

THE INK QUILL

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Bladen Community College

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SPILLED INK

Mary Butler—BCC Alumna

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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
NASH HESTER: MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Ray Sheppard—BCC Faculty

THE INK QUILT

PROSE

Prose
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PROSE



12:31

Bryan Padilla—BCC Student

This is a chronicle of my experience in track my freshmen year. Why would I choose track? Well, my dad told me stories of his track career in Mexico, and how he and his brothers would run for hours a day in the mountainous region of Guanajuato. I wanted to carry out my family's tradition of running. No one told me how difficult and challenging it would be. I would soon find how competitive, intense, and exciting track really is. My journey would lead me to the most aggressive race I have ever experienced so far, conference: the final opportunity to qualify for regionals, the race that would show me nothing is worth working for if you are not giving it your all from a difficult beginning to a triumphant end. One race is nothing; it is the climb you go through to get to that point that counts. Therefore, before I tell the tale of conference, I give you the story of my climb.

I was too excited to think clearly; my heart was racing. A voice above me announced the beginning of track. Jumping from my seat, I raced out of the classroom to sign up. As I made my way down the stairs to the atrium, my smile diminished as I saw a crowd of students walking down the stairwell. I kept telling myself no one would stop me from regionals. Once I arrived at the gymnasium, the crowd congested its entrance. Jackson, a tall, slender figure blocked my way, and I cut in front of him.

He looked down on me and with a superior tone said, "You're too short for track."

My heart began to pound, but I said nothing. Events like these are what motivated me to push forward. A week later, track practice began. Around twenty-five students gathered for Coach Baker's opening speech. Our first drill would be a two-mile run and then some sprints. We waited at the starting line until coach blew his whistle, and then we were off. I finished in second place. That was the day I first met Cory. We became brothers and the fiercest of rivals during track.

Most runners would take a break during the weekend, so Coach Baker thought of a brilliant idea, "Murder Mondays." Dehydrated and exhausted, I collapsed on the grass after two 400-yard sprints.

My team lay on the grass beside me, until a playful, yet stern voice said, "Get up! You can't be tired already! That was just the warm-up!"

This was track, where we would purposefully run a few seconds slower to be punished with country miles. After all, this was much easier than our regular drills! When we ran a country mile, we jogged up and down the bleachers until we got to the end, ran around the fence backwards, and then ran up and down the bleachers on the other side, completing a mile while closing the loop.

Distance runners were the hardest working members of the track team. I would silently cry while racing my teammates due to the pain I was under. This continued for a couple of months. The constant destruction of my body from practice and track meets led me to find new ways of recovering. One day, out of desperation, I gathered almost

everything in the kitchen, and I put it in a blender: sweet potatoes, eggs, avocados, mushrooms, celery, broccoli; you name it. Breakfast was miserable for an entire three months. There was one reason why I had to keep going. I would become someone greater, someone who could inspire others to work towards their dreams.

After more than two months of constant training and competing, the final race to qualify for regionals arrived: conference. In the future, I would have a story to tell my kids about how hard work, persistence, and determination earned me a spot at regionals my freshmen year.

The chance to prove myself had come; the two-mile race was up next.

I found myself walking with a crowd to the starting line. The closer I got to the starting line, the weaker I felt.

A few seconds after we lined up, I heard a loud yell, “Get Ready!”

My mind was occupied with a cloud of wavering voices. Was I ready?

“Set!”

Everyone was counting on me. Cory was drafted for relays.

“GO!”

My mind went blank as a stampede of runners fought for space. After two laps, a half mile, runners were more distinguishable because the pain had slowed some down.

A few minutes later, my coach gave me my time for the first mile as I ran by, “Six minutes!”

I was in agony, but hearing this gave me a feeling of relief as 12:30 was the qualifying time for regionals. A mile and a half into the race, I was doing my best to keep up the pace. My vision was blurred; the exhaustion felt overwhelming. My eyes were tearing up, but still, I kept up the pace. Pushing myself, I lengthened my strides in the last lap. It was hard, my mouth was dry, and my legs were giving up. I was drowning. Half a lap left, my neck began having trouble supporting my head. I slowed down to catch my breath.

My school was cheering me on from all directions, “Let’s go, Bryan!”

With my last ounce of energy, I thrust myself unconsciously into every painful stride to maintain the pace. I ran as if the gates of heaven were in front of me. My legs were numb, but I managed to cross the finish line.

As I stopped myself from falling, I turned to my coach who was smiling as he asked, “Did you run that race?”

My dream had come true. I was certain I had qualified for regionals. With some help, I walked to the bench.

Then, a woman with a clipboard gave me my time, “Bryan Padilla, your time for the two-mile run is 12:31.”

I went mute for a moment.

“NO! I MADE IT! WHAT WAS ALL OF IT FOR?”

I was in denial; my mind was screaming though I could not speak a word. I was trying to hold back the tears.

No one told me how difficult failure would be. From that day forward, my eyes were open. I did not deserve to win, no matter how hard I worked for it. I had to earn a win by giving it my all throughout the entire race. I learned to never let pain distract me from my goal. If I had enough energy to walk after that race, then I had enough energy to make that last second count. I chose to slow down. What would have happened if I had gone the distance?



MY DUCK

Mary Anne Murphy—BCC Faculty

IS THERE ANY TRUTH TO THE ANCIENT ALIEN THEORY?

N. Frank Tolliver—BCC Student

Many of you might think that I have lost my mind. However, I sit here in sound body and mind prepared to present to you facts that may change your viewpoint. Regardless of what you believe in, there are things in this world that can't be explained. Massive structures, such as the pyramids of Egypt, were built with such precision that even today's technology can barely replicate. Giant stones moved great distances supposedly by using shear manpower. Ancient civilizations recorded several unexplained events, such as flying machines, weapons of mass destruction, and visitors that looked and dressed differently. In the beginning I was just like you, but now I believe without a shadow of a doubt that the ancient alien theory is real.

In today's society we see technological advancements that we never would have dreamed of just twenty years ago. Every year, these advancements in technology are coming progressively faster, doubling and tripling at a phenomenal rate. Well, what if I told you that this technology that seems so new to us today has been around for thousands of years and that ancient civilizations had access to the same knowledge and technology that we have in modern times? Before you stop reading this and go back to browsing on Facebook, consider these questions: How could ancient civilizations build massive structures like the Giza complex and Stonehenge using sticks, stone and shear man power? NASA spends a tremendous amount of time and resources strictly on the search for extraterrestrial life since there is

positive, documented proof of other earthlike planets with water and an atmosphere similar to ours. Some are considerably older than earth. Could this mean there are life forms and civilizations far older and more advanced than we are? As far-fetched as it may sound, it is hard to deny the possibility that the ancient alien theory is real. Our ancestors documented such events as far back as written history goes. The Bible, the Quran, and almost every ancient text share similar stories of unexplained and miraculous events. The only logical explanation is these people were visited by ancient astronauts who played an intricate part in what the ancients did.

In 2580 B.C., the pyramids of the Giza complex were built. Pretty much from the time they were constructed, man has been fascinated by them. The entire complex including the sphinx is considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. What makes these structures so fascinating to us is the size of the pyramids (Wolchover). The largest stands 481 feet high and 756 feet long on each side. Each stone used to build them weighs three tons. These people supposedly had only their health and strength, plus a few primitive tools made from wood and stone. It has been said that the Great Pyramid was erected in just twenty years, implying that these men were able to put one of these massive three ton stones into place every five minutes around the clock nonstop. What is even more amazing is how exactly and precisely they were built. The simple fact that they were able to build them is almost unimaginable. Engineers and architects of today have determined it would be very difficult for ancient Egyptians to replicate what they did 4500 years ago despite the heavy construction equipment and advanced tools to which we have access. Upon further study, we find

out that not only were they able to build these gigantic structures incredibly fast, they are also perfectly aligned with the three stars on Orion's belt in the constellation Orion where they believed their god came from (It Wasn't Possible). Today's computers, satellites, and super powerful telescopes could not have positioned these pyramids more precisely. "The base of the great pyramid is a square whose perimeter is equal to the circumference of a circle (π) with a radius equal to the great pyramid" (Bland). Such advanced mathematics could not have been available to them.

The U.S. government dedicated \$18.5 billion to NASA strictly for the search for extraterrestrial life (O'Callaghan). We hear stories all the time of UFO sightings and government cover-ups. Area 51 being one of the most famous, it is also one of the more recent. The reality is there have been stories of UFO sightings and visitors from other worldly beings for thousands of years.

One thing that we all know and can agree on is that the universe is a large space. I think we can also agree that at some point we have all looked up and wondered what's out there and if we really are alone. Through the advancement of telescope and satellite technology, combined with our increasing ability to travel farther and faster than ever before, we have learned that there are several planets either within our reach or at least in our visual range. Most of these planets are not capable to support life of any kind. Now, we are able to venture off our world to discover new planets, solar systems, and galaxies. We can see light years away from here. Of course, we know it is impossible to see and search the entire universe. That is the reason scientists narrowed their search. They now look in what they call "Habitable Zones." Planets in these "Habitable Zones" are

the right distance from their star and have the right temperatures, water, and an atmosphere to support life. NASA has already discovered such planets. On July 23, 2015, NASA's Kepler mission confirmed the first near-earth sized planet in the habitable zone around a sun very similar to our star (NASA).

The U.S. government spending \$18.5 billion on the space program, the search for life, and the discovery of earth-like planets in "Habitable Zones" prove that we are not alone. According to the ancients as well as to modern day science, we have never been alone. Ancient astronauts have been visiting this planet for thousands of years, leaving behind evidence along the way.

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FAVORITE PLACE

Greyson Heustess—BCC Student

My favorite place to go to is the Arkansas flooded timber. All is silent early in the mornings, and the air is freezing cold. The water is so calm and peaceful, and the beautiful sunrise shines through the trees. The woodies are squealing, the mallards quacking, and the pintails whistling. The ducks are flying through the trees above your head and cupping up to splash right into the variety of food and space. The wind whistles through the timber. It is honestly just a beautiful place.

Then, all of a sudden, shooting time starts. Boom! Boom! Boom! Three big birds go down. Then you hear the chuckling of the hunters followed by a group of a dozen teal cupped up swaying through the trees heading straight for the decoy spread. As you hear a hunter's two favorite words, "Cut 'em," gun smoke fills the flooded timber, and birds lie peacefully on the water. Splash! The dogs start their retrieving, bringing these gorgeous drake green winged teal back to the blind.

The hunters laugh, crack jokes, and just enjoy their time. The boat ride back after they kill their limit of ducks is always cold, but also rewarding. There are piles of birds that the hunters will enjoy at dinner. When they finally get back to the campground, the hunters enjoy the reward and are back in the timber the following morning. The Arkansas flooded timber is my favorite place not only because I love duck hunting, but also because of how pretty it is.

FRIENDS WITH A MONSTER

Ciara Blanks—BCC Student

She thought she could win the battle. Her heart raced as she grabbed him by the shoulders, their eyes locked, and his sly gaze had her in a trance. She thought she knew all his tricks, but this was no ordinary game. His fierce stare overwhelmed her, and her hands fell from his body. He wrapped his arms around her and planted a soft kiss on her cheek.

"You know I always win."

She looked away from him and stared off into the distance.

"Let me go."

As he held on tighter, she reached into her pocket and brushed her fingers against what was inside.

"I said let me go."

He let out a little chuckle and kissed her again. But this time his action did not go unpunished. She whipped out the object from her pocket, a knife, and blood trickled from his jaw as she cut him with it.

"Why...why did you do that?"

"Because that's what you've been doing to me since I met you."

She lifted her shirt just enough to reveal her chest. The skin

in front of her heart was a sickly blue color. Many scars surrounded the area. It looked like someone tried to patch her up as if she were a rag doll.

"When you lie to me, a new scar appears." He knelt down to her. She turned away from him. He sighed.

"Is there anything I can do to make it up to you?"

"Leave, go far away, and erase my existence from your memory."

The pigment drained from his face.

"No, please... I love you more than you could ever imagine."

She glanced at him, tears in her eyes.

"Why do you keep hurting me then?"

He gave her a sinister look and reached for her chest. Before she could block his hands, they had already scratched the surface of her scars. She rolled on the ground, wincing in pain. He made horrible grunting sounds as he rubbed his temples. She stared intently at him. The grunts turned into screams as horns began growing from his temples. His face turned bright red, along with the rest of his body. Thick, jagged claws emerged from his fingers and toes. The most gruesome of all was the tail that formed from behind him. It wrapped around him like a snake.

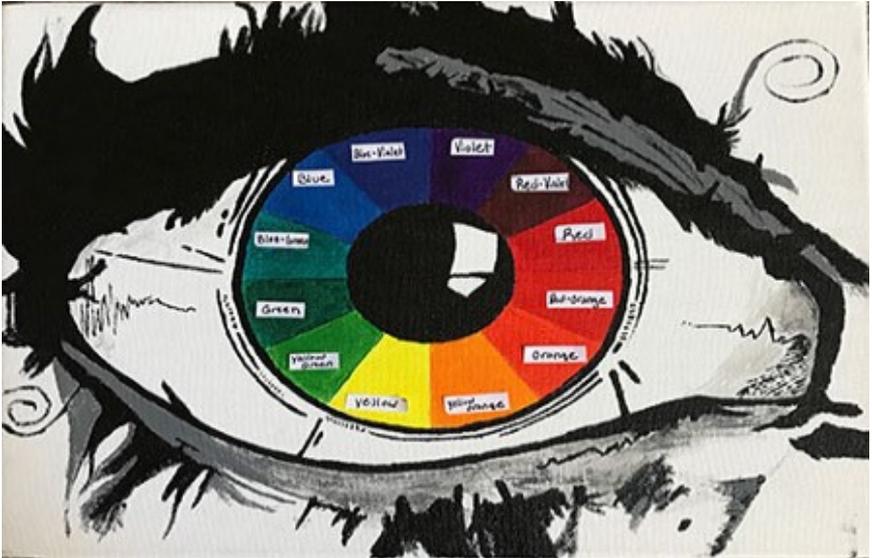
"I'm so glad you can see me in my true form."

She looked in terror, her body trembling as he slowly approached her.

"Don't be afraid..."

Her voice broke as she spoke, "Devil! You're the devil!"

He brought his face to hers, and whispered, "Don't pretend like you didn't know."



COLOR WHEEL EYE

Faith Johnson—BCC Student

LOST

Carina Walker—BCC Student

On June 6, 2017, I was able to log into my future for the first time. I woke up that morning feeling like a young child eager for the first day of school after an adventurous summer vacation. I felt excitement and a sense of pride in myself, a feeling that I had not been able to genuinely experience in years. Having spent nearly ten years away from constructive classroom time, I was excited to rectify the mistakes of my past and begin my journey toward a new life. As I stared at the computer screen that bright morning, I found myself overwhelmed with emotion. The seemingly simple accomplishment of enrolling in summer school at my local community college was a major accomplishment for me. This accomplishment was my chance to prove myself. I felt as if I was on the brink of self-reinvention! My enrollment in the summer session of 2017 was a mini milestone to me and my family.

If I were to say that the day started off like any other, then I would be fabricating an elaborate tale. In fact, June 6, 2017, was unlike any other day in my life. Perhaps my parents felt the same joy and excitement the day I came into this world, or on the day I spoke my first words. We may never know because that is merely speculation. I am certain, though, that if any person experienced joy like this, it had to be in relation to me. Personally, I find it unfathomable that any person has felt such utter excitement over the commencement of such a chore as school work, but there I was grinning from ear to ear waiting to be asked simply, “What are you doing tonight?” so that I may childishly respond, “Sorry, I’m busy; I have homework.”

As I logged into my student account for the first time to view a class schedule, I immediately began to click and toggle through

every page and resource that my student platform afforded me. I reviewed each class syllabus with remarkable attention to detail, and transcribed every assignment due date into my new planner. I familiarized myself with the expectations of each of my professors, and gained an understanding for each type of assignment requirement I would have. Each of my professors included an introduction of themselves for the class, but, of course, I felt as if each introduction was created specifically for me. It was my opinion that all of my professors knew of my enrollment and possessed their own personal excitement for the work I was to produce. I honestly felt as if all eyes were on me!

The first assignment I was to complete included a detailed review of a scholarly psychology article, followed by the chance to produce my very own acrylic painting. Both assignments would allow me the opportunity to not only express myself creatively, but also gage my ability to produce. I had been away from constructive classroom instruction for nearly ten years! Only slightly intimidated by the tasks that awaited me, I confidently reminded myself of my goals and reassured myself of my abilities. Having tackled my first college self-pep-talk, I felt as if I were the powerful goddess depicted on the cover of my art class text book.

A self-proclaimed motivational speaker, I self-assuredly toggled through each assignment and organized my thoughts. The excitement and anticipation I experienced, waiting for school to begin, was nothing compared to the surge of emotions I felt then. Finally, I picked up my pen, and I began to complete the scholarly article review, only pausing to review my work. I was not only impressed with my latent, may be even rusty, skill set, but I was also reminded of my love for writing. I enthusiastically jumped right back into my work, before eventually reminding myself that I was merely writing a review of the article, and I had not been

assigned with writing a scholarly article myself. Upon completing the assignment, I felt like myself again! The feeling of productivity is indescribable, and my self-esteem was the first beneficiary on my new productivity policy!

As night fell and I concluded my chores for the day, I humbly reminded myself that the day's chores had included homework. One last time, I logged into my student account simply for the gratification of seeing a class schedule assigned to me and just to see my name as a part of a student roster. Once again overwhelmed by emotion, I toggled through each page of the student platform. I read disclaimers and copyright messages; I logged out and logged back in, which were all silly actions on my part just to verify the reality of my enrollment. At that point, I realized that my life had changed. I realized that, in one day, I had begun to correct mistakes that I had allowed to haunt me for years. I realized that I again had a chance to be great.

