Child, I believe he was grievin about somethin awful that night. I believe he meant to lay with me too, but I don't believe a man of rules like him meant to bring forth no Massa slave baby. I love what God done let me have of my own want, but Sybil is right, once Massa know a baby came of it, he ain't gonna let that be."

"Maybe you can go live in the big house and be his special gal." Lula giggled.

"Hush gal. Shush." Josephine waved her arms in an attempt to keep the shame away from her; the shame that of all the unlikely women to ever lie with, Master Fox chose Mama Jo.

Josephine flailed at the air as if swatting annoying deerflies.

“I ain’t studin him.”

“What kinda spell he had on you Mama Josephine?”

Josephine mumbled, “The kind that say this ain’t none of that breedin stuff; and I don’t care what ya’ll think. That night was mine; that baby mine. I ain’t lying about you need to hush either Lula, so hush.”

Little Man came down with the water. He was almost a teen boy, but he wasn't bigger than the little boys. Master Golden had set his tasks as running the water, running the cows back into the barn before a storm, running, because that's something he could put to use within the boundaries of those four hundred acres; a child bred to be a strong field hand, but he couldn't be sold. He had short legs, big feet, a stout body, could run over the furrowed fields like a bunny rabbit, and all the while keep the water bucket steady.

Josephine looked down on his nappy head, which glistened in her dizzy vision as he dipped the water. "You all right Mama Josephine?" They both looked up to see if Master Golden or Master Tchula was riding near.

Grey Fox did not know it, but many of the older slaves who went on with Jack Flowers to the new Territory had called him Tchula li, Little Fox, and although they called him Massa Fox in his presence, he was Tchula li in the fields, some compassion still left for the man who was once a sullen

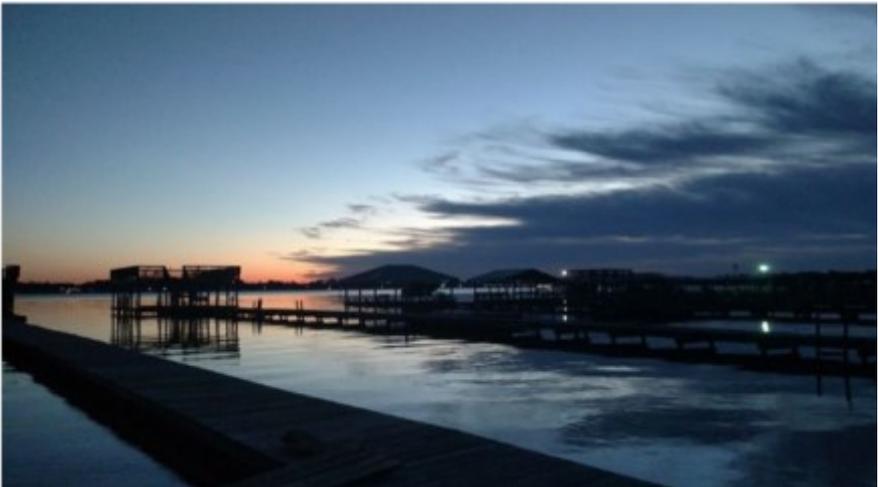
little boy, now just the steel-faced man with nothing on his mind but keeping the rhythm of crops and the rhythm of good commerce.

Josephine sipped a little from the clay cup, lips cracked, and she spilled the rest slowly down the front of her dress to blend the darkness of sweat around her collar with the leaking milk of her breasts.

"She wasn't crying, was she Little Man?"

"No ma'am, quiet as a little ole mouse."

She waved him on, retied her white head cloth, and went back to breaking the clumps, poking the holes and dropping the seeds that would soon burst through the finely worked soil.



## **A WHITE LAKE MORNING**

Ray Sheppard—BCC Faculty

## ZELDA LOCKHART BIOGRAPHY

Zelda Lockhart is currently Endowed Professor of Language and Literature at North Carolina Central University teaching Creative Writing and is Director at LaVenson Press Studios: Inspiring Women to Self-Define Through Writing & Publishing. She is pursuing a PhD in Expressive Art Therapies, holds an MA in Literature, and a certificate in writing, directing and editing film from the NY Film Academy.