My college career on June 6, 2017 changed my life. My accomplishment reminded me of what it feels like to achieve, and reminded me of the ambitious spirit and nature I have always possessed. My life completely changed in a day, and looking back, I can truly say I was in fact my own biggest road block all along. My sense of pride in myself has returned, and my self-esteem is at an all-time high; I can confidently turn down frivolous plans because of homework assignments and because a degree is in my near future. As I drifted to sleep on June 6, 2017 and I thought of my journey and the choices I made along the way, I was not ashamed. Rather, I was proud that although I may have strayed away from my path, in the end, I was able to find my way, and I am no longer lost.



MY LIFE IS NOT THE MONA LISA

Amanda Ismail—BCC Student

My life is not the *Mona Lisa*. It lacks beautiful shades of memories painted onto the pristine canvas of my existence to create a flawless portrait. It is Vincent van Gogh's ominous *Starry Night*, eerie and haunting, filled with dark strokes of memories and occasional moments of brightness. How do I shuffle through those dark strokes and find one with more impact upon my life than the others? The single dark stroke that painted its biggest blow to me would be the death of my older brother, Michael Anthony Stull. This one event changed me in more ways than I could have ever imagined, and, even though it stole a piece of me, it also gave me much in return.

To understand how this impacted me so deeply, it must be known how devastating it was to lose my older brother, and to do that, I have to share how amazing he was, and exactly who Michael Anthony Stull was. If this name means nothing, it is because not too many people knew my brother. The ones that did only referred to him as one of the "bad apples" or "too smart for his own good." Let me introduce my brother.

Michael Anthony Stull was a genius—well, three points below the IQ classification of genius. This was impressive to me, and I admired his intelligence greatly. It made me want to be more like him. I wanted to listen to System of a Down and Linkin Park because he listened to them. I wanted to read *The Lord of the Rings* because he read it. It made me feel proud and cool to see him come into my first-grade

classroom to fix my teacher's computer when he should have been in his own class down the hallway. The only thing that I did not admire about my brother was his life.

My sweet brother was also not gifted with a *Mona Lisa* life. He struggled with feeling inexplicably alone and abandoned by his loved ones who did not know how to handle him. He was misunderstood by everyone, and he faced these terrible challenges alone. This life that he was burdened with would be the end of him.

As a young child, I never fully understood the havoc that was always happening in our home. I remember that my brother never lived with us for long because our parents were always sending him away to boys' homes and boot camps. I simply knew that when he was home, or when we visited him, I always wanted to be around him.

Michael was gentle and kind, and he could make the grumpiest old man laugh. He was intelligent and gifted in ways that I would never fully understand. He was also sad and tormented with demons that I never wanted to acknowledge. One demon wore the mask of my father's face, and for reasons beyond my comprehension, Father hated my brother.

I remember him being cruel to Michael, calling him names and beating him. I would want to help so badly, but I would be too frightened. So, with music playing, I would take my crying little sister and go hide underneath my bed. These are memories that I wish desperately to forget, but they seem to be permanently implanted in my head. Nightmares of these events still seem to creep into my subconscious, even now.

This caused my brother to go into a downward spiral of acting out and misbehaving. He would get into physical altercations with my other brother, Kenny, and my older sister, Cara. Running away became a skill that he adapted to swiftly and did quite frequently. He would run away from home and return later to wake me up at midnight to cook me turkey legs that he would buy, or rather steal, from Food Lion. He always took me fishing or let me listen to a new System of a Down song. He never forgot about me.

Michael died on February 2, 2005. He was seventeen years old. He passed out with a plastic bag over his head and suffocated. This was not a suicide, but the result of huffing. Huffing is a type of substance abuse that involves inhaling fumes from household substances to experience a high.

It was a typical night when we found out what had happened to Michael. My little sister and I were pretending to be asleep while giggling under our covers with flashlights.

"NO!"

We stopped giggling. We could feel the air being sucked out of our house at the sound of my mother's scream. Something bad had happened. Being the young and naive twelve-year old girl that I was, the worst thing that I could imagine happening was that our dad was leaving us again.

How juvenile I was. I instructed my little sister to stay in bed so that she would not have to overhear the news of our father leaving again and I crept down the hallway. It was raining that night, and it seemed as though there was a flash of lightning with every demure step that I took. As I think

back on it now, God was probably trying to warn me and tell me to go hide back underneath my covers.

I should have listened.

Peering around the corner, I looked into the living room and saw a short and stout woman standing at our front door with a pained and uncomfortable look on her wrinkled face. My mother had knelt down before her with her face in her hands and sobs racking her body. Fear snaked its evil way up my spine and dispersed throughout my body.

I knew that something terrible had happened because my mother and father both left the house and seemed to forget that they were leaving my sister and me at home. Our parents never left us at home alone. I looked frighteningly at our red door for them to return.

"What's goin' on?"

My little sister looked so tiny and fragile in her pink and blue satin nightgown. Her petite seven-year old face looking up to me for answers that I did not have. What do I say? How do I ease her fear when my own was choking me?

"I don't know. Let's go back to bed."

I took her tiny cold hand and led her into my bed. She held her fluffy, stuffed dog, and I clutched my beloved Raggedy Anne doll. Neither of us went to sleep. We stayed awake listening to the drum of thunder and the patter of the rain on the roof.

It seemed like an eternity before we saw the blinding

lights of a car shine in our window. I did not move an inch. I did not take a single breath. I squeezed my little sister and my doll to me, and I prayed that our mother and father would not come to our room. If they did not come to our room, it meant that it could not be something that was terrible.

I could hear the front door open slowly, but I did not hear it close. My eyes stayed glued to my bedroom door, willing our parents to stay away. I was afraid to even blink my eyes, and even when they began to burn, I could not risk it. My tiny heart was beating like the wings of a hummingbird, and I felt that if I made any sudden movements, it would take off in flight.

My father's figure suddenly filled our doorway.

"Come with me. Your mother has to tell you something."

My father generally never showed much emotion. That night was not any different. Neither his facial expression nor his tone of voice gave anything away.

My sister and I climbed out of my bed and followed our father into our living room where our mother was sitting. I could only describe the feeling on the back of my neck as the crawling sensation of spiders. It made goose bumps break out all over my spindly arms. I wanted to turn around and go back underneath my covers.

My father brought us over to the couch and sat us on each side of him. I looked over and stared at the woman who should be our mother. This woman looked like the ghost of our mother. Her strawberry blond hair clung

damply to her pale and chilled face. Her normally crystal clear blue eyes were now a dull grey and bloodshot. She was looking at us with a destroyed and helpless look that I pray every day to never experience myself.

"Something very bad happened."

A single tear rolled down her freckled spattered cheek as she said this.

A fist sized lump formed deep in the back of my throat. It was hard to breathe, and every muscle in my body tensed to the breaking point. My body was shivering, but my cheeks felt like they were burning on fire.

"Your brother Michael had a very bad accident, and he died."

I shattered. I ceased to be a person anymore. I was flesh and cells and blood. There was no soul or heart. The world around me no longer existed, and all sound was muted. All I could hear was the pieces of my heart falling apart. My body instantly froze over and numbed.

Dead.

Dead meant never coming back.

Dead meant never playing me System of a Down songs.

Dead meant never hugging me again.

Dead meant forever.

My eyes remained on the ghost of my mother, but she was not who I saw. I saw Michael. I saw his shiny, sky-blue eyes and his buck toothed smiling face that was only starting to get some peach-fuzz on it. I would never see that face in

person again.

In the distance, I could hear my little sister crying, and my mother moved to go comfort her. The room came back into focus as I stood up and walked to my room hauntingly. Once there, I went to my closet, sank into the dark abyss, and shut myself inside. In the darkness, I could imagine for a moment that it was all a dream.

I lay on my side and wrapped my body around my Raggedy Anne doll. The plug that held my tears back vanished, and the salty wetness flowed freely. My chest constricted painfully, and I knew that it was the pain of my breaking heart. I clutched my chest in an attempt to keep the pieces together. I could not catch a breath, and I was afraid that I was dying as well. My body felt frail, and the violent sobs made it feel as though I was going to snap in half. I wanted to run away from the pain. I wanted Michael to come into that dark closet and to wrap his arms around me. I wanted him to smile at me and to tell me that it was all a cruel joke.

"Come start cleaning. We're going to have people coming over."

I looked up through the glaze of tears in my eyes and saw my father looking down at me. Like a zombie, I went to the kitchen, and started on the dishes with those tears in my eyes.

Later that night, my mother called my other brother, Kenny, who was away on a construction job. She told him what had happened, and he rushed back home. I woke up that night to him pulling me into his arms. For a moment, I

thought that it was Michael.

"No, Amanda. It's me, Kenny."

I looked at him with a longing that nearly tore me apart. I wanted him so badly to be Michael, but Michael was gone.

My mother had to wait until the next day to call my older sister, Cara. She was in the army then, and stationed in Korea. I forgot much else from that day.

Over the next few days, people that never showed us any interest visited to give us their sympathy and various fried foods. As if a fried drumstick could heal the wounds made from Michael's death.

I despised everyone then. I hated the ones who looked at me with pity. I hated the ones who told me that he was in a better place. I hated the girl in school that said that she understood how I felt because her friend, Michael, killed himself, and did not realize that she was talking about my brother. I hated the people that kept saying that it was a suicide. I hated my father, who said that it was Michael's fault for making us spend all of this money and do all of this shopping.

I hated them all. I hated them because they were alive, and Michael was dead. I hated everything for a year.

On the anniversary of my brother's death, I found myself sitting at his graveside with his picture in my hands. His smiling face was looking up at me, and it gave me a warmth that I missed desperately. It made me realize that he would not want me to live with hate in my heart. He would want

me to live my life to the fullest, and to honor his memory by being happy.

I look back now, and think that he would be proud of me. I do not carry hate anymore. I do not judge people the way others did to him when he was alive. He made me become a better person. It is for Michael that I cherish everyone in my life. You never know when they may not be there anymore.



GATLINBURG, TENNESSEE

David Ivey—BCC Student

NO MEANS NO

Allana Carroll—BCC Student

As has become increasingly prominent in the media as of late, there still remains a massive gap between men and women. In October of 2017, *The New York Times* released an article where twelve women accused Harvey Weinstein, a famous film producer, of various degrees of sexual assault. By stepping forward, these dozen women opened a floodgate. It is stated that “1 in 4 women have experienced sexual assault on a college campus” (Victims of Sexual Violence). Most women are aware that, if they choose to accuse someone of sexual assault, their allegations will most likely be swept under the rug, especially if the perpetrator is a rich white man. When the twelve women accused Weinstein, it encouraged other women to do the same. Eighty-four women have accused Weinstein of some form of sexual assault or harassment. Other women have stepped forward and accused numerous other important political figures, business men, and male celebrities of sexual assault. The sheer number of women who experience sexual assault exemplifies that men still think that they have ownership over women. Furthermore, there are still doctors, lawyers, judges, actors, politicians, teachers, and CEOs who have committed sexual assault and have not been punished. Many of these men will not see any consequences because they are in a position of authority and power. These men have the connections and reputation to absolutely ruin anyone who gets in their way .

Not only is sexual assault being reported at a terrifying number for all women, it is even worse for women of color.

The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence says that “Native American women are 3.5 times more likely to be a victim of sexual assault than any other race or ethnicity.” Many women become ashamed of their sexual assault, even though it was not their fault. They internalize their feelings about the sexual assault in fear that they will lose the respect of their families or their religious congregation. The number of sexual assaults that get reported is extremely low. However, it gets worse with the statistics of women of color. Many women will not report their assault because of a distrust of the police. In fact, many undocumented women will refuse to file a report due to the extremely valid fear of being deported and losing their children and their home. When women do not want to file a report, most of the time they will skip the hospital, too. Almost all women know that if their attacker holds a position of power over them, their claim will likely be dismissed quickly and their name and reputation tarnished. However, it is important for people to know their rights. If they go to the hospital after a sexual assault, the hospital is required to contact the police. It is up to the patients whether or not they actually want to file a report. In no way can anyone ever be forced to talk to the police. If patients want to file a report, but do not want for their name to be on the report, there is a way for them to file the report anonymously. By filing an anonymous report, the patients’ names are not recorded on the documents, leaving their identity a secret to everyone except the nurses. In addition, there are also circumstances when a patient would not have to pay the hospital for its service. “You cannot be billed for the medical exam, sexual assault evidence collection, or preventative medications as long as the crime is reported to law enforcement, even anonymously. You or your

insurance company could be billed for treatment of other injuries. Some of those costs can be reimbursed by a state victims' compensation fund" (Alessi & Dissell). However, it is recommended that a person who has recently experienced sexual assault go to the hospital. That way, the person's injuries can be taken care of and evidence can be collected; thus, whenever they decide to file a report, the evidence to support their claims is available.

Women have taken massive strides forward by finally having the opportunity to stand their ground and call out everyone who has done them wrong. However, it does not change the fact that for all the progress society seems to have made, people still seem to lack the basic understanding of consent. Society also seems to have a problem with recognizing that women do not owe anyone anything in regards to their body and their time. The only way humanity can advance is to listen to women and educate themselves on the problems that all women face.

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NO VALUE

by Sharron Thomas—BCC Faculty

I walked into her home, now reduced to one room. She was safely cocooned with all she needed, with her most cherished belongings and the recognition that all her needs would be provided by the loving family she had reared. It was there I noticed several broken shells. Why in the world? This lady and her husband were known for liking china figurines, antiques, and other nice things. Why would she want these? There is no value to them.

Several days later, the thought came to me. *Hmmm...the shells had no value, broken, chipped, BUT they were the remnants of a family trip to the beach for her 80th birthday.* Her great-granddaughters and grandsons were there.

Hours of laughter in a whole week-end carved in time especially for her, bringing memories of her times with her husband, daughters, and grandchildren....

Times reminiscent of awakening to the view of the endless horizon of the ocean; with eggs, sausage, bacon, and coffee wafting through the air...

Times of watching her girls enjoy the sunshine and the grandchildren growing from toddlers playing in the sand to the times of bikinis and iPods filled with music in their ears... to the times when her own daughters became grandmothers, and family trips were still important enough to be carved into a moment in time...

Times of days filled with joy, loud voices, talking over one

another, staying up late talking of days gone by, and the always necessary family devotion at the end of the day...

Times of loss of her love, the death of the patriarch of the family, and the deeply emotional push to see family fun continue in spite of the huge hole created by loss of the glue.... Times of reorganization after his loss, times of great-grandchildren bringing new life to the future and hope for a better tomorrow even without him.

Little shells, broken, but priceless in the eyes of a child who is beginning the family adventures to the third generation of her breakfasts, parties, cooking, vacations, and family devotions. She is the matriarch. So the shells may have no value. Indeed, they do not, for they are priceless!



CHERISH EVERY SUNSET

Hartley Storms—BCC Student

INTERPRETING FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

Jesus Ramos Pacheco—BCC Student

Being a high school senior at eighteen years of age and having the opportunity to interpret in Spanish for a victim of a crime to an investigator of a police department is very exciting, but at the same time an eye opener to reality; anyone can be a victim of a crime at any time or any place. This was a time in my life that I will never forget. This was the start of interpreting for law enforcement. I had always dreamed of having this opportunity to interpret in Spanish, and when the day finally came for my first interpretation, I was prepared.

I had just started doing ride-along with the Bladen County Sheriff's office when this incident took place. I remember it was a sunny Tuesday afternoon in the month of May. I was at my house doing some college homework when all of a sudden, I got a phone call from a deputy of Bladen County Sheriff's office. I instantly knew that something was wrong.

I answered my phone and the deputy asked, "Jesus, where are you? Are you busy at the moment?"

I replied, "I'm just doing some college homework. Is everything all right?"

"No, we just had a break in at a house and the victim was assaulted. He neither speaks nor understands English; I need you to come to this location, so you can interpret in Spanish for the victim and give this information to an investigator."

"Yes sir, where is the location?"

"It's near the Paul R. Brown School. I need you to get here as fast as you can. If anyone stops you on the way, let them know that you are about to do some work for the Bladen County Sheriff's office and Elizabethtown Police Department."

"Yes sir, I'm on my way. Give me ten minutes," I said.

"All right, thank you. I will be waiting for you," the deputy responded.

As the cell phone call ended, I said to myself, "Today is the day I finally get to interpret." I immediately started changing and grabbed the keys to my truck.

I told my parents about the cell phone call I had just received and the incident that had just taken place. I then left my driveway and started to head towards the location. There was not a lot of traffic, so I sped through town. I started preparing myself mentally, telling myself that this is what I've been waiting for. When I got closer to the location, I saw all the patrol cars.

The deputy was there, wearing his shiny black boots and his star-shaped badge, which stood out from the rest of the officers' shield-like badges. As soon as I parked my truck and got out, all the officers turned towards me. The deputy greeted me and thanked me for coming. He told me about the incident that had taken place involving one Hispanic male victim and three unidentified suspects. The suspects had broken into the victim's home and assaulted him before running away with an undisclosed amount of money and other items. The deputy also mentioned to me that they had one suspect in custody, but the other two had gotten away.

While we walked towards the victim, I saw an officer taking the handcuffed suspect to the back of his patrol vehicle. I recognized him from school. He played on the junior varsity team. The deputy and I arrived on the porch of the victim's house, where the victim and the investigator were. The deputy introduced me to the investigator; we shook hands and exchanged names. The investigator wanted me to ask the victim what took place and if he could describe the suspects and the clothes they were wearing.

I turned to the victim; he was in his sixties wearing a blue t-shirt with work pants. His arms were bruised, and his left eye was swollen. His lip was cut up, and he had dried up blood around his nose and mouth. I could see in his face that he was relieved to see me because I would be able to understand him as he explained what he had been through. I felt everyone's eyes on me, but I was determined to do a good job. I asked the victim what had happened. He had gone outside to cool off because he didn't have an air conditioner. He had already seen the suspects walking down the road, but he didn't think much about it. He lay on his couch and soon fell asleep only to be awoken by a sound of glass shattering in the back of the house. He got up and when he looked in the back, he saw someone running. As soon as he tried to go inside his house, he was confronted by two individuals who assaulted him, robbed him of his cash, and left him on the ground for a few minutes before he could get up and call 911.

While I was listening to the victim I was upset, but I could not show my emotions because I had to be professional. I thought to myself why "would anyone do this to another human being." But I was glad I was able to talk to the victim and assured him that I was there to help him. I also asked the victim if he remembered the type of clothing they were

wearing, but he said he did not. I interpreted this information to the investigator, and he started to take notes on his notepad. Then he asked if the victim had seen those individuals prior to this day, which was not the case. I shared with the investigator that nothing else was missing from inside the house and nothing else was broken besides the window that was damaged.

The investigator gave the victim his card so that he would call the investigator if he remembered anything else and the investigator would call me. The victim asked me to thank the investigator and asked if he could be updated on the other two suspects. I let the investigator know, and he agreed wholeheartedly. The victim thanked the investigator and me before heading inside his home.

The investigator thanked me and said he would be contacting me in the future if he needed my help again. He then added, "Once you turn twenty-one, you need to come work with us. We need a bilingual individual like you."

As I thanked the investigator for the opportunity, we exchanged numbers and talked for a few more minutes before the rest of the officers that were there approached me and started thanking me. As the rest of the officers got in their vehicles and started to leave the scene, I got in my truck and sighed, saying to myself, "This has been an unforgettable day."

At the end of the day, I had finally accomplished one of my dreams. It was such a great experience that I was able to learn from. I had felt really bad for the victim because he was defenseless in the situation, but there will always be bad

people in this world and someone has to be the voice for individuals like that victim. I am glad I was able to help the victim and the investigator. I was also glad to meet new officers that day.



**ABOVE GRUTAS DE TOLANTONGO,
HIDALGO**

Jennifer Munoz—BCC Student

THE ANCIENT BOOK OF VITALITY

James Little—BCC Student

Theo Baros awakened in a dense and humid forest. Fog surrounded every direction. As he saw it creeping closer, he picked up the book from his lap, flipped through the pages to chapter one, and began to read hastily. He was distressed, but it was impossible to tell. His facial expression hadn't changed since his mother, Margaret, had passed away. The sky darkened as grey clouds began to suffocate the sunlight. Then he began to read aloud, "Father, come to me. I know you are close!" Lightning began to strike as rain poured fiercely. Theo's eyes flickered as his body slumped into the wet soil. His mind began to unravel the past.

Theo's father, Ron, came home early from his shift at the local saw mill to take his family on a fishing trip that he had planned for some time. He greeted his loving wife at the bus stop at three o'clock on the dot, Monday through Friday in order to walk Theo home. They lived relatively close to one block away from the community bus stop. Theo embraced his loving family with open arms. As they walked along the smoothly paved sidewalk, he grasped their hands firmly. A caring parent was on each side. He felt as if he was living in a dream. Endearment exploded in his heart.

He would usually walk home briskly, but with his father and mother present, he wanted to caress this moment. The moment shattered the existence of time. Smiles embraced their faces as the spring weather comforted their hearts. In the far distance, the sound of a train released a pleasant

rumble. Theo noticed a crow perched on a vehicle's side view mirror; it was scratching violently against the driver's side window; the sound made his bones shiver. The crow began cawing loudly as if it was in distress; perhaps it was trying to escape from a predator. Corruption had not yet settled within this ray of sunshine. It was a challenge for misery to claw its way into the family's spirit. A buzzing rattle came from Ron's pocket, incoming was a phone call with dreadful news.

"Ron, I'm sorry to have to be the one to tell you this, but your mother was in a terrible accident." The voice sounded firm, but discreet. His hand began to shake vigorously as he received the news. The family lawyer was a compassionate man. He attended many of their gatherings, a lifetime friend of many in their small town.

"Tell me it is not true, Sam," Ron said. He sounded hoarse from the constant shouting at the mill. The deafening machines required them to yell while communicating.

Sam replied, "I'm sorry, Ron. I know your father's passing was such a shocking incident." Ron's father passed away not too long before his mother. His death was still under investigation, and they were beginning to carry on without his presence. Ron acknowledged Sam's concern for the family's wellbeing.

"How, Sam?" he questioned.

Sam responded, "It is still undetermined."

“Thank you then. I will have to speak with you another time, my dear friend.” He ended the phone call by slamming the flip phone, and then slid the phone back into the pocket of his trousers. Tears began to mask his eyes. He released Theo’s hand from his and looked towards the horizon.

“What is it, honey?” Margaret spoke concerned. She was frightened; their emotional wounds had yet to heal. She grabbed his hands with intentions of obtaining his attention.

His eyes caught hers, and he answered, “Mother has passed.” Ron reached out to hold his family. Theo and Margaret quickly constricted their arms around Ron. His family’s embrace comforted his suffering slightly. As the family walked home in silence, their heads sank to the ground. The day began to fade as death encroached their misfortune.

Once the family settled down at home, rain began to pour against their tin roof fiercely. It was almost deafening. Theo’s parents insisted that he go upstairs to play, while they gathered their thoughts about the shocking news. Margaret and Ron sat on opposite sides of the room: Ron on his black leather recliner, Margaret in the wooden rocking chair that her grandfather had built for her. Theo had climbed the stairs before they were situated in the living room. As he played with his ninja turtle set, he was confused. They had not yet explained to him what was going on. He noticed a shadow cast onto the wall where his bookshelf sat against. The figure was of a large bird. Theo looked over his shoulder and noticed that it was familiar to the crow he saw earlier. The bird began to claw at his

window. As the crow started to caw, he heard his mother scream from downstairs.

“Theo, call 911; your father is having a seizure!” Margaret was yelling at the top of her lungs.

Theo came rushing down the stairs with the portable house phone against his ear. The dispatcher was on the phone before he reached the bottom of the stairwell. This was the first time Ron had ever had a health issue in their twenty plus years of marriage. Margaret was holding Ron against the hard wood floor of their living room. Margaret began crying frantically; she didn’t know what to do. She held his head in her lap to prevent him from smashing his skull into the floor. As the dispatcher took information from Theo, Theo was staring at his father’s vigorously shaking body that lay on the floor.

Shortly after Theo hung up the phone, Ron began to calm down. He lay there, unconscious and limp. Ron was sweating profusely. Theo and his mother struggled to move his body onto their living room couch. He was a heavy-set man. Margaret turned to look at her son. She could see that he too was terrified by what just happened. She placed her hand on his cheek; the tears on her face began to dry as he spoke, “It will be okay mother; daddy is strong.”

The rain stopped, and the sound of sirens filled their ears. The paramedics were almost there; their sirens were blaring with speed. But it was too late, the ancient evil had found a way into their home. Before the paramedics could knock on the door, Ron awakened. Margaret asked Ron if he was okay.

“Yes, Margaret, I am okay,” he replied.

“We were worried about you; you fell down to the floor from the couch and began shaking tremendously,” she said with concern. Margaret started again before he could reply, “Do you remember anything?”

“Yes, I was holding my father’s hand before he passed away,” Ron began to explain to her what he saw. “We were in a cornfield and there was a massive number of crows surrounding us in the sky, all cawing in sync. My father had begun coughing and he pulled a long black feather from his mouth. After he handed me the feather, he slipped away into the afterlife. The crows above us flew away simultaneously.”

Once Ron finished explaining his dream, an itch came from the back of his throat. His lungs were filled with pain as he began to cough. The pain brought tears to his eyes. As he covered his mouth, he could feel something crawling from his lungs and up his esophagus. He reached in his mouth, as far as his mouth would allow his fist to go. His natural reflexes kicked in; the feeling of his fingers down his throat made him gag instantly. Ron was able to finally grab ahold of what was coming out of his body. He pulled a small black feather out of his mouth. He stared at everyone in the room. The paramedics had just breached the door, and his family stared at him in disbelief. A hideous cawing noise came from the doorway; the paramedics had left the door wide open. Everyone turned to look at a group of crows; they were all staring in Ron’s direction.

Theo awakened dazed; the words he shouted from the ancient book had shaped the atmosphere once more. The

sun was gleaming down on his bare face. He could sense a figure walking slowly towards him. The features reminded him of his father. It was dark haired and had a thick physique. It looked as if it was wearing all black, and that something was covering its face. A group of crows were cawing in the distance; he looked towards the sky. They became inaudible as the figure reached him. Theo was stunned; it was no man, but a human sized animal. Theo realized that the creature was a six-foot-tall crow. Its dark eyes pierced through his as he began to tremble at the sight of this gigantic creature. It was as black as the night. Theo looked down, and the book was still clasped in his hands. The pages had been turned to chapter two.



TENNIS, ANYONE?

Diane Vitale—BCC Staff

CHRISTMAS ANGELS

Kimberly Edwards—BCC Student

It was a cold rainy night in December of 2012. I had just left from work in the hospital in Lumberton and was meeting my husband at Wal-Mart to finish Christmas shopping. I was not really in the holiday spirit; my mother had passed away ten years before. Christmas was her favorite holiday, and I was always emotional during Christmas. This Christmas was even worse. My oldest daughter had run away to her father's. I just didn't have the Christmas spirit in me, but I knew I had three other younger children, and I had to cheer up and finish shopping. My husband was pushing me to finish, but I was finding every reason not to go. I was pregnant and tired. I just didn't want to be around people. I wanted to go home, crawl in bed, and go to sleep.

I was sitting in my Jeep in Wal-Mart parking lot, waiting on my husband to get there with the kids. I was thinking how I wish my mother was still alive; I wanted her to meet my three younger children and my unborn baby. She would tell me how to deal with my oldest daughter. I started to cry, asking God why he had to take her so soon. I needed her here with me. I knew my younger children would have loved her. She would have spoiled them to the core as she did with my older two children. My heart broke for my younger children that they didn't know what it was like to have grandparents since both my parents and my in-laws had passed away before my younger children were born. The more I thought, the more tears just flowed. I asked God to give me a sign, something to know my mother was watching after me and that I was doing everything right with my

oldest daughter. There was a knock at my window. I turned to look, and my husband was standing there. When I was getting out of the car, he hugged me and said, “Kim, it’s going to be alright. You need to get some cheer about you.”

My two little ones were excited; they loved Wal-Mart. As we were heading to the toy department, my husband asked me why I was crying. I knew I couldn’t answer him or else I would start crying right there in Wal-Mart. As we approached the toy department, my husband took the kids where the bikes were because my little girl wanted a tricycle. We let her on one to see if she could peddle it. Next thing she was riding around in a circle and my little boy had gotten onto a bike with training wheels. Off they went riding around the toy department. My husband told me to go buy what I needed, while he was going to stay there and let them ride around. He put a tricycle in my buggy for Gracey and I went about my business of picking out other Christmas gifts I had on my list. As I was shopping, I kept thinking of my mom and my oldest daughter.

I texted my husband and told him I was going to check out and put the stuff in the Jeep. I asked him how the kids were doing. He texted back and said they were still riding around the toy department. I laughed thinking he’s going to have his hands full when it’s time to go. I finished checking out and went to the Jeep. While I was loading the pink tricycle and other stuff I had gotten into the Jeep, I texted my husband and told him I was ready to go.

After sitting in the Jeep for about twenty minutes, I tried calling him to see what he was doing; of course he didn’t answer. All I could think of was the babies were raising the devil. I really didn’t want to go back in. I was tired, but I

knew he needed my help. As I was getting out of the Jeep, I saw him coming out of the store. He had two babies, a bike, and a tricycle. I was like “Dennis, why did you buy that? You know Dawson just got a new bike and I just bought Gracey a tricycle.” My husband was in tears, while the kids were excited and kept talking away about their new bikes.

My husband called me as we were leaving the parking lot and explained what had happened. He didn’t buy the bike or tricycle. He said when he got to the register to pay for some other items, an elderly lady was standing there with the bike and tricycle and told him she wanted him to have them for the kids. My husband thanked her and explained we had already bought them one and that he couldn’t take the bike and tricycle. She said, “No, Sir, you don’t understand. I was led here to buy these. God spoke to me and told me to stand at the register, and I would know who to give them to. As soon as you approached the register, I knew it was you.” The cashier told my husband that she had gotten them out of the garden center. She hadn’t even been in the store.

As my husband was going on and on about what just happened, I couldn’t help but to think about the elderly lady I met at WalMart in Elizabethtown two days earlier. She had followed me and the two babies around. When she finally stopped me, she handed me a twenty dollar bill. I explained to her that I hadn’t dropped it and thus, could not take it. She said she knew, but wanted me to have it and would not take no for an answer. I went to the store manager to tell him what happened. He asked me what the lady looked like. I turned around, and she was gone.

The next day at work, I was telling my manager what

happened. She said, “Kim, listening to your story I can tell you who it was and why. It was your mother working through angels! You keep saying how you wish your little ones could have met her. That was your sign from God to let you know He has angels on earth as well as in heaven. I started to cry. I was losing faith and I had let depression set in, while God was giving me a sign. My mother was there the whole time; she was watching over me and her grandchildren. That was her way of letting me know everything was going to be okay.

I learned never to lose faith and that God will give us signs and work through others to give us the comfort we need. That Christmas, my husband and I learned that our mothers were watching over us. If we keep our faith during hard times, we always have angels with us.



HEAVENLY

Fabiola Taylor—BCC Student

THE ZAHIR STORY

Kenya Roudy—BCC Student

“You’re pregnant,” were the words I heard on a warm March afternoon in the Women’s Center of Scotland County. The only thought that came to my mind was, “This can’t be happening.” With teenage girls already at home, to me starting all over was a daunting task. But nothing prepared me for the day my only son, Zahir, would be born.

It was around 3:00 a.m. when that all too familiar pain hit me like a ton of bricks. I knew from previous false alarms that this was different. I made sure to grab the black hospital bag that I packed when I first found out. I gathered the kids from their sleep and loaded the new black minivan I recently purchased for my growing family.” Are you going to be ok mama?” my youngest asked me through sleepy eyes. “I’m going to be fine,” I assured her as we raced to the nearest hospital which happens to be 20 minutes away. That’s one of the disadvantages when living in a small town. Everything of importance is so far away.

This was a very trying time for me because I had recently lost my mother, and here I was about to become a mother again. Through each contraction, I felt myself pushing the gas a little harder. I took the time to focus on the road ahead, knowing that I had to be more careful. As we pulled into the hospital’s parking lot, a rush of fear overcame me. “Am I prepared?” The cool Carolina night calmed me as my daughters helped me into the emergency room. Everything felt like a blur at this point. A nurse came to me with a wheelchair and told me to remain calm. As I cried out in

agony, the nurse helped me into an available room. I still remember that she smelled like pears and apples. She told me to call her Helen and if I needed anything she would be the one to help me. The pain was overtaking me. I didn't care if I was carrying a baby boy or a baby girl. I just wanted a healthy child. I almost lost it when the doctor on call came in and said there were some complications.

All I could think of was that I was about to lose my baby. When Dr. Kahn appeared in my room, I was so relieved. Dr. Kahn is a short, female powerhouse doctor; she had been my physician since the birth of my first child. "What seems to be the problem?" she asked as she sanitized her hands. "The baby is in a breeched position at this time," Nurse Helen said as she handed Dr. Kahn a pair of gloves. "Breech?" I said through bated breath. I knew breech meant that the baby was in the wrong position to be delivered properly. "There is nothing to worry about; we will handle this," Dr. Kahn told me in a very soothing and calming voice. At that time, she and the nurse tried repositioning the baby by pushing my stomach in a counter-clockwise motion, causing a considerable amount of pain. Dr. Kahn saw that the baby wasn't responding to this method, so she suggested a cesarean section. The thought of going under the knife was so terrifying to me. I just didn't want anything to happen because I am the only parent that my children have. "I'm sorry, but if I can deliver my baby naturally, that is what I would prefer," I told them. Dr. Kahn explained what she felt would be in my best interest, but ultimately left the choice up to me. I thought about it and eventually decided that I would stick it out and hope the baby would turn on its own.

The minutes seemed like hours as I lay in agony. "This

will all be worth it in the end.” I said to myself. Just then my friend Minnie came into my room. We had been friends since Ken and Barbie’s pink convertible. “Girl, I got here as soon as I could,” she said while trying to catch her breath. I could always count on her to be there when I needed her.

As I lay hooked to a multitude of machines, the one monitoring the baby’s heart rate began to light up with a permeating deep red blinking light. This can’t be good. The nurses rushed in to see what was happening. Currently the baby was in distress, and an emergency cesarean section was my only option. I prepared myself as they handed Minnie the all-white protective suit, so she could be in the room with me. It was now or never. I turned my focus on the walls to take my mind off the impending surgery. Pictures and bulletin boards whizzed by as they ran down the long fluorescent lit hallways. We arrived at the operating room. The room was so bright. Everything was white and clean. I looked around at all the large machines and sterilized surgical tools that were intended for me. Nurse Helen held my hand as they transferred me to the operating table. I felt safe; I knew that I was in good hands. I looked up as they proceeded to put the mask on my face. “I need for you to count back from 10,” said the nurse with the white mask covering her face. “10...9...8...” I don’t remember anything after that. It felt as though I had blinked my eyes for a couple of minutes and woke up from the darkness in a recovery room. A warm towel draped my forehead, and I was covered in heavy white blankets. I remember being cold and looking around the room to ask anybody where my baby was. Just then a nurse came in; it was Helen. She told me that the procedure went according to plan and that Dr. Kahn would be checking on me in the next hour or so.

“Where is my baby?” were the words I forced myself to mumble through the pain. “Oh, I’m happy to say that you delivered a healthy 8lb 2oz baby *boy*.” I started to cry tears of joy. A baby boy, I was so elated. “Zahir, that’s his name. Zahir means shining and flourishing,” I told Helen through the flow of tears. He really lived up to his name. He was my shining star in the darkness of losing my mother. Helen brought him in the room to me. I held him and told him that I would be the best mother I could be. He looked up at me and smiled. I knew my mother would be so proud of me at this moment in time.