Lockhart is author of *Fifth Born*, a Barnes & Noble Discovery selection and finalist for debut fiction from the Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Foundation. Her novel *Cold Running Creek* won an Honor Fiction Award from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association. Her third novel, *Fifth Born II: The Hundredth Turtle* won a finalist award from the Lambda Literary Foundation and secured her position as Piedmont Laureate in North Carolina. Her fiction, poetry and essays appear in periodical like *Chautauqua*, *Obsidian II*, and *USAToday.com*. She continues to lecture across the US on issues specific to the human struggle and on the ways literature is like baking soda; it is good for whatever ails you.



## MORALITY PLAY

Mark Cox—Visiting Author

General Lee has suffered visibly  
since his divorce, gone genuinely gray  
yet less able to stay in character—  
propped on his horse by Prozac  
and behavioral therapy.  
The dimpled tin flask?

It might or might not  
be part of the act.  
But the bulge in his tunic,  
the burial mound between  
his heart and epaulet,

that's a Nokia phone.  
He can feel it vibrate  
even as he draws his saber to charge—  
his daughter again, impatient,  
worried about the science fair project  
or that Miguel boy or both.

In our fathers' mansions are many rooms,  
each staircase lit by a proper woman's dress,  
exploding outward from the waist,

bright as muzzle flash. In this fashion,  
the must-tinged, curated odors  
of death and disrepair

are dispelled by antebellum grace,  
a gay waltz superimposed  
on the gallows and scorched earth  
of unconditional surrender.

And here in the white cavalry tents  
of dressing rooms and canteens,

is the disembodied cast,  
their corpses stacked four deep,  
breaking for coffee and short bread  
flecked with the ash of last night's fires,  
warming themselves, palms first  
at the steam of Starbuck's cups,

as if at barrels of tallow or pitch,  
the rendered fats of human appetite,  
our ongoing morality play  
of canned spectacle and irrevocable orders,  
eternal figures of will and submission,  
spit-shines gilding our bloody past.

Push forward on the left flank,

mount and survey what's won.  
Rear up on the grand white stallion,  
hurrah the troops with hat in hand,  
pause for photo ops. Done.  
Rivulets of audience empty grassy lots

and now, what is the strategy  
for his newly sexual daughter's suitor  
and the papier-mâché volcano  
she needs to erupt by Monday.



## NAMASTE

Rudy Pait—BCC Alumnus

## OUTTAKES

Mark Cox—Visiting Author

Dusk's embroidery, vivid, vast,  
richly sutured  
with infinite accident.

Autumn has come, its woods stark,  
only our own passing  
sweeps leaves back into the trees.

Film upon film, decade into decade,  
so many figures absorbed,  
and still the screen is never filled.

Clotheslines, pale, bowed  
pulley to pulley, span  
the rest home courtyard,  
blistered with rain.

Like skiers, drops of rain drawn  
diagonally down the window.  
Some survive longer than others.

We are alone.  
It only seems that the moon  
is a flashlight pointed at you.

That barefoot boy at Woolworths  
still steers his coin-operated car  
through 1961 without a coin.

Eventually, a woman  
hands you a jar to open  
and you can't.



## **SNOWY SPRING**

Chelsea Taylor—BCC Student

## MARK COX BIOGRAPHY

Mark Cox founded the Creative Writing Department at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. He has a BA in English composition from DePauw University, Greencastle, IN, 1978 and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Vermont College, Montpelier, VT in 1985.

He has participated in over 260 public readings, workshops, and panels in 36 states. He has won several awards, such as Society of Midland Authors Poetry Prize (1999), Oklahoma Book Award for Poetry (1999), Kansas Arts Commission Poetry Fellowship (1996), OSU Burlington-Northern Faculty Achievement Award (1994), Pushcart Prize, Best of the Small Presses (1993), and Third Place, *Kansas Quarterly* Seaton Poetry Award (1993). He has authored three books. More than 270 of his poems and essays were published in anthologies, magazines, and other venues.





## **LONE FLOWER**

Erin Pait—BCC Student

# ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING THE CONSTITUTION A MODEST PROPOSAL

Don Brown—Visiting Author

King Solomon, often called the wisest man in history, once said that “without a vision the people perish.” Some 2,700 years later, the great American Patriot Thomas Jefferson said that “the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.”

Yet, as I write this essay, as America enters the 241<sup>st</sup> year of her existence, a dangerous level of pandemic ignorance exists about who we are as a people and what binds us together as the most uniquely-constructed nation in history – namely, the United States Constitution.

Perhaps there’s some basic understanding in culturally idiomatic phrases such as “the land of the free,” or “the flag still stands for freedom,” or whatnot. But beyond a vague notion that the Constitution is somehow tied to freedom, our national collective ignorance of the document itself is troubling.