It now feels as though my family is complete.



CIRCLES OF ILLUSION

Bradley Earl—BCC Student

THE ADOPTION PROCESS

Kendra Gainey—BCC Student

I sat in my car in the parking lot of Department of Social Services. My hands were sweating, and my heart was beating so fast that I felt that I could hear it in my ears. The day had finally come! I was finally picking up my three-year-old son to take him home with me. It was 10 minutes before I was supposed to be there to get him and that felt like hours. I continued to sit there wringing my hands and glancing at the main entrance to Social Services and the clock, checking the time. I watched adults and children entering and exiting the building. Some appeared happy and others seemed to be very sad and upset. I knew that in 10 minutes I would be walking in as a mother of one child and leaving a mother of two. I knew that my life would be completely different. Even though I was happy, I was also scared. My mind was racing with thoughts and questions like, “Will he like staying with my family and me?” and “Will he cry a lot the first few days because he is afraid?” I didn’t know the answers, and I was almost too nervous to find out.

My seven-year-old daughter sat in the backseat rattling out nervous chatter. I turned around, looked at her, and said, “Sweetie are you ready?” She just nodded her head and went back to singing and mumbling under her breath. I turned the car off and beckoned for my daughter to get out. She stepped out the car and grabbed my hand. We started walking very slowly to the front door. Neither of us said a word. It was a whirlwind of emotions: happiness, excitement, fear, and nervousness. We had finally reached the door. I looked at her nervous face; her eyes stretched

wide with excitement. I said quietly in her ear, “It’s okay. Let’s go in and get your little brother.”

We walked in and were greeted by security. They handed us the tray to empty our items in, had us walk through security scan, and then handed back our items. I grabbed my daughter’s hand and we started walking to the area to meet the case worker. The caseworker greeted us warmly with a smile. She asked me if I had any questions or concerns before the child was placed in my care. I told her I did not and sat down. She turned around and said something to someone, but all that I could focus on was my son in another area behind her. He was running, playing, and jumping around like a three-year-old boy should. I stood up, my heart racing and tears forming in my eyes. I had waited so long for this day. I had cried many times, and I had almost quit fighting for him because the process was long, hard, and exhausting, but now it was all over.

His foster mother grabbed his hand and walked him to where we all stood. My daughter knelt and grabbed both his hands. She said something quietly and he started giggling. We all stood around watching the two interact. I was so happy that it felt as though my heart was going to explode into a million pieces. The tears threatened to fall, and I quickly dabbed my eyes. Finally, he looked up at me. His eyes sparkled, and he ran up to me. I grabbed him swiftly and hugged him, squeezing tight. I kissed his cheek and rubbed his head. I grabbed his little hand in mine and when I did, that’s when I began to cry. In my mind I thought back over everything and how hard it was. I had almost given up and washed my hands with trying to adopt him. It was tough; I had to go over every detail of my personal life with

Social Services, countless visitations with him, court, and so many other requirements. It was exhausting, and it took a very long time, but this hug right now and this little hand in mine made all that worth it. He was worth every tear; everything that I had been through over the past year, he was worth it!

We finally were done, paperwork signed, and we were walking towards the front of the building. He and my daughter were holding hands and jumping around. The caseworker walked us out the door. She said that she was so happy that he was finally getting a home with a mom, dad, and a sibling and a chance to have a normal life. I thanked her for all her help with this process and I gave her a hug. My kids and I walked to the car and got in. I was still in shock. I still wanted to cry tears of joy, but I refrained. I buckled both kids in and got in the car. My daughter said, “Mommy I am so happy! I am glad that he is finally here. I have a little brother now.”

I said, “Yes, that is true. I am happy to have a son now. I have my boy and my girl.”

She giggled, and he did, too. She handed him the teddy bear that we bought him a while ago. He grinned and hugged it so tight. He then reached back for my daughter’s hand and held the teddy bear in one arm.

I buckled up my seat belt and cranked up the car. I turned around and looked at my two beautiful children, my heart so full of joy and happiness.

“Are you both ready to finally go home?”

They both nodded their heads, happiness displayed all over their faces. I turned up the radio and glanced in the rearview mirror at my two children. The amount of joy was so much that my heart felt as though it was going to explode. My eyes began to sting from the threat of tears, and my emotions were all over the place. I started to drive out of the parking lot and as I did, I thanked God for another wonderful blessing, for giving me strength to keep fighting, and for allowing me to be a mom of two great kids. I listened to him talking away and laughing and thought to myself, “my son was finally coming home.”



VENUS FLY TRAP

Tim Marshburn—BCC Faculty

THE DISNEY DREAM

Tammy Huff—BCC Student

We had driven all day on Wednesday and stayed in a hotel overnight. Steelie and Kendalyn, my daughters, were ages eight and four. The white pebbled ceiling stared back at me as the shadow of a small round table and lamp began to move across the wall. The short breaths of my two angels flowed into my ears, and my heart pounded as I waited eagerly for the alarm to sound. The blankets ruffled, and a small noise came from the bed next to mine. "Mom? This beach is far from home. Can we please go see the water now?" "Showers!" I exclaimed barely containing myself and my secret. The steam and the smell of soap filled the small room that overlooked the parking lot where our car was parked.

The hover of the wheels on the carpet was music to my ears as we rolled our luggage toward the elevator. The day had finally arrived. I had been keeping a secret for nearly two months. As a single parent for over three years, never had I imagined in all my dreams that I would be able to give my girls this surprise. The thought of all the long, hard hours at work and saving every extra dollar was about to pay off. The salt air breeze hit our face as we walked out of the lobby and headed for the car. Little voices of awe and giggles came from the two small shadows on the ground beside me. "How far are we from home? It's hot here. "Florida!" I replied and nothing more. As the last door slammed shut, the engine began to purr, and we were one step closer.

The hotel seemed to shrink as the car climbed the massive curved bridge that led us to our dream destination. "Look

how high we are!" excitement and squeals came from the back seat. "It's like we are flying. All I see is the sky." The sky was pastel blue with soft streams of thin white clouds that stretched for miles, and the water was a deep blue. "Look at those little boats!" said Kendalyn. "Can we go see them?" As I giggled to myself, I replied, "Sure, we're on vacation, right?" My heart was pounding with pride as we made the next turn and headed toward the Disney Port Terminal. I had pulled it off, and they had no idea. "Oh, look at the black one. Is it a Disney ship? Let's go see." Claps and giggles filled the air in our little green car packed to the rims with luggage, blankets and of course Maggie, my youngest daughter's doll that went everywhere.

The terminal was massive: a huge parking garage and big green road signs overhead. Finally, I saw ours, the Disney Terminal, next right. "Look, mom, look at that boat; it's bigger than our house," said Steelie. I leaned over to take a peak; it was black for as far up as I could see. When I pulled up to the curb, a tall, slender young man in his late twenties approached the passenger window of the car. As I rolled down the window, the air filled with the sounds of people and machinery. I smiled from ear to ear, and I thought to myself... "This is it." The moment of truth has arrived. I recorded with phone to ensure that I captured this magical moment in time. I can already imagine hearing the squeals of excitement. This window has never lowered this slow before; it seemed to take forever. And then it happened.

"Are you ladies here to board the Disney Dream?" the young man asked. "What do you think girls? How would you like to go away for a few days on the Disney ship?" I waited for what seemed like forever. Where was the

answer? Where were the screams of excitement that I have played and replayed over and over in my head for the past few weeks? Why was there silence? Then I realized the slender young man was laughing. I looked back. Big green and brown eyes stared at me blankly. Mouths open but no words had emerged, just silent little pale faces staring at me. I wasn't sure if they thought it was a joke or if they were a little scared of that big black boat that towered over our little car. "Well?" I asked again. Little oval mouths slowly started to turn into smiles, and big round eyes narrowed with excitement. "Can we?" they asked. "Yes," the young man replied as I began to laugh. "Let me take your luggage so you can park your vehicle and start your journey," he said.

The crisp salt breeze blew our hair as we walked across the ramp to board the massive ship which I had still been unable to see entirely. Finally, I was able to reach a point where we could stop and look out over the length of the ship. It was beautiful. The water seemed to float through the transparent tube of the aqua duck. We could hear the laughter and squeals of those that passed over the edge of the ship in our imagination. "Can we do that first?" Kendalyn asked. "Yes," I replied as we waited in line to board. It was only a matter of maybe fifteen minutes until we reached the entrance to the ship, but time seemed to stand still.

A sweetness filled the air as we approached the entrance. Claps and cheers started to overpower the sounds of laughter and machinery. As we approached, I saw two rows of Disney employees lined up on each side of the main floor entrance to make the moment unique, and it was more

magical than I ever imagined. Their uniform shirts were crisp white and vest of black and gold. Smiles and cheers from them erupted again and again. "Your family name, ma'am?" asked a young lady with bright blue eyes. "Huff," I replied in shock of the magnitude of the grand entrance that stood in front of us. "Welcome the Huff family, Tammy, Steelie and Kendalyn!" echoed through the ship's main lobby and the cheers and claps erupted again. As we made our way through the line of the spectacularly dressed staff, we emerged into the central atrium where Mickey and Minnie Mouse greeted us. The smiles on my girls' faces of disbelief and amazement were well worth the wait. We made it. I did it.

Emotions began to fill my body. The heat started in my feet and traveled up to my eyes when I began to cry, and the hair on my head stood on end. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. Those little faces were so used to hearing "not this trip," or "we have to share." I still believe to this day that they didn't think it was real until the sail away party. I must also admit that when I lay in between the soft, sweet-smelling sheets that first night and felt the slow movement of the ship, I, too, thought it was a dream and was afraid to go to sleep.



MIRACLES FROM GOD

Madeline Patrick—BCC Student

Imagine what it feels like to be perfectly fine one minute and the next minute life is completely changed for the worse. Sadly, I know what this feels like. When I was a new born in the hospital, the doctors diagnosed me with this rare disease called neurofibromatosis which is a disease in which neurofibromas form throughout the body. And if you don't know what neurofibromas are, they are a tumor formed on a nerve cell sheath, frequently symptomless, but occasionally malignant. I was considered lucky on up till I was 17 years old when they found a tumor inside my spinal cord, which led to me having a serious surgery to remove the tumor on October 20th, 2016. My family and I drove almost 10 hours to the All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida.

It was 4 o'clock early Thursday morning when my mom came in my hotel room to wake me up, so I can get ready for my surgery. Oddly, I wasn't scared at what I would soon face, or the long journey of recovery I would have. I felt this way because I knew in my heart the Lord was with me. I was at peace and happy. My faith was what kept me going. It was real hot that morning in St. Petersburg, Florida. I didn't come prepared for the warm weather because back home it was chilly. I went into the bathroom, put my clothes on, washed my face, brushed my teeth, tied my hair back, and headed to the hospital. I arrived at the hospital along with 20 other family members including my grandparents, aunts and uncles, as well as my cousins who came along to support me. When we went to check in and head down to the waiting room, I started to feel as if my heart was about to beat out of my chest. It hit me. My nerves were all over the place. I wanted to just break out crying, but I knew God had me, so I just closed my eyes and prayed for strength and peace. I

wanted to stay strong for not only me but for my family. I didn't want them to see me so upset. A nurse walked into the waiting room wearing all purple, my favorite color. She called "MADELINE PATRICK," and I knew it was time. I grabbed my few things I had in my hand and headed to be prepped for my surgery.

When I went into the room to get prepped, the smell was indescribable. It was so strong and smelled as if someone had poured cleaning supplies in the room. It gave me a huge headache. They told me to wipe myself down with these weird cleaning pads that smelled awful. It was supposed to kill any germs on my body before they rolled me to the operating room. They gave me a gown that went all the way to my ankles and that also smelled like chemicals. This whole situation made me feel terrible. I couldn't shake off the feeling that my whole life was about to change. Imagine lying on a hard hospital bed, freezing, shaking from fear. It was a feeling that I never had before. Questions ran all throughout my head. Was I going to wake up from surgery? Was my feeling going to be lost forever? How am I going to feel when I wake up? All I can say is it was nerve racking.

Right before they rolled me out, my family wanted to say a prayer with the surgeon and me, so we did. I felt better afterwards because it reminded me that God was still with me. The nurse came to get me and told me it was time. I went back to the room and lay on the bed. They rolled me down the hall to these two doors where I let go of my mom's hand. They rolled me through the two double doors. I thought to myself "where in the world are they taking me?" It was freezing cold and it looked weird and unusual. We came to this room where my surgery was going to be taking place. When they rolled me in, I saw another bed in there. I also saw weird looking machines everywhere in the room. They told me to stay calm; everything would be okay, which only made me feel even more scared of what I would face

when I woke up. They put this weird mask on my face and told me to count down from ten. In a matter of seconds, I could not feel anything.

I woke up many hours later in unbearable pain, screaming and crying out for help. I couldn't move... I thought I was paralyzed. Hours later, the doctors came in shortly after they had put me in an ICU room. I still could not feel anything below my waist. However, as my dad was rubbing my feet, my left big toe moved. He jumped with excitement. His face lit up like Christmas lights.

My mom ran to get the doctors to tell them the news. When the doctors came into my room, they were asking me so many questions; I wanted to scream. All I wanted to do was sleep and get some relief because I was hurting so badly. The doctors told me and my parents that the pain I felt was a good sign because that meant that I was not paralyzed. It just meant that my road to recovery would be a long process, but with God anything is possible.

A few hours after surgery, they brought me Jeff, the therapy dog. Then an occupational therapist came in and taught me some tricks to help me dress myself, brush my teeth, and do my hair. It was hard doing all these things at first. But we went over it again that afternoon until I was comfortable with how I was doing it for myself. It was a very stressful day, but I got through it with the help of my family, nurses, doctors, and God.

This day was a very important day for me. This day let me know that I was strong. It let me know that no matter what, I had my family to lean on. It taught me to never give up, to always keep moving and pushing myself to strive to overcome any and every fear I have.



THE SANDBOX

Spencer Scott—BCC Student

It was a warm sunny afternoon, and the kids were just getting home from school. Like every other day, Johnny and his little sister Rose went out to play in their sandbox, but they noticed something different this time. There was a mysterious hole about the size of a penny in the corner of the sandbox. They ran over to it and Johnny peered into the dark hole, but their mom interrupted them with snacks, and the hole vanished.

They quickly ate their snacks and ran back to the sandbox. As soon as the mother left, the hole reappeared. This time the hole was even bigger, and Rose became a little terrified. She began kicking sand over it, but it just kept falling down the dark hole. As the hole grew, and it became large enough to crawl through, Johnny built up his courage and told Rose he was going to explore the hole. As Johnny ventured down the hole, he slipped and fell down the dark hole. In fear, Rose called out to her older brother, but she had no answer. Since her brother was down there and not responding, she knew she had no choice but to go down there and make sure he was all right. As she began crawling down the hole, she also slipped, but Johnny caught her before she hit the ground.

They looked around and saw nothing but darkness. After looking around, they noticed a flickering light coming from the end of the dark tunnel. As Johnny began walking towards the light, his little sister followed, clasping onto his shirt. As they got closer to the light, they heard a loud roar

and laughter. When they turned the corner, they saw creatures of all kinds. Some were green; others were purple; some had four arms, and some had five eyes. They all had one thing in common; they were HUGE!

“P-p-please, don't hurt us. We didn't mean to come down here,” Johnny said in fear.

“Hurt you? Why would we ever hurt you? Y'all are the first humans to come down here in a very long time,” said one of the monsters.

Still scared, Johnny and Rose sat and listened to all the stories the monsters told them. As time went by, Johnny and Rose began playing games with the creatures. They played tag, hide and seek, and even duck, duck, goose.

They were having so much fun with these creatures when suddenly, Rose screamed, “Oh no, Mom is going to be worried sick!”

Sadly, Johnny and Rose gave the monsters a hug and told them goodbye. They ran back to the hole and the tallest monster picked them up and helped them climb back up to the top. As Johnny was on his way out, he promised the monsters that he and his sister would be back some day.

They scrambled out the hole and ran inside to their mother.

“Back so soon?” their mother said.

Confused, Johnny looked at his sister and said, “What?”

We have been gone for hours.”

“No, it has only been thirty minutes,” their mother said questioningly. Johnny looked at Rose, and they both shrugged their shoulders and ran back out to the Sandbox.



SUMMER

April Smith—BCC Student

THE HOWLING DARK

John Cooke—BCC Student

“Wake up boot!” I heard from the opening of my Quintze snow shelter. “Fire watch!” the figure in the doorway said before slipping out of the range of the solitary candle perched on the edge of the ice shelf.

I groaned internally, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes as I fumbled in my pocket for my watch with near-frozen fingers. When I pressed the illumination button, the face sprang to life and read 00:00, midnight. The walls and floor of our temporary abode, which was once just packed snow, had transformed to ice from the condensation caused by the breath of having three marines packed into such a small space. I climbed out of my sleeping bag and pulled on layer after layer over my uniform. I threw on almost everything I had dragged up the mountain with me. I did this knowing it would not be enough to keep the cold at bay. Shaking my head, I grabbed my small daypack and rifle, bracing myself for a long night.

I stepped outside and circled up the sloping staircase we had dug out of the ice, cursing myself with every step. As I came level with the ground, a vicious wind sideswiped me, carrying with it snow heavy enough to fill every crease in my clothing. If it was cold in my cave, then outside, it was hell frozen over.

The instructors for our mountain survival course had told us what elevation we were at, but in my dazed state, I could not recall. It was high enough that every breath was difficult.

We had already sent multiple people back down the mountain for severe altitude sickness, frostbite, pneumonia, and accidental injuries. Our merry band had dwindled down to only thirty men, almost half of what we started with.

Twenty-four hours earlier, the view from where I was standing was simply breathtaking. Sitting on the side of a mountain overlooking a steep walled valley, I saw a perfectly placed lake that was frozen over, and evergreen trees springing out of the mountainside, painted by the inspired hand of God. That picturesque scene was gone, shattered by a blizzard that had landed sometime in the night. Gale force winds poured layer after layer of snow onto the trenches dug only hours before.

It was at this moment that I realized I had stepped too far away from my shelter. I looked back, but the snow was falling in sheets so thick it had already obscured my footsteps. I was trapped like a mime in a box; only my box was a snow globe. I was only a few meters away from my brothers, but the howling wind coupled with the driving snow made this distance stretch to miles.

“Davy!?” I yelled into the dark, hoping someone had already woken him. I received no reply, save the wind shrieking across the mountaintop.

“Figures,” I muttered to the storm, as I slung my rifle across my back.

I began my trek across the virgin snow, my snowshoes keeping me aloft. I knew that the fire pit was downhill from my position, so that is the direction I struck off in. Blindly

struggling against the elements, my thoughts drifted to home. Six months prior, I had been sitting comfortably on my couch in North Carolina, and if I had not run off to join the marines, I would still be there.

“No sense in thinking about it now,” I told myself, trying to ignore the wind and my own exhaustion.

After a few minutes of walking, I reached the tree line, and turned right, following it further into the dark. After a short walk, I arrived at the fire pit, where Davy was already standing. He was bundled up in clothing, the same as I was, looking around half bewildered, half angry.

“Can you believe these Pogs?” he yelled, incredulously. “What?” I replied, not entirely sure what he was talking about.

I knew what a Pog was; it means a Person Other than Grunt, a derogatory term we used for people that were not infantrymen. I just did not know what had upset him. Though it was well below zero, we were in a blizzard, AND it was just after midnight. While any one of those is enough to make a person a bit cranky, all three almost guarantee it.

“They let the fire die! Seriously! They had one job, and they managed to mess that up!” He threw his hands in the air in a gesture of surrender, and I could not help but laugh.

“If we didn’t have bad luck, we wouldn’t have luck at all, huh?” I said, grinning at him.

Davy had been with me since the beginning, all the way back to the first day of boot camp. We had been lucky

enough to be together through everything, and had forged a strong friendship. He grinned back at me, tobacco flecks sticking between his bottom teeth.

He let loose a thin stream of tobacco spit over his bleeding chapped lips, and shrugged. “We’re gonna have to go get firewood; we don’t even have any kindling.”

I raised my eyebrow and gestured vaguely around us. “In this? Are you crazy?”

He acted as if he did not hear me as he walked towards the woods.

“Hold on!” I yelled struggling to keep up, my rifle banging against my side.

Davy was quite a bit taller than I was, and was not a slow walker by any standard. When he reached the tree line, he paused to pull out a can of chewing tobacco and offered it to me. I took it gratefully, as I had left mine in my rucksack in my cave. After I had tossed it back to him, I unslung my rifle, leaning it against a nearby tree. I unclipped the strap on my backpack, letting it fall with a muted thud into the snow. After a brief struggle between my near frozen fingers and the frozen zippers, I reached inside and began searching for my roll of paracord. Once I found it, I pulled it from my bag and grimaced. What had been a full roll when we left basecamp had dwindled to only a few meters over the course of the month we had been on the mountain.

“You got hypothermia or something?” Davy asked, slipping his can of dip back in his shoulder pocket.

“I said firewood, not paracord.” I rolled my eyes, and kept unrolling the cord. “You see how thick this snow is, dumbass?” I asked, tying one end of the line to my belt loop, and offering the other end to him. “If we get split up out here, that’ll be it for the Roughnecks.” I finished, referring to the call sign we had given our squad.

An assault-men squad is only four men, versus the thirteen men that make up a rifle squad. One of our squad members had broken his ankle a few days in, and another had come down with double pneumonia shortly after, leaving only Davy and me. I was not joking when I said that would be it for us. Getting lost or hurt out here was bad enough when the weather was nice. With the blizzard only getting stronger, and sunrise hours away, any misstep out here could be fatal. Getting separated was not an option.

Once he realized the sense in what I was saying, he tied the other end of the cordage to his belt loop without protest and gestured for me to lead the way.

“I’d hate to accidentally drag your munchkin ass through the snow,” he said, laughing as he spit another stream of tobacco juice.

I flipped him the bird and started into the woods. As we walked, Davy would take his bone-handled knife and carve a strip of bark off a tree every few paces, leaving a trail of breadcrumbs for us to follow. We stuck to collecting dead tree limbs that had already fallen because cutting them off the trees would take too much energy, and would be more difficult to burn. After we both had a respectable bundle of sticks, we headed back towards the pit, arguing about the best way to cook squirrel.

“You’re crazy,” Davy said after I insisted that the only way to cook it properly was frying it in a cast iron skillet. “You’ve got to mix it with pork and make squirrel sausage patties. Any other way is just a waste of perfectly good squirrel meat.”

We bickered back and forth until we reached the fire pit, and dropped our firewood next to the pile of ash that was supposed to be a roaring fire.

Davy started stripping thin strips off one of the sticks for kindling, while I arranged the smaller twigs in a tepee, digging through my pockets for a lighter. I found one by the time he had finished the kindling nest. Pulling my glove off with my teeth, my thumb found purchase with the flint wheel and I tried striking it below the kindling. Nothing. Again and again I tried, but whether the lighter was out of fuel, or the combination of the cold and elevation had rendered it inoperable, I could not say. Either way, I knew if we did not get this fire started, at the very least, we were in for an extremely uncomfortable night. By the time I gave up with the lighter, I could not feel my hand, and I was feeling blindly in my pack for my magnesium block. After watching me struggle for a few moments with a bemused expression on his face, Davy reached down and took the pack from me, shining his red-lensed flashlight into the inner webbing. He immediately reached in and pulled out my magnesium block and dropped my pack on the ground.

As I breathed into my hands, trying to warm them back up, he hunched over the kindling and began shaving magnesium into the kindling bed. After he had accumulated a small pile, he flipped the block over to expose the flint rod embedded in the other side. After

multiple strikes against the back of his knife, one spark landed home, and ignited the magnesium. A beautiful flair of light, and fire was licking up the sides of the tepee. A few minutes later, we were sitting around a fire, our personal inferno, with the cold momentarily forgotten.



BLACK PLAGUE

Bradley Earl—BCC Student

BUILDING TRUST

Joyce Bahhouth—BCC Faculty

Success. Ambition. Big dreams. Promotion. Titles. Accomplishments. These and many other goals come with a big price: perseverance, diligence, focus, and most importantly, building trust.

Many of us focus on hard work and diligence as key factors to success. They are, but they are not enough. They gain impetus when associated with building trust. Many of us are competent, knowledgeable, and very serious at our work, but few of us shine because we need others to trust us.

Building trust takes years of hard work and cannot be accomplished overnight. It is when we are discrete and allow our accomplishments to speak for themselves. It is when we communicate effectively with others and allow them to choose to come back to us because they know that we will not let them down. Others trust us when they feel that our main objective is what is best for them. Others seek us when they realize that we have left our ego behind and prioritized meeting their needs as professionals in our fields. This may seem like a long-winded route to success, but who said that success was easy?

Let us all as of today create for ourselves solid foundations that instill in others respect for who we are and trust in what we can do, and may our names be engraved in people's minds for generations to come.

BUT SERIOUSLY, FOLKS...

Kathy LaMaster—BCC Student

I've been living with my ex-husband for a few years now, just not in the traditional sense. Brian passed away some time ago, and he was an organ donor. He had made the unselfish decision to donate his body to the University of Minnesota to be analyzed by medical students. When the studies were completed, the remains were returned to Ethan, our son, and I keep them now in my bedroom.

But seriously...this is about the importance of organ donation. If you are not currently a donor, I hope that you read this essay with an open mind and reconsider your stance. I am going to quote directly from the letter Ethan received dated July 17, 2012:

A seventy-year old man received the gift of Brian's right kidney during a transplant surgery in South Dakota. This recipient suffered from kidney disease and had been on the transplant waiting list for three years. He and his family are very grateful for this chance for a longer and healthier life.

A fifty-four year old man received the gift of your father's liver during a transplant surgery in Minnesota. This recipient was diagnosed with cancer of the liver and had been on the transplant waiting list for a year and a half. His doctors report that the surgery was successful and that this gentleman has been discharged to continue his recovery at home with his family. They are so thankful to your family for this generous gift.

Your father's heart was sent to researchers at the University of Minnesota for use in studying the function, anatomy, and vasculature of the heart. This investigative research will help physicians learn more about the human heart and how to help those who suffer from complex cardiac conditions. Future generations will benefit from Brian's gift to research and your generosity.

On behalf of these recipients, their families and LifeSource, thank you again for helping us to enable your father to give the precious Gift of Life through donation. Brian is truly a hero to those he has helped. You and your family reached beyond your pain in a moment of tragedy to consider the needs of others. We cannot think of a more loving tribute to your father.

A letter dated April 26, 2013 was written by the recipient of Brian's liver:

A thank you seems so small compared to the gift given to me by your loved one. I want you to know that this gift has provided me the chance to raise my boys, love my wife longer, and with this renewed opportunity of life, I am so grateful for my gift.

Thank you for:

- *The gift of a second chance of life
- *The ability to be a father to my twin sons
- *To be around to love my spouse and support our family
- *Your unselfish gift in your time of sorrow

The letter was simply signed "Dale."

If that doesn't inspire you to put a little red heart on your driver's license, I don't know what will.



GRUTAS DE TOLANTONGO, HIDALGO

Jennifer Munoz—BCC Student

CALLIE DARLA LAMASTER

Kathy LaMaster—BCC Student

"It's the littlest one. He wants the littlest one," said Andrew, Sarah's older brother. Sarah had kittens and a lot of them. On a whim, I decided that Ethan needed a pet, and a kitten it would be. We went to pick out our future family member a couple of weeks before she was ready to leave her mama. Sarah's mom, Ellen, was a great friend and before we picked up the kitten to come home with us, I asked if Sarah was okay with it. The last thing I wanted was a sobbing Sarah tugging at my heartstrings as Ethan carried her kitten away. "She'll be fine. She knows that we can't keep them. We've talked to her." Ethan and I were excited to bring our kitty home. I had suggested the name "Callie" since she was a tri-colored calico and Ethan readily agreed. When we arrived to pick her up, Sarah walked her out to us, her eyes brimming with tears. "Her name's Darla," she quivered. I cut a look to Ellen that said, "This wasn't supposed to happen!" Ellen quickly took Sarah inside and we were off with our new pet.

We quickly christened her Callie Darla LaMaster. In the odd way that often happens with babies, the name completely fit her. She wasn't just a Callie or Darla. She was Callie Darla, the LaMaster kitten! On her first night home, I turned and asked Ethan's dad, Brian, to take care of something long forgotten. He was in his recliner and he replied that if he did "I will have to wake up the rugrat." Callie was sound asleep on his (rather ample) belly. She had found warmth, comfort, and the perfect bed! She was adorable and well behaved...for a while. I

walked into our bedroom one day and saw her batting at her reflection in the headboard mirror. She was so darn cute! She was a good sport, allowing Ethan to take her for rides in a doll stroller that we purchased solely for that purpose.

She grew quickly and began to show her mischievous side. Soon she was climbing curtains at an alarming rate of speed. Not long after that came the moans that happen before a cat is "fixed," something that young Ethan termed "the gross out." "Mom, Callie's doing the gross out!" When she was old enough, we had her spayed and declawed, the latter of which resulted in a longer than usual stay at the vet's office due to Hurricane Fran. I felt the first real pangs of cat motherhood when she spotted us days later. She was one happy feline and a true member of our small family!

In her younger years, her curiosity got the better of her a few times, and she would sneak out the door when we least expected it. I blamed the lizards and salamanders as she couldn't hold herself back if she spotted one on our steps or deck. Sometimes she was missing for several hours and more than once I was up in the middle of the night walking around our house shaking a bag of treats in an effort to coax her out of hiding. She always came home and I called these disappearances "Callie's Great Adventures."

She was a good mouser, too. On my way to wake Ethan for school one morning, I noticed she was playing with one of her toys. Except, it wasn't a toy at all; it was a dead mouse that she was flinging all over the place. I abhor the nasty vermin and called my husband in a panic. He talked me through sweeping it on a dustpan and throwing it in the

yard. Callie didn't understand why I took her toy away and had a major attitude for days afterward.

Oh, her attitude! It was real and it was intense! She loved Brian, Ethan, and me, but few others. She would abide our friends the Dickerson's (I think she could tell they were a cat loving bunch), the Tatum's (although she wasn't fond of Winston's jumpiness around her), and Jackie (a cat lover, if ever there was one), but everyone else was pretty much dead to her and had no business sniffing around her domain. I was once watching a friend's daughters and one of them made the mistake of trying to pet her. Callie arched, hissed, and was ready to pounce, and the poor girl screamed bloody murder. You'd have thought Callie was Jason from Halloween!

Trips to the veterinarian were pure torture. Her vet was very old and often impatient with her obvious disdain and outright hatred of him. She once bit him. He looked me dead in the eye and said, "Your cat bit me." One of the techs said she thought there must be some bobcat in her for her to be so mean. I was mortified and just wanted to get her HOME. I was always a bit offended because they didn't know the Callie that I knew and loved. In retrospect, I should have asked about anxiety medicine for her before a vet visit. I guess hindsight is 20/20.

She had to make a few adjustments over the years. She did well with the move after my husband and I separated, but it was another story entirely when Ethan went off to college. For days she walked from room to room crying for him. He came home quite a bit his freshman year, so Friday nights were wonderful because we were all

reunited. She soon knew the routine and grew to pace on Sunday afternoons because she knew he would be leaving her again. Ethan brought his laundry home in those early days, and she took to lying on top of his clean laundry in an effort to keep him home where he belonged. If he didn't come home on a Friday night, she would cry the most pitiful cry you ever heard the second I turned out the last light and went to bed. It was the craziest thing...how she knew that it was the night he may come home. Her cries were mournful and often lasted well into the night. By the end of freshman year, she was a bit more accustomed to his schedule, but by then he was soon home for the summer, and we would have to go through everything again in August.

As she got up in years, we worried about her health more than ever, but she was the Energizer Bunny of cats. When I moved into a different house a couple of years ago, she was climbing counters and the refrigerator and discovered a Cat Narnia behind the cupboards. She had been with us on Ethan's first day of kindergarten, his first day of high school, and through his college years. We began to think of her as Callie the Invincible and when I would sometimes worry, Ethan would calm me by saying that indoor cats could live a long, long time.

I noticed her gait first. She lacked the pep in her step. I would talk to her and she looked a bit mournful to me. Within a couple of days, she wasn't getting on the couch with me for "bonding time," our nightly ritual. It was the weekend and I would be unable to get her to the vet until Monday. She was eating and drinking, so I felt like that was a positive sign, but something was definitely "off." My friend, Jackie, gave me the name of a vet that she

had been taking her cats to as Callie's longtime doctor had passed away. I think in my heart of hearts, I knew there was the possibility that she was very sick, but could not face it.

I did not go to work on Monday, but instead spent the morning with her. When I scooped her up to go, she did not resist and that was not like her. I talked to her the entire way and she just looked at me with her "owl eyes." I was sobbing when I checked her in, sobbing as I waited for her to see the vet, and blubbering by the time the vet came in. I knew, but was hoping against hope that it was not going to be the news I dreaded most in the world. When the doctor confirmed my worst fear, I immediately called Ethan. He wanted to come and say goodbye so Callie, and I had a couple of hours until he would arrive. I sobbed and talked to her and looked into her beautiful eyes. I wanted to commit those eyes to my memory. I reminded her of the wonderful life that she had lived...her great adventures and how much she loved her little Ethan. Over and over I told her that when she got to the other side and talked to the other cats to tell them, "You might think you are prettier than me or more regal than me, but I was loved more than any cat who EVER lived. I know this for a fact because my Mommy told me. And she told me to tell you." I told her over and over that no cat was ever, ever loved as much as her and not to ever, ever forget it. I cried and cried and cried some more. Ethan arrived, and we cried together. We both told her over and over how much we loved her. We kissed her several times and finally it was time. I cannot possibly write about her passing except to say that it was the most horrible, heart wrenching thing I have ever been through. It was a nightmare of the worst

sort. I cry whenever I think about it and am sobbing as I type this.

Her ashes sit on a bookshelf beside my favorite photo of her. I carry locks of her fur in my pocketbook. She was simply the greatest cat ever...because she was OURS.



BRUTUS

Tim Marshburn—BCC Faculty

DEAR MAX

Trever Lloyd—BCC Student

It's been sometime since you've been gone. Sometimes you just pop into my mind and I think about all the time we spent together having fun, playing football, and debating who was better Lil Wayne or Eminem.

I wish that you were still here, my brother. It doesn't feel right having to say "rest in peace" next to your name whenever I bring your name up in conversation.

Sometimes I just stay up at night and think about how I didn't respond to the text you sent. If I'd known that would be the last time I would ever talk to you, I would've called you and talked to you. Honestly I blame myself for your not being here anymore. If I had texted you back, maybe I could have made a difference; just maybe you would've felt better. I just hope that you could forgive me and continue to watch over me, my brother.





**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
SUPERWOMAN SUPER FEELS**

Lenore Lacy—BCC Staff

THE INK QUILL
LITERARY ANNUARY MAGAZINE

POETRY

Poetry
poetry

POETRY



DELICATE LITTLE FLOWER

Hayley McKoy—BCC Student

Growing up, they told me I was a delicate little flower.
They told me not to spill on my dress, but to smile at
everyone.
They told me that I was a fragile princess with bows in my
hair.

Growing up, they told me I was a delicate little flower.
They did not tell me that flowers do not die pretty,
Forgetting to mention they're sometimes a symbol of
sympathy,
Sometimes an apology for hurting another.
They forgot to mention sometimes flowers just are meant to
look pretty for a crowd.