This ignorance goes on display whenever some politician babbles about “our great democracy.” Actually, the Founders abhorred democracies, which allow rule by majority and, thus, in effect, rule by the mob. Pure democracies self-implode and have no legal checks to stop the majority from crushing the minority.

In a pure democracy, for example, the majority could

decide that it does not like black people, or does not like gay people, or does not like Christians. Then, by majority vote, the majority could vote for laws to steal from people the majority doesn't like, or to crush people who are different, who do not conform to the whims of the "majority rule."

Here's a great truth understood by the founders: A pure democracy, lacking checks-and-balances, is a dangerous and evil enterprise, which eventually will self-implode. The majority, wielding unchecked power by the ballot alone, will eventually turn its base instincts against the minority.

### **We are a Republic Not a Democracy**

Remember this. When we recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, we "pledge allegiance" not only to the flag, but also "to the Republic" for which it stands. We do not pledge allegiance to "the democracy" for which it stands.

Benjamin Franklin, when asked by a lady on the sidewalk as he emerged from the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, "what have you given us, Mr. Franklin?" responded, "a republic, ma'am, if you can keep it."

Franklin's answer contains two concrete truths to ponder. First, America is a Republic, not a democracy.

And second, Franklin understood that if we aren't diligent to contemplate and understand our republic, and what a republic actually is, we are apt to lose it, and to lose the freedoms that are incumbent with it. Ignorant politicians

yapping about our “democracy” demonstrate just how close we are to losing our constitutional republic. We cannot possibly preserve something if we don’t understand what we are preserving.

What, then, are the basic differences between a democracy and a constitutional republic?

Well, we’ve already discussed the notion of a pure democracy. A democracy features pure rule by the majority, with no checks to restrain the majority’s unbridled power to harm the minority.

### **Rule-of-law & Checks-and-Balances**

A republic, however, places the rule-of-law over all else. Think two phrases in understanding our Constitutional Republic. First, think “rule-of-law,” and second think “checks-and-balances.”

### **Rule-of-Law**

The notion that we are a nation of laws, and that laws usurp the day-to-day whims of the masses, which could change as quickly as the wind blows, comes from a principle as ancient as the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic law.

In a constitutional republic, for the republic to work, laws must be based upon sublime moral principles, not immoral principles. Consider the words of our second president, John Adams. “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of

any other." James Wilson, a signer of the Constitution and a U. S. Supreme Court Justice, said, "Human law must rest its authority ultimately upon the authority of that law which is divine."

A constitutional republic can only work based upon moral law. Thus, sublime law based upon morality, and not the whims of the majority, are to govern the affairs of men and women. There must be an extra-constitutional moral compass for the Constitution to work. The Constitution cannot function, independently on its own, free of a moral compass. For example, the time-honored-principle of "Thou shall not steal," first set down by Moses in the Ten Commandments (a great moral compass relied upon by the founders), makes its way today in a variety of statutes, both state and federal, outlawing larceny, robbery and shoplifting.

Even if the majority, by "democratic" vote, were to fixate upon something immoral, say by passing a "law" that it's okay to steal from vagrants, or from illegal immigrants, or to discriminate against Hispanics, in a republic, the morally engrained rule-of-law, preventing thievery and robbery, would prevail over the democratic whims of the masses.

Likewise, in our constitutional republic, while certain democratic principles are set forth within the Constitution – such as direction election of the Congress by the people, the rule-of-law as set down by the Constitution itself prevails above all. The rule-of-law prevails even above the daily democratic whims of the majority, and especially if that majority manifests itself in an immoral way.

## Checks-and-Balances

Second, in addition to thinking “rule-of-law,” also think “check-and-balances.” Our Constitution, which contains seven articles and twenty-seven amendments, features many checks-and-balances to guard against the overconcentration of governmental power. The founders recognized the basic axiom that “absolute power corrupts,” and “power corrupts absolutely.” Borrowing from the writings of the Frenchman Montesquieu, who distrusted centralized governmental power, the founders used Articles I, II and III to slice the powers of the federal government into three co-equal branches.

Article I gave Congress the power of the purse, along with the power to make laws, and the power to declare war. The President, established under Article II, could check Congress by vetoing their laws, and was commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Congress could check back against the President by overriding his vetoes, and cutting off monies to programs he advocates. The electoral college for the election of the president is a check-and-balance to prevent the overconcentration of power to prevent large, corrupt, heavily-populated urban centers from perpetually lording over the majority of the country whose interests are not urban interests.