I do not remember what age I decided not to be a flower
anymore.
Maybe it was when I didn't want to smile at everyone.
Possibly when I began to hate dresses,
When bows in my hair became a means of holding it back for
men.

I do remember realizing what flowers were for.
When the man I loved hit me the day before.
When my mother died, merely a month after I was old
enough to drive,
When company is over and I want them to think I've got
myself together.

So no, I do not want to be a delicate little flower.
I do not want to be thrown away after two weeks in a vase.
I do not want to sit still and look pretty.
I do not want to be a cheap apology for wrong doing.

I want to be so much more than a flower.
I want to be the warm sun on a cold winter day.
I want to be an old book on a shelf dying to be read;
I want to be so much more than a flower that will end up
dead.

HEARTS LIKE GARDENS

Hayley McKoy—BCC Student

I hope we may tend to our hearts like gardens,
Paying careful attention to what we harvest.
Making sure to always water and feed our souls,
Never allowing them to grow too old.

I hope we may always cut away pieces before they die,
Giving someone else a chance to see what lies inside,
Remembering to give extra care to the valuable pieces,
Loving the rest without needing a reason.

I hope we may tend to our hearts like gardens,
Assuring they do not die and harden.
Always making sure to bloom and thrive,
Letting the best parts of us remain kind and alive.

I DREAM

Hayley McKoy—BCC Student

I dream of being like a field of wildflowers,
Poured down on by April showers.
I dream of being a place of peace,
Where others may come and their worries cease.

I dream of being a beautiful hideaway,
Where you might come when feeling astray.
I dream of being like a field of wildflowers,
Where each piece of me has its own powers.

I dream of being a million parts
That come together to form a magnificent work of art.
I dream of being a scene in a fairy tale,
Where wholesome values like love prevail.
I dream of being a holy place,
Where you may seek me to find grace.

I dream of being like a field of wildflowers,
Poured down on by April showers.



STRENGTH

Pierce Melvin—BCC Student

Give me strength in all that I do
Give me strength stronger than two
Give me strength to swallow my fear
Give me strength to not follow a peer
Give me strength all the way through
Give me strength to be more like you

FREE

Kaitlyn Taylor—BCC Student

Butterflies flutter by and I'm left grounded
By fate to say I don't deserve the wings I earned.
And with these chains by demons I was bound,
While in my heart desire of the sky so burned.

I watched them all gain their wings and leave me.
And each so close, first one, then two, then three.
And now I wonder, who next will it be,
To wave from yonder cloudy, endless sea?

And oh, to go, I yearn so fiercely.
Please God, just give me the wings I want.
To feel so light and utter carefree,
And free of where my demons haunt.

THIS ISN'T A GAME

Hannah Rogers—BCC Student

This isn't a game for me.
There is no scorecard.
This is my life.
He is my life.

I can tell you about the first time we met,
How my heart was unguarded and my soul was alive.
I can tell you about how he looks at me like I'm the only
thing he will ever need.
I can tell you about how I wipe his tears away as he shows
me parts of him
That he has never shown anyone before.

I gave him all my love, and that love changed him and made
him better.
I'm with him through all the moments of pain and self-
doubt,
And I love him more because of it.
But you see none of that.

All you see is a shiny picture-perfect romanticized version of
him
And how your relationship was with him.
You're bored. You're lonely.
Your motives are selfish and desperate,
And you're messing with real love.

THE VOID

Creshanda Melvin—BCC Student

In life, my life,
I've been through a lot,
Showing love and compassion
Some seem to have forgot.

Forgotten where they come from
Forgotten where they have been,
Behind closed doors,
We all have sinned.

So don't look at my outside;
Don't try to judge me,
My inside is beyond beautiful
Pushing me harder to succeed.

To succeed in life
You have to know your worth,
Not what someone is willing to pay you
But the respect you deserve.

My sister, I'm here
Not just as a sister but also a friend,
Know that you can trust me
From beginning to end.

Even though we get that numb feeling
And feel annoyed,
Know that God is with us
And He can feel the void.

HIS SYMBOL OF LOVE FOR ME

Creshanda Melvin—BCC Student

Looking down,
Emptiness is all I can see,
What should show happiness
Doesn't even show eternity.

This symbol has left my mind
Blank from what it should be
This symbol has made me cry
Hurt from what it could be.

As I sit in unsureness,
I ask will you buy me a ring?
Just to get a cold stare
So hard it stings.

The sting presses;
It presses so deep
So deep that
I begin to weep.

Long for that special love
Love that can't be explained,
Only to find
Bits and pieces of cold rain.
Waiting so long to see his symbol,
Now it doesn't even matter,
Nope, not even a sprinkle,
Why? Because my heart is just shattered.

Now as time passes by

And I begin to fall to my knee,
I pray that someday
He will show his symbol of love for me.



MOONLIT KISSES

Elyssa Lawson—BCC Student

I REMEMBER

Creshanda Melvin—BCC Student

I remember when you would look at me
as if I was everything to you,
I remember when you would hold my hand
And make me wonder if it's true to have someone like you.

I remember when being around you
Made me feel like everything was okay,
I remember being around you
Was good enough to have nothing to say.

I remember the lonely feeling
that I would get when you leave,
And still today I have to believe
With us together, there is nothing we can't achieve.

I know today is not all you wished it would be,
But I'm happy you chose
to spend some time
with someone like me.



WHO I AM

Mary Anne Murphy—BCC Faculty

If you want to know who I am, ask where I've been
For all the struggles and all the pain have made me who I am
I am strong because I was weak
I am whole because I was broken
I am because I believed
If you want to know who I'm becoming, ask what I'm doing
I am turning dreams into reality
I am taking what is mine
I am conquering
If you want to know where I'm going, ask me my dreams
I will love again like there is no tomorrow
I will be complete again because I will achieve all
I will succeed just because I am me



WHO I AM

Mary Anne Murphy— BCC Faculty

REFLECT

Andrew Bahhouth—BCC Family

What is evil?

Is it an evanescent eagle of caprice
Soaring through the iridescent skies of morality

Picking out its next casualty?

If beauty is in the eye of the beholder,
Isn't sin beheld by those who are bolder

Than bold, who go without being told

And remark upon a stark reality?

Evil is a fallacy

Created by the maladies

Of the locality.

Ignominy is forced upon he

Who abandons the element of veracity,

Even to himself.

The elf of treachery is

A wretch you see.

A wretch without a sketch

Portraying right from wrong.

The sinner sings the song of ignorance

Not belonging to any rally of intelligence,

Except for the intelligence of bliss,

Realizing not what is amiss.

The looking glass of humanity

Is one of vanity and hypocrisy.

Those who commit wrongs

Are thronged by the public

Into a cage.

They are carefully watched as though on a stage.

The public goes into a rage over these sinners,

Projecting its own feelings of insecurity upon those who are caught.

But the forgiveness which is sought is not granted.

The brows of the public are slanted

And their mouths form a malicious contortion.

This distortion of right and wrong

Causes revenge to avenge justice.

This melodious cacophony of erroneous democracy

Drives people over the edge of the ledge of honor

And allows them to be drawn in by the sonorous wails

Of onerous jails of the soul.

This downwards spiral of corruption

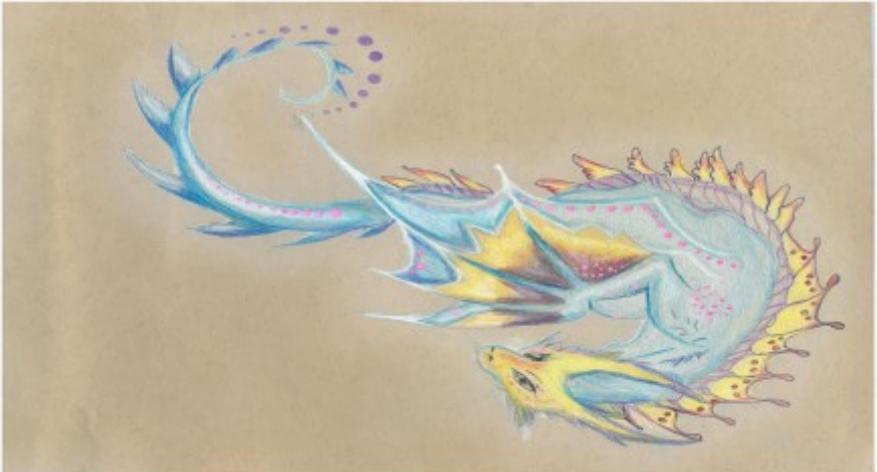
Never ends

And sends a message of troublesome disruption

To humanity as a whole.

If forgiveness is not allowed,

Then retribution for sinners is avowed.



**TALES OF OLD MAGIKA:
IN THE THEME OF ALVIA ALCEDO**

Tristian Stitz—BCC Student

50 YEARS

Robin Novak—BCC Staff

Fifty years of caring
Fifty years of sharing
Teachers showing dedication
by sharing the gift of education
With students working hard every day
striving to make their way
Their struggles are real
but the benefits are the best deal
Because Bladen Community College
gives them the knowledge
To let nothing in life impede
their opportunity to go out and succeed!



MEMORIES LAST FOREVER

Ashton Magby—BCC Student

LEFT BEHIND

Willie Allen—Friend of BCC

We leave evidence as we pass through our time.
Each day is a page; each one pens as a personal opine.
The missteps we make affect us only...we think.
But our folly may injure others, swiftly as an unnoticed
blink.

Our words are like missiles that go flying through space.
They're just words uttered in the heat of a moment, we say.
We may think we just say them, and it's off our lips and onto
the dirt,
But they soon penetrate someone's heart and mind like an
arrow of hurt.

Our deeds are open to each one who passes by,
But others who are looking to our life as their guide,
May not be impressed as their life brings them only grief.
And they may curse each day when they find no comfort or
relief.

Each promise we leave undone or promise we break
Is like a chain hanging around our neck that we often regret.
They follow through life, like unwanted, deserved shackles
on our feet.
But promises we should fulfill if the rest of our night is to be
sweet.



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;

And Christmas can never be replaced by the cheap
substitutes of now.

The yearning hearts now sit and ponder: Why did it happen?
When and how?

EMBRACING THE OAKS

Tim Marshburn—BCC Faculty

Branches huddling
Wedged together and pruned by
The wind and the salt.
A maritime forest—dry.
Old grove slanting from the sea.



EMBRACING THE OAKS

Tim Marshburn—BCC Faculty

THE HUNT

Harrison DeVane—BCC Family

Early in the morning I wake, crawling out of bed and putting
on clothes,
Eat some breakfast, get my gun, and put on boots to cover
my toes.
We ride to the pan, where the dogs are waiting patiently,
barking, sounding like a loud cheer,
Excited to chase their quarry, the most elusive whitetail deer.

We ride to the land, the land where others had hunted before
us; we ride over the bridge,
And pass through the gate, as many had before, and meet up
at the old ridge.
We talk about our week and listen to the huntin' master as he
tells us where to go.
We soon disperse and go to our appointed spots and wait for
the hunt to forgo.

Soon, we hear the joyous bark of the dogs, and the whistle of
the dog driver as the hunt begins.
I sit in my chair, listening to the dogs' bark and the chirp of
birds with a grin,
Fascinated with nature's melodious and random song, struck
with awe at God's creation.
I soon realize the dogs are coming, and sit and wait, listening
with anticipation.

As the dogs' bark gets closer and closer, I soon hear the all
too familiar crunch of leaves.
I pull up my gun and become tense, hoping it to be true what
my ear perceives.

I see my quarry as it steps out into a bottom from behind a towering white oak.

A six-point buck, beautiful and majestic, was gone in a flash; my heart broke.

I sat in dismay thinking about the buck that got away, pondering if I would see him again,

But the hunt was over, and as I was walking back to the truck, it hit me then.

I remembered the words my dad had said not so long ago: about the hunt we can boast;

It's not the kill that matters, but experiencing God's creation is what matters most.



**MAVERICK AND I OUT FOR A RIDE
ANTELOPE ISLAND IN THE GREAT SALT LAKE**

Diane Vitale—BCC Staff

BLANKET BOY

Mariea Bryant—BCC Student

We have all been together for years,
Joy, laughter, smiles, and a few tears.
So many miles traveled:
By foot, bike, bus, rail, or trail,
You never failed to help others sail.
You shared the world with us as we did with you.
You had a home without walls and yet were quick to make
calls.
You surrendered to Him, “Oh Great Grandfather,”
Is what you called him,
To each He is called by many names,
But all refer to the same.
We spoke briefly then deeply.
Then, secrets and confessions were made known.
That’s when we hung up the phone and rested for a spell.
If only I had known, I would have kept you on the phone.
Then none of us would be filled with pain from hell.
By morning light, I was told you had taken flight.
With unseen wings you had flown and gone home.
Now we sit and mourn, with broken hearts beating like
battered horns.
No more smiles, no more laughter, just tears till ever after.
No more original one-line jokes,
It’s as if we have all been choked.
All the great debates seem to be deflated.
It’s as if we have all been down weighted with pain.
You did things great and beyond us.
You lived, loved, and cared for all freely.
We, as a team, shine with your heavenly beam yearly.

To fulfill your dream of a warm blanket for all who need.
Fame and fortune, you did not seek, for you were humble
and meek.

Oh, how we have stumbled and fumbled
Because that day our lives crumbled.

Our words are no longer mumbled with tears;
For with each passing year we are learning,
Our love for you is ever burning, but life goes on.



DANDELIONS

Kristen Hunt—BCC Student

EULOGY OF 2017

Trever Lloyd—BCC Student

Rest in peace, year 2017. Nobody can ever forget you.
Like with any year, there have been some wonderful highs
and some depressing lows.
A year full of twists and turns that nobody would have ever
expected to happen.
You have given everybody a moment to be thankful for.
I am thankful for iPhone x and 8
And mourn iPhones 5, SE, 6, and 7
I am thankful for my kids' adaptability to technology
And regret that they may not understand my experience
As a child their age.



DAWN PATROL

Maurice Mitchell—BCC Staff

OBLIGATION

Charity Taylor—BCC Student

Helping, Helping, Helping

Constantly always helping

Stress, Stress, Stress

Mind is full of stress

Need, Need, Need

Assistance is in need

Busy, Busy, Busy

People are too busy

Sleep, Sleep, Seep

Running out of sleep

Gone, Gone, Gone

Ready to be gone

Run, Run, Run

Ready to just run

Task, Task, Task

Always complete the task

Burnt, Burnt, Burnt

Finish feeling burnt

POLLUX

Aaron Cox—BCC Staff

Your smile draws me forever closer.
Your kindness knows no bounds.
I'm throttled by your indecent exposure.
I truly believed in our new compound.

Our love must be one to fear because you always seem to
hide.
Tears shower our relationship causing pain and doubt to
thrive.
Another side of you emerges, this one governed by pride.
It is within your arms I lie; I've never felt more alive.

Your goal eludes me, my perception all but for naught.
You managed to steal my mind, body, and somehow, even
my heart.
Each day, I'd swoon for you without so much a second
thought.
Never once had I thought our cracked love would ever be
pulled apart.

Ripped out from under you, my heart will soon be dry.
Don't you even care to lose the one right by your side?
Lying in a shallow grave is where my memories will lie.
My corpse dreams of us together because in you, I still
confide.

I've let the twins kill me and you have nothing left to say.
How dare you stand hand to hand with me at my own
shallow grave?

I see tears in my eyes as the two of you walk away.
Left alone, the ground my new master, I am to become his
slave.

My time is drawing near as I hear the master's call.
Please, heaven, set me free from this never-ending curse.
Flying to the stars, I look back as my wings begin to stall.
As long as the Pollux has me chained, never will I disperse.



MOONSHINE

Kristen Hunt—BCC Student

ALGIEDI

Aaron Cox—BCC Staff

I remember the time we spent together.
I remember your gentle smile.
We were truly two birds of one feather.
Whatever caused you to turn so vile?

I gave my heart up to you, and you still let me walk away.
Don't you know, without it, I'll see my dying day.
My body to lie here, forever breathless, no funeral underway.
Please, Algiedi, save me before my soul floats away.

Dear Algiedi, do you remember me?
Do you still think of the time we shared?
Am I still part of your reality?
Until the end of time, this will be my prayer.

Seeing your smile hasn't been easy, nor the way you hold the moon.
It hurts to watch you, Algiedi, but I'm captivated by this surprisingly
sweet perfume.
Please come back to me, Algiedi; I need you very soon.
My soul cannot stay much longer in this state of gloom.

Dear Algiedi, where did we go wrong?
Our memories haunt me to this day.
I see you smiling at me, Algiedi; you must've known all along.
Algiedi, my Algiedi, was it truly me you meant to slay?

Now that you've got your revenge, Algiedi, will you visit my lonely
grave?
Your hatred has killed me but you shouldn't let it thrive.
I'm bound to the earth now, but I must still be forever brave.
You see, for even in death, I've never felt more alive.

WHEREVER YOU ARE

Kaitlyn Taylor—BCC Student

I watched you go on the most beautiful day,
And I thought to myself, 'Why is it this way?'
And it's not until I'm alone with myself
That the thoughts creep in and I know I'm not well.
Because watching you leave meant something new,
I was forced to face more than just losing you.
It made me realize I was growing up fast
And that these faces and places, they won't always last.
Though it is tough, and you know it will be,
I can't help feeling that you're still here with me.
I'll look out the window, at the sky, at the stars,
And I know that you're happy
Wherever you are.

The sky will turn gray; that is no lie.
There will be times when I'll fall and I'll cry.
Sometimes the thought will be too much to bear.
I'll be sad and alone, broken and scared.
Then you will come to me in a vision so clear,
And you'll say to me, "Don't cry; I am here."
Even if I can't see you and I don't hear your voice,
The will to move on is solely my choice.
So as I sit, writing, I hope you will see this,
And know that even though you will deeply be missed,
Don't worry about us. We'll be fine. We'll recover.
But your name will be heard, and we'll say,
'Man, I loved her.'

TO MY DEAR AND LOVING MOTHER

Conner Brisson—BCC Student

You've been by my side since day one;
You've always been the light to my sun.
You've supported me in every game,
And for that I try and keep you sane.

We've always had a bond that can't be broken.
And you've always been there when we were all
heartbroken.

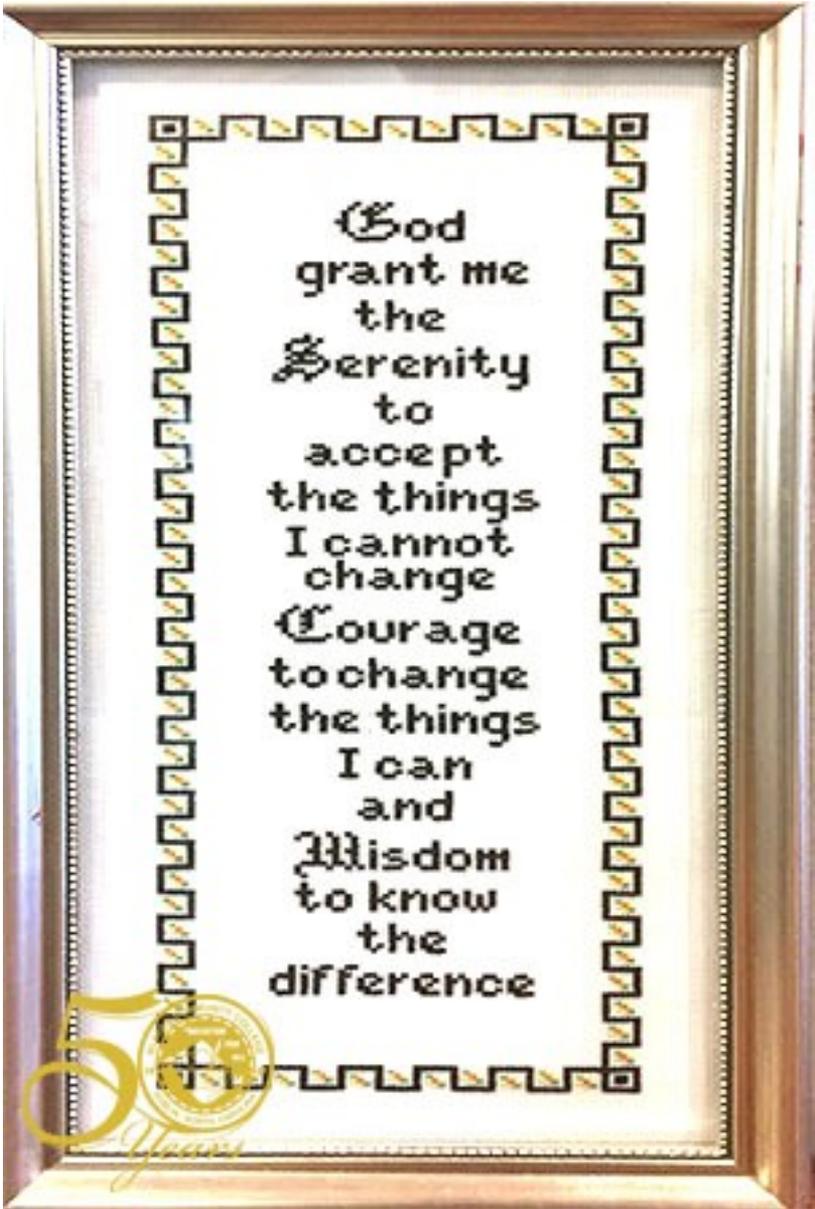
You keep us strong as one;
And now we have an angel looking out above.

You've been there through the ups, and downs;
Even through the tears, and frowns.
I couldn't do life without you,
Because I am who I am because of you.



HORIZON

Kyle Gause—BCC Student



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

CROSS STITCH

Betty Williamson—BCC Alumna

THE INK QUILL
LITERARY AND ART MAGAZINE

ART

Art
Art

ART
ART
ART





GEOMETRIC CHAOS

Blair Potter—BCC Student



DANCING AUTUMN

Alexandria Rogers—BCC Student



CRIMSON FALL

Alexandria Rogers—BCC Student



PURPLE WATERFALL

Edgardo Lara—BCC Student



WE REMEMBER

April Smith—BCC Student



BROKEN WINGS

Madison Byrd—BCC Student



SUNDAY VISITOR

Andrea Carter-Fisher—BCC Staff



SUNSET BLUES

Fabiola Taylor—BCC Student



LA VIDA ES BELLA

Fabiola Taylor—BCC Student



SERENITY

Fabiola Taylor—BCC Student



EVENING AT THE MARSH

Lisa DeVane—BCC Faculty



INFINITE

Jacob Hester—BCC Student



DIVE

Jacob Hester—BCC Student



RAINBOW AT PERDIDO KEY

Maurice Mitchell—BCC Staff



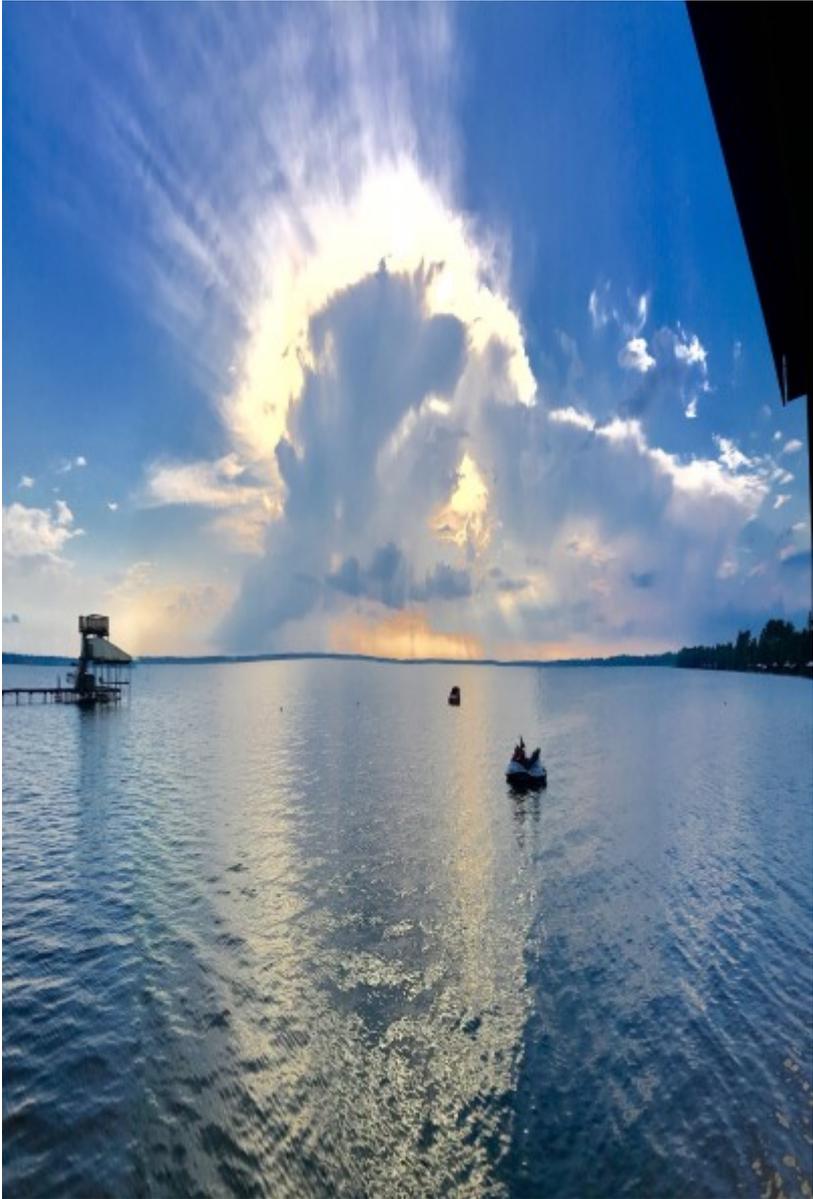
RAINBOW BLVD

Rebecca Ivey—BCC Student



REFLECTIONS

Laura Hall—BCC Faculty



LKW SUNDAY NIGHT

Robert Cooley—BCC Student



WINTER MORNING AT WHITE LAKE

Ray Sheppard—BCC Faculty



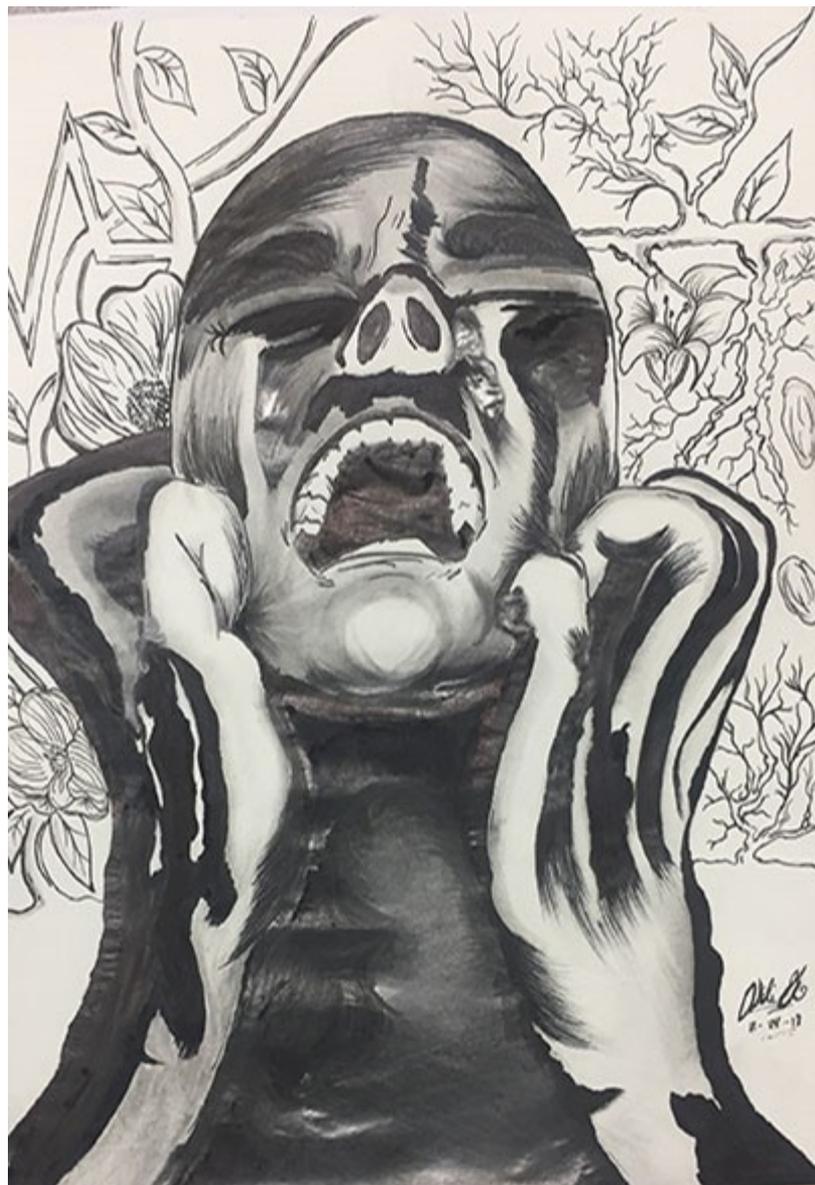
GOOD MORNING TO YOU

Jeanne Butler—BCC Staff



EIFFEL EYE

Brinkley Collier—BCC Student



BEAUTY IN MADNESS

Akili Grafton Jr.—BCC Student



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
COLOR-POP ON NYLON

Lenore Lacy—BCC Staff

THE INK QUILL
LITERARY ANNUARY MAGAZINE

ESSAY WINNERS

MIDDLE SCHOOL

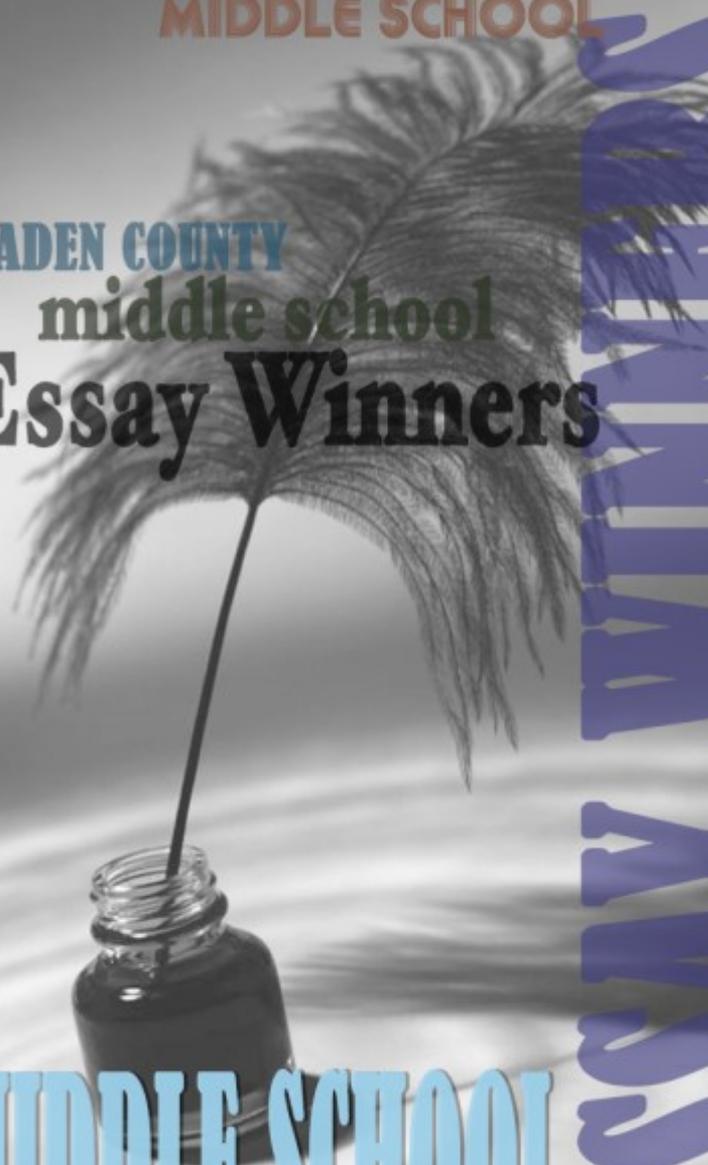
BLADEN COUNTY

middle school

Essay Winners

ESSAY WINNERS

MIDDLE SCHOOL



WORLD PEACE

Abigail McLaughlin—Bladenboro Middle School

Our world desperately needs peace and love. We have so many school shootings, drive by shootings, wars, murders, robberies, and hatred.

Since 1996, over two hundred students, faculty, custodians, and administrators have been killed in school shootings in the US. These innocent people didn't ask for or deserve this. Students should be able to attend school and college in an environment that is free of fear and hatred. Neither students nor teachers can do their best when afraid of what might happen. We live in America, not some third world country. What is wrong?

Children today can't play outside without the fear of an insane drive by shooter or kidnapper. It is even dangerous to go to a public park and have a fun and relaxing day. There could be some mentally deranged person hiding around the corner. World Peace could put an end to some of this. In our great country, statistics tell us that a little over 700 children a day are kidnapped. This seems unreal. Yes, we need world peace to ensure everyone's safety.

War is a total disaster to families, soldiers, and our nation because of the many innocent lives that are lost. The aim of people should be to help—not kill—each other. We could help other countries through their own efforts to produce more food, more construction materials, and more clothing, and to become more aware of acquiring peace. I don't understand why people can't get together and not be

consumed with evil. God made a perfect world and people have corrupted it. Colossians 3:15 says, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”

If I were older, I would be afraid to work in a bank or a store. Everyday businesses are robbed, and employees are murdered or hurt. Again this is not necessary. Peace should be a goal of every citizen in every country and a goal that all citizens in all nations strive for.

As a fourteen year old, I can do several things to help people attain peace and unity. At school, if I see other students with weapons, I will report them to the authorities. I will always be on guard and check my surroundings. By reporting any illegal act I see, I may save the lives of many innocent people. If I did not report dangerous instances, and a tragedy were to follow, I would feel guilty the rest of my life.

When I attend ballgames, I will always remain in the perimeter of the field or the gym. As a watchful student, I will encourage my friends not to leave the area during the game because there could be anyone prowling around outside looking for innocent people to abuse. After a game, I never walk to the car alone. This is a safety precaution that should be practiced. Talking to other students and reminding them that this world is not a perfect place could and should help them.

During my trips to the mall, I am not allowed to roam the area by myself. The adults that I am with demand that I stay with them. My friend’s mom took us to the mall and decided to let us go unattended. I immediately told her I couldn’t do

that. Luckily, we stayed with her.

In conclusion, we all have to work to acquire world peace. God made everyone equal so that we strive to help others, report dangerous situations, and respect the value of life. If we could all be nice, kind, considerate, and love others, what a positive impact this would have on our community, state, nation, and world.



THE ART OF NATURE

Rebecca Ivey—BCC Student

HEALTH AND FITNESS

Ashtin Lauren Wright—Clarkton School of Discovery

I believe that a great initiative that will positively impact my community is creating a health and fitness center that offers programs for children and teens. I believe that teaching children at a young age about proper nutrition and physical activity is beneficial to their health. I would love to help put into place a program with activities that build strength, promote strong bones and muscles, and enhance healthy growth and development. These types of activities will also help to strengthen the lungs, regulate blood flow, and maintain a healthy body weight. If people learn to make healthy choices as children, they will more than likely continue to make their health a priority throughout their lives.