The Courts, established under Article III, would hear cases involving controversies among the states and among citizens in disputes under federal law. So the Congress and President check one another at multiple levels, and the courts, which are established by Congress and nominated by

the President, hear controversies brought before them. Thus, the founders sliced the federal power structure into a pie with three pieces.

The Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments of the Constitution, placed additional checks-and-balances against an overreaching federal government. While the checks-and-balances of Articles I – III, checked the federal government against itself, the unalienable rights as set forth in the Bill of Rights checked the government against the people. So in Article I – III, the government is checked against itself. In Amendments 1 – 10, the government is checked against the people.

Under the Bill of Rights, for example, the Congress could not pass any law prohibiting Freedom of Speech. Government agents could not search a man's home without a warrant based upon probable cause. Troops could not be quartered in citizens' homes. The right to bear arms and establish a militia against an overreaching government was sacrosanct. All these and more rights in the Bill of Rights check the government from tyrannical rule over the people.

### **The Perfect Picture of the Constitution: The Constitution as a Restraining Device**

If a word-picture could describe the Constitution, imagine a giant seat-belt with shoulder harnesses, complete with handcuffs and harness straps. Now think about this restraining device being wrapped around the federal government in Washington, DC, like a giant net restraining a

huge octopus with far-reaching tentacles. Because at the end of the day, the Constitution, contrary to those who would redefine it day-by-day to fit their latest political whims, does not create some sort of governmental lollipop factory to dole out all kinds of free goodies to the people.

Rather, the opposite is true. The Constitution, at its very core, is a great restraining device, specifically designed to restrain excessive, and potentially monstrous governmental power. It was, and still is, a great restraining device to prevent tyranny from ever ruling over the United States of America.

In Articles I – III, it restrains the federal government against itself through internal checks-and-balances between the Congress, the executive, and the courts.

In the Bill of Rights (The First Ten Amendments), its restraints go even further. Here the Constitution restrains government directly against the people. Altogether, there are some thirty-eight enumerated, “unalienable” rights listed in the Bill of Rights. These “unalienable rights,” freedom of speech, freedom of worship, etc., were considered by the founders to be granted from God, and not from government.

Sadly, most Americans, even most American lawyers, are not only ignorant of the Constitution, but could not list the unalienable or “fundamental” rights in the Bill of Rights if you put a gun to their head.

## **The Litmus Test of Our Constitutional Knowledge: The Five Fundamental Rights of the First Amendment**

Permit me to illustrate my point. Having practiced law for thirty years all over the country, I know a lot of lawyers. To test a basic constitutional knowledge amongst the bar, I have asked dozens of them this basic question:

“What are the five fundamental rights in the First Amendment of the Constitution?”

The answer to this question should be on the tip of every tongue of every third-grader in America – at least if we hope to preserve our Republic.

As you think of my question, consider your own knowledge of the Constitution. If the answer to my question, “What are the five fundamental rights in the First Amendment of the Constitution?” does not roll immediately from the tip of your tongue, then perhaps you, too, find yourself in the position of most Americans, being woefully ignorant, through no fault of your own, of the great document for which our boys spilled their blood at places like Normandy, Iwo Jima, and other battlefields around the world.

Back on point, of the many lawyers to whom I’ve posed this question, not a single one has been able to name all five fundamental rights of the First Amendment on the first go-round!

Some have gotten two or three right. A few, even four.

One lawyer mistook the Right to Bear Arms (set forth in the Second Amendment) as being part of the First Amendment. Wrong answer.

Two questions arise from all this. First, if lawyers, who in theory are supposed to be best trained in American law, can't even name the five fundamental rights in the First Amendment, what went wrong?

### **America's Law Schools' Dirty Little Secret The Constitution Is Not Taught**

Well here's a dirty little secret.

Law schools don't teach the Constitution. At least not directly. That's right. While all bar exams have a section on "Constitutional Law," and while all law schools have courses entitled "Constitutional Law," the truth is that in these classes, the Constitution itself is not required reading, nor required study, in most American law schools. Instead, "Constitutional Law" usually involves required reading of various opinions of the United States Supreme Court. They start with the landmark case of *Marbury v. Madison*, dating back to 1803. From there, law students must read, digest, and dissect all the great Supreme Court cases, and read the majority and dissenting opinions of those cases.

Now there's nothing wrong with that approach at all. By reading cases, law students learn legal reasoning (or in some cases the lack thereof), and the cases sometimes actually refer to parts of the Constitution.