There are very few health or fitness programs that are available for young adults or children in my area. We have a gym, but the programs and equipment are mostly for adults. I think a center that has equipment specifically for youth as well as offers fun fitness and yoga classes, gymnastics, and running clubs would be of great help to my community. This would give children a chance to be active and stay healthy, while they are enjoying themselves. Children and young adults used to get more exercise because they were more engaged in outdoor physical activity. Now they have so much more technology that they, as young adults, are more involved in things that do not require them to be physically active. I think a center that includes technology but also engages children in more physical activity is a necessity.

I have also noticed that my community has a lot of fast food restaurants. There are very few restaurants in our community that offer nutritious or healthy options. I would love for menus in restaurants in my community to include healthier food choices that appeal to young adults' taste and portion size. I think another great idea for this center is to offer nutrition classes and cooking classes that would teach children to help prepare nutritious snacks and meals. This would not only be beneficial to their health but would also teach them skills they can use throughout their lives.

This center could offer summer camps, too. In the summer, young adults tend to eat more, make less healthy food choices, and exercise less. Camps could be a fun way to keep them active and help them burn more calories. The camps could include swimming, biking, gymnastics, fitness, game play and more. These camps would be a great alternative to being home alone, being with a sitter, or just being inactive in general.

I really want to start an initiative to help get youth in my community on a healthy track for life. My idea for a youth fitness center would be a great start by offering fun, healthy ways to spend their time! I know by being more active and eating right, children could not only feel better, but also perform better in school, sports, and daily activities.



DOG SANCTUARY

Hannah Davis—Clarkton School of Discovery

Dogs are man's best friend, right? No one wants their best friend to be stuck in a "shelter" or live on the streets with no home, right? Well, I certainly don't. My dream is to rescue these dogs from the streets and from kill shelters and create a sanctuary for them where they can live their life in peace or possibly be adopted. Usually, dogs can be expensive, but I will sell them for the lowest prices possible so that all families can get a pet. Accomplishing this task is no easy feat, so I'm going to have to raise money through fundraisers and donations. This sanctuary for the dogs would not only take stray dogs off the street and away from kill shelters, but it would also open up a spot where community members can find a job, and people of all ages can go play with dogs.

Dogs need the proper amount of space; most of the time they are not given that space in shelters. With abundant space, my plan is to have a main building and a large open fenced-in area. Both will be accessible to the dogs. Before any dog is under the sanctuary's care, the facility will have all of the proper permits necessary for its operation. Everything must be legal before any work with a dog is done. To acquire the dogs, I'll travel around my community to the devastating kill shelters and save the poor dogs there. Next up, I'll travel around my community finding unloved strays and giving them and the other dogs all the love I could possibly give, and more. Before the facility opens up to the public, all of the participating dogs will be closely watched to determine whether or not they are safe for the community members and fellow dogs. If they are deemed not safe, then they will be separated from the majority and put in a more isolated

enclosure where only the volunteers and workers interact with them.

Determination will get this project up and running. Through hard work, I'll raise money with community fundraisers and generous donations. After enough money is raised, I'll begin construction. As already explained, the proceeding steps are to acquire the permits, recruit volunteers and workers, take in the dogs, and start the sanctuary.

The sanctuary is expected to greatly reduce the population of stray dogs and dogs in kill shelters. Simultaneously, it is expected to open up jobs for the young and the old and provide space for community recreation with the dogs.

The positive effects on the community will be tremendous. It will open up jobs so that young and old adults have somewhere to work alongside the animals they love. Stray dogs will be taken into the shelter and won't be seen on the streets anymore, and dogs in kill shelters will be saved and live a better life. Community members of all ages can visit the sanctuary and play with the dogs. Best of all, the dogs will be affordable for families who can't usually afford to adopt a dog. I believe that this sanctuary will pave the way for more community boosting projects.

This dog sanctuary will benefit our community in numerous ways. Dogs will be helped. Young people and adults will have a new job and recreation site. Others in my community will be encouraged to start inspiring projects. I know that it will be an excellent asset to our community and will be tremendously enjoyed and appreciated.

A HELPING HAND TO THE GREATEST GENERATION

Connor Britt—Clarkton School of Discovery

My grandparents are some of the most important people in my life. My grandmother recently had to have cataract surgery; some of the medicines were so astronomically expensive that her doctor had to give her a coupon for her to be able to afford them. Without those eye drops, her eyes could have become infected and may have become damaged permanently. It made me reflect on all of the elderly in our community that could be suffering because they could not pay for their medicines. I spend the majority of my time riding around with my grandpa, talking to all his friends, and I couldn't imagine him or grandma suffering. They are so full of knowledge, wisdom, and the most entertaining stories. I would like to start an initiative that may not solve the issues with expensive medicine, but would certainly bring awareness to it.

I would start with my local school and ask our principal to allow the children to write letters to politicians and pharmaceutical companies challenging them to come up with better solutions to help the elderly pay for medication. We could offer our opinions on the methods we would use, like lowering the prices or offering discounts for people over a certain age. Then, I want to spread the idea to other local schools to see if we can make a change in their ideology.

I also hope to talk to local pharmacies to ask if a program could be implemented by asking people if they would like to round up their bills to go into account to help people of a

certain age. If their bill was \$9.45 and they agreed to round up, it would put \$0.55 into a fund. These small amounts might add to a substantial sum. The pharmacist could disperse these funds to those struggling.

I hope to make prices for the elderly in the pharmaceutical area cheaper so they can live their lives in a simpler, better, healthier and less stressful way. I think it may increase the life expectancy for the older generation because it makes the medication cheaper and more accessible. It would also show kids that they can make an impact on the way the world works and create a sense of accomplishment by making the world a little brighter. One day I hope to be a biochemist, so hopefully I will be able to find less expensive ways to make medicines and maybe I'll find a cure for some illnesses.

In conclusion, our community can start a project to make the prices of expensive medication lower for the elderly. It will also show kids who participate that they have a say in the prices of everyday commodities, and it shows them that when a community comes together, great things can happen.





MAJESTIC DEER

Faith Johnson—BCC Student



Doily Pressed
Cobalt Dish

CERAMICS
Craftsman Lisa Neal

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
COBALT DISH AND VASE**

Lisa Neal—BCC Staff

VISITING AUTHORS

A quill pen with a dark, feathery top and a sharp nib, resting on a light-colored surface next to a small, dark glass inkwell. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light gray.

Visiting Authors
visiting authors

VISITING AUTHORS

VISITING

WAITING FOR WONDERLAND

Alex Albright—Visiting Author

*The train to Wonderland
arrives in four minutes*

Substrated beneath the old
State House on the Bowdoin
platform and across the tracks
a couple breaks up loudly:

You have to choose he says,
walks away & up steps into
noise & light, his legs still
in this scene as she texts.

A child cries on our side
of the tracks & cellphones
blimble away in pockets &
purses before train's squeak

stops this

Now arriving:

READING ARCHIE AMMONS WHILE EATING LUNCH AT A KFC

Alex Albright—Visiting Author

A week before he'd have turned 82, I've
got Archie's new collected at sunshine's edge
& a five dollar fillup: chicken pot pie, all
I can drink CoCola and a chocolate chip cookie

with senior discount \$4.82 tax included: he
would have smiled big and broadly at such
a deal: on a warm and slow Tuesday, lunch
crowd mostly now gone back to work : Ace

Moving and Storage, Buckner Exterminating,
now me in that number: sunshot off a drive-thru
Focus blinks by on a red blur: concrete and pave-
ment on somebody's farmland now forgot, hospital

looms big behind, out of sight but casting shadows
that'd've ruined this field's cotton or corn: a sheaf of
light broken and grayed for you and me, long after
Ezra's exile, now routine: today I learned someone

has a funeral to go to tomorrow and someone
else will have an operation on Friday but in
Archie's world he's late collecting for their supper
the pigs and cows of his Columbus County farm

WHEN THE ANGLE'S RIGHT

Alex Albright—Visiting Author

When the angle's right
between this window seat
and sun's setting low

on lake, its light
touches blaze like
magnified glass-made

hot spots that burst
bright: flat flames:
The angle bends

the fires go quick to black
holes, the world less
tempered than it was.



ALEX ALBRIGHT BIOGRAPHY

Alex Albright holds a BA from UNC-CH and an MFA from UNCG. He worked in bookstores, taught high school, and has been an English faculty at ECU since 1981. He is founding editor of the *North Carolina Literary Review*, has written and produced two musical productions: the UNC-TV documentary *Boogie in Black and White* (1987) and the one-woman show, *Coming into Freedom* (1990) for Louise Anderson and the NC Symphony. He is also the author of *The Forgotten First: B-1 and the Integration of the Modern Navy* (2013), editor of several publications, and recipient of the 1991 Jack Kerouac Prize, the '98 R. Hunt Parker Award, the '07 Roberts Award, and the '12 Brown-Hudson Award.



LOST IN CALABASH

April Smith—BCC Student

TRANSFORMING SOUL

Bruce Lader—Visiting Author

Often I suspect my spirit
isn't the same as a year ago,
or even yesterday.

It doesn't listen to me,
seems to have a mind of its own,
says and does whatever it fancies.

Today, like Clarence Darrow
defending freedom of thought,
it argued for animal birthrights,
unpolluted air and water.

Tomorrow, it may challenge
theories of the universe.
Maybe my rebellious soul
is more intelligent than I am.

Can it be an impostor,
an enemy disguised as a friend.
Can there be more than one?



SOUL DREAMERS

Bruce Lader—Visiting Author

voyage the archipelago
of a pomegranate, explore
the parallel universe
of a waterglobe,
map the topography of Mars and Io,
undersea chasms
deeper than the Grand Canyon,

soul dreamers, like dolphins,
dare to wander and
weave blue holes through space,
make the most of time, the effort to span
peacekeeping bridges,
alleviate troubles,
imagine traveling anyplace,
without checkpoints—

soul dreamers understand
when a fisherman
reels the catch out of a sea,
where the water and fish
originated is unimportant,
what's the difference if a man
or woman, friend or enemy,
lends a hand?

BRUCE LADER BIOGRAPHY

Bruce Lader is the author of *Embrace*, *Landscapes of Longing*, *Discovering Mortality*, and *Fugitive Hope*. His poems have appeared in over 100 journals, including *Poetry*, *New York Quarterly* and many international anthologies. Lader is the founding director of Bridges Tutoring in Raleigh, North Carolina.



A BEAUTIFUL DAY FOR A FERRY RIDE

Diane Vitale—BCC Staff

THE SCIENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE (GLOBAL WARMING)

Robert W. Miller—Visiting Author

The terms global warming and climate change are often used interchangeably, but they are different. Global warming is the overall warming of the planet and is primarily caused by greenhouse gases released from human activity, although there may be a small contribution from natural climate cycles. Climate change is driven by global warming, affects precipitation patterns and temperatures, and drives local weather. This means some places will be wetter, drier, warmer or cooler. There also is a difference between climate and weather. Climate describes long term patterns in temperature, precipitation, and growing seasons, while weather is what is happening at a location at a particular point in time.

The Science behind Climate Change

The overwhelming consensus among thousands of scientists worldwide representing numerous scientific disciplines is that climate change is real and we're the cause of most if not all of it. There is some debate within the scientific community regarding how fast it is happening and how bad it will get, but not what is causing it.

How strong is the consensus that humans caused climate change? Two hundred and fifty five members of our National Academy of Sciences, including 11 Nobel Prize laureates, defended the rigor and objectivity of climate science. Their statement, "Climate Change and the Integrity of Science," was published in the research journal *Science* on May 7,

2010. Worldwide 55 international scientific organizations have endorsed the findings of climate change research. The International Panel on Climate Change concludes “the scientific evidence for human caused warming of the climate is unequivocal.”

An analysis of climate change skeptics within the scientific community, published in ScienceDaily (www.sciencedaily.com) on June 27, 2010, concluded “The very few scientists who are unconvinced have far less expertise and prominence in climate research compared with scientists who are convinced.” Those who deny anthropogenic global warming have no alternative theory to explain the observed rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide and global temperature. In spite of all the evidence supporting anthropogenic climate change, why is there a debate?

Humankind's Great Experiment

Can we change the chemistry of the atmosphere without negative consequences? Fossil fuels (and limestone) are a store of carbon that was once in the atmosphere. Our atmosphere 4.6 billion years ago consisted of carbon dioxide, methane, hydrogen, and nitrogen. Our present atmosphere consists of oxygen (21%), nitrogen (78%), and argon and other gases including CO₂ (1%). The current composition is the result of eons of biologic activity that fixed carbon in geologic formations and we are now putting that carbon back into the atmosphere.

Facts about Climate Change:

Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas!

Carbon dioxide is increasing in the atmosphere!

The climate has gotten warmer!

Questions related to these facts

Is the current warming caused by CO₂?

How warm will it get?

Greenhouse Gases

What is a greenhouse gas? Solar radiation covers a spectrum from very short wave radiation to very long wave radiation, of which visible light is a very small part of that spectrum. Much of our incoming radiation is short wave, and this does little to warm the atmosphere. However, short wave radiation will heat the earth. The warm earth then emits infrared radiation (long wave), and that will heat gases. Some gases are much more efficient at absorbing this energy including carbon dioxide, methane, fluorinated gases and nitrous oxide, all of which are increasing due to human activity. Of these, carbon dioxide accounts for 82% of our greenhouse gas emissions.

Current emissions of carbon dioxide are 600+ million metric tons per week, or 31.2 billion metric tons per year. Back in 1950 the first continuing measurements of the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere were started at an observatory in Hawaii by an atmospheric scientist named David Keeling. He found the amount in the atmosphere at that time to be 280 ppm.

Carbon dioxide has increased steadily since then and today exceeds 400 ppm. Where has all that Carbon Dioxide gone? One third has dissolved in the oceans making them more acidic (carbonic acid), some has been sequestered in ecosystems (plants love it), and rest (50%) is in the atmosphere. As the levels of carbon dioxide increase so do global temperatures.

We also have atmospheric records dating back 425,000 years captured in air bubbles trapped in glaciers and ice

caps. The highest concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide in that time period were in warm eras between five ice ages, and were less than 300 ppm.

Some cite past ice ages and warming in between as evidence that what is happening is part of normal climatic variation and it will soon start to get colder. However, ice ages are known to be caused by what is known as Milankovitch Cycles, which are driven by periodic changes in earth's orbit caused by gravity from the giant gas planets, and wobbles in earth's tilt towards the sun.

Evidence from the Present

The troposphere is warming as greenhouse gases trap long wave radiation from the earth's surface. Inversely the stratosphere is cooling as the troposphere traps energy. Globally, glaciers and ice caps are melting. Oceans are warming, and levels are rising as warming water expands. Rising sea levels are further augmented by melting ice. As it stands we are locked in to a three foot+ rise in sea level by the end of the century. Flora and fauna are shifting their ranges towards the poles, and the frequency and intensity of weather extremes are on the rise. A few have tried to blame climate change on solar activity because for a couple of decades solar flares were on the rise along with global temperatures, but solar activity is now on the decline and temperatures continue to rise.

Computer Models

All computer models predict warming and all are making better projections as to the effects of climate change. One of the big variables in the models has been modeling the amount of cloud cover there will be as the climate warms. Dr. Kate Marvel, a physicist at Columbia University and a

researcher at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, studied the impact of warming on cloud cover. She found that there will be more high thin clouds that let sunlight in and trap heat, adding to warming. Low thick clouds block sunlight and reduce heating, but will become fewer in the tropics and this too will add to warming. While the models have all predicted warming, they have underestimated the extent of warming, likely the result of incomplete understanding of the role of clouds.

Global Effects of Climate Change

- *Warming greatest at high latitudes
- *Changing rainfall patterns
- *Shifts in agriculture
- *Ecosystem shifts and species loss
- *Population displacement
- *More frequent and more extreme weather events
- *Rising ocean levels
- *Melting glaciers and ice caps
- *Acidifying the ocean water
- *Loss of Arctic sea ice
- *North Atlantic and Pacific species will mix
- *Coral bleaching

Effects on North Carolina

- *By 2100 sea level will rise 1 meter
- *2,500 square miles of the coast will be under the sea
- *Warmer and probably drier
- *More frequent droughts
- *More intense hurricanes
- *Sounds will become bays and the outer banks will become isolated islands
- *More and more intense wildfires
- *Loss of coastal farm and forest land
- *More stress related pest outbreaks
- *Net loss of wetlands
- *New warmer climate species moving as native species are lost.

What to do about Climate Change?

There are many solutions to our current crisis, but none will change what is already in the atmosphere. We can, however, stop adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere to

slow the changes already in progress. We all are familiar with the need to switch to renewable energy sources, which are now competitive with fossil fuels.

Additionally many industries, such as Apple and CocaCola, and GM have also signed on to keeping up their efforts to reduce emissions in support of the Paris Climate Accord. Interestingly, China is spending twice as much on renewable energy technology as the United States. China's leadership believes their scientists and China will dominate new renewable energy industries.

Presently natural gas is replacing the burning of coal in power plants, and this is happening because coal cannot compete economically with natural gas, nor can it compete with renewables such as wind and solar. Natural gas conversion is helping because it releases less carbon dioxide per unit of energy than coal, but ultimately needs to be replaced as well. Natural gas is not without its own problems as much gas is produced by fracking, a process that has its own environmental issues.

Hopeful Signs

Hopefully we will see our country renew its effort to deal with climate change. For citizens, it is imperative to understand what science tells us and to act accordingly. As astrophysicist Neil deGrass Tyson said about science "The good thing about science is it's true whether you believe it or not."



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Robert W. Miller, Emeritus Professor from the College of Natural Resources - University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point (UWSP), currently chairs the Oriental Tree Board, is a member of the North Carolina Urban Forest Council Board, serves on the Science and Technology Committee for the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership, and is a part time urban forestry and arboriculture consultant. Miller has published many papers in professional and scientific journals and has written the book *Urban Forestry: Planning and Managing Urban Greenspaces*. Miller’s BS and MS in forestry are from West Virginia University and his Ph.D. in forestry is from the University of Massachusetts.



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