But here's the problem with that case-law approach.

Isolated as the only method for studying constitutional law, the approach misses the forest for the trees, because law schools do not mandate either the study of or the memorization of the Constitution itself as part of the curriculum – but instead mandate only what the Supreme Court says about the Constitution. This would be like a seminary student studying the great sermons of Billy Graham, Peter Marshall and Charles Spurgeon, but never having to read the Bible itself, upon which those sermons are based.

As for me, personally, I've served as a Special Assistant United States Attorney, as a US Navy JAG Officer, as a military prosecutor, as a military lawyer at the Pentagon, and have appeared in state and federal courts in California, Texas, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia, have appeared before two state supreme courts, the United States Court of Appeals for the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit, and have filed two cases with the United States Supreme Court. After all that, and after having practiced law for thirty years, not once has my legal training actually required me to even read the Constitution, at least not in its entirety, let alone learn it and study its texts. What I've learned of it, I've had to learn largely on my own.

And yet, I've taken an oath to defend the Constitution, both as an attorney and as a naval officer. Query: How can we defend something if we don't even know what it says?

By the way, many of these politicians who talk about "our democracy," are attorneys by training.

So what are the five fundamental rights of the First Amendment?

Here they are:

Freedom of Worship

Freedom of Speech

Freedom of the Press

The Right to Peaceably Assemble

The Right to Petition the Government for  
Redress of Grievances

If you were able to rattle these five rights off without checking Google, good for you. But you are in an extreme minority. Most lawyers can't, and neither can most Americans. And remember, these are just five of some thirty-eight unalienable rights set forth in the Bill of Rights alone. Most of these Amendments, like the First Amendment, have multiple unalienable rights contained within them.

Here's a hard truth. The teaching of the Constitution has been a failure at every level at most schools, public and private, and in law schools all across the country.

**Learning the Constitution:  
A Modest Proposal &  
Call to Action**

Our national ignorance is inexcusable, and we must do something about it. The five fundamental rights should be as elementary to school children as eenie-meenie-miney-moe. Just as Jewish kids are required to learn the Torah as a prerequisite for Bar Mitzvah, no American student should be able to graduate from high school unless and until the

Constitution has been memorized, all seven articles and all twenty-seven amendments.

To accomplish this will require that we re-think our curriculum, both in public and private schools all across America. We will need to begin teaching the Constitution itself – not what some court says about it – from Kindergarten on upwards. The five fundamental rights, for example, could easily be learned by first graders. Each and every year after that, in the thirteen-year span from grades K-12, the Constitution must be taught, and taught, and taught again, until a rote understanding seeps into our students about who we are as a nation. Students should be rigorously tested on the Constitution each and every year that they are in school, and should learn to recite it.

Understanding the Constitution must be the culmination of a student's high school experience, and a fundamental understanding, through vigorous examination, must be a non-negotiable pre-requisite to graduation.

These steps should be part of the price of eternal vigilance that Jefferson called for to preserve and to keep our freedom. Teaching and learning the Constitution is part of the vision that we, as a nation, must focus upon, or surely we will perish.

President Ronald Reagan once asked a great rhetorical question. "If not us, then who? If not now, then when?" Here is the answer to the President's question. Now is the time, and we are the generation who must re-commit to the Constitution. Our failure to do so will place us on the road to tyranny.

## DON BROWN BIOGRAPHY

Don Brown, former U.S. Navy Jag officer and former Special Assistant United States Attorney is currently Charlotte author and attorney. During the early years of his career, Brown authored legal memoranda for the Secretary of the Navy where he served at the Pentagon.

Drawing from years of military and legal experience, Brown is the author of 12 books. The first nine were published through Zondervan/Harper Collins and are military suspense fiction action thrillers. The 11th was released on May 29 by Rowman & Littlefield. This particular book is Brown's first work of non-fiction....a military exposé entitled *Extortion 17: The Shootdown of Seal Team 6*. Brown's one work of historical fiction was published in 2014 in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Normandy invasion during WWII. Brown is also the author of an educational guide to his best-selling novel, *Treason*. The guide teaches basic constitutional principles with a focus on the Bill of Rights and freedom of religion. Two of Brown's novels have reached #1 on Amazon's International Bestseller list....2009 and 2010 respectively. His bestseller, *Treason*, written in 2003, is said to have predicted the Fort Hood terrorist attack which occurred six years after the book was written.





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Ray Sheppard—BCC Faculty

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