

**Honors 1001:  
The Collected  
Essays**

**Volume 11**

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## **Preface**

**Each fall, the freshmen entering the University Honors Program at Arkansas Tech University attend a six-week seminar called “Honors 1001.” While the course is a bonding experience, as well as a chance to become oriented to college life, the students also read and discuss a selection of essays by contemporary authors and write personal essays of their own on topics they select as a group. At the end of the course, each student submits his favorite essay for inclusion in our collection.**

**The members of the Fall 2010 Freshman Class of the University Honors Program at Arkansas Tech hope that you will enjoy reading the personal essays on these pages. In all cases, the opinions expressed are those of their authors and do not reflect the opinions or views of the administrators, faculty, or staff of Arkansas Tech University. Therein lies their charm.**

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**THE AUTHORS**  
**University Honors Freshmen**  
**Fall 2010**



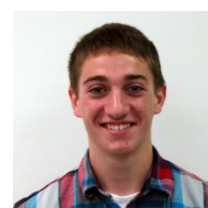
**Cody Alderman**



**Sara Armstrong**



**Elizabeth Ash**



**Neil Bruner**



**Shanyce Day**



**Michael Godsey**



**Shawn McKay**



**Caitlin Oswalt**



**Jesse Owens**



**Weston Rutledge**



**Ryan Scantling**



**Anthony Slater**



**Kenneth Smith**



**Stevie Svetz**



**Dallan White**



**Kelsey White**

## From Hero to Zero and Back Again

Cody Alderman

Everything is circular. Though things, situations, and even your core self may change, eventually, it all finds its way back to where it was. While my father has remained the same person through my entire eighteen years on this earth, my view and respect for him has changed. Everyone goes through those stages where either their parents can do everything or they can do nothing. My view of my father is no exception.

When I was young, he was always the man I wanted to be when I grew up. He was strong, and people looked up to him. I looked up to him. He embodied everything a father should be. I had the child-like faith and love in him that made him a superhero in my eyes. Week after week, I witnessed him lead people without faltering and change peoples' lives through the words that were divinely inspired in him. I saw unfaltering faith and belief in what he was called to do.

In turn, the belief and respect was returned with what I perceived as a father's version of child-like confidence. He was my personal motivational speaker, at least that's how I saw him. He always cheered me on and backed me up. He never doubted me and always, always supported me in what I did. For example, when I was younger, I loved baseball. It was my enduring dream every year to make the All-Star team and to travel the state doing what I loved. But season after season, the names were announced, and I was never one of them. Dad never doubted me.

He was there to get me out of my selfish pity and not only told me to practice more, but actually practiced with me. And because of his help, motivation, and long hours of repetitive pitch and catch, I had one of the best seasons of my life and was finally chosen for the team. He never had any doubt in his mind, even when mine was clouded. But then, nothing he did made sense anymore. He was full of nothing but resentment toward me and was dead set on holding me down and being "one of those parents."

I saw him make, what I thought were, parenting mistakes. He kept me imprisoned in the safety of our home while I wanted to go out with raging hormonal friends and got in to God knows what kind of trouble. He stopped being the cool, motivational father and buckled down and made me start taking responsibility for my failures, even if that failure was a simple B on my report card. He was stupid, unfair, and not who I wanted to be when I was a father.

I was embarrassed around him. Every time he took me to school, he would park directly in front of the main entrance. I would slam the door and run into the building before anyone could see me to save the embarrassment. It did, however, help that he always dropped me off late. He had no sense of what was cool or not. Hawaiian shirts made up ninety percent of his wardrobe, and the other ten depicted the "American Muscle" that he always dreamt of owning, or were dress shirts that he preached the

same old tired, worn-out sermons in. Everyone knows that socks and sandals should never be worn at the same time, except for my dad. He was the kind of person who always reminisced about the days when Lynard Skynard and Creedence Clearwater Revival were all that was played on the radio, and not this “unsoulful” and meaningless music that was blasted at 1000 watts at every ungodly hour of the night.

We had nothing in common, and I was fine with that. My weekends consisted of video games and friends who actually did have similar interests, but not time with my father. But I liked it. The only time I wanted to see him was for money or to drop me off somewhere, but he was nothing more than a chauffeur, not a loving parent who only allowed me to have fun at his expense. It was his fault anyway. I was forced to live without my license until I was 17 and a senior in high school. Even when I did finally have that plastic card that signified freedom for every other teenager in America, I was held to an 11:00 curfew. Every night. No matter whom I was with. Everything he did was stupid and selfish to me. All he wanted to do was save money and keep his oppressing thumb on every aspect of my life. Everything he said fell on deaf ears and every look of hope, encouragement, and love was met only with rolled eyes.

But now that he's not around, I see what an impact he had on my life through all those years of me hating him. When he constantly asked if I had done my homework, he was just keeping me accountable and helping me to grow in school so I could come to college. And free for that matter. I now see that I was lucky to have him constantly pushing me and protecting me. If my studies and morals had suffered, there would be no way on this earth I would be where I am right now, both physically at college, and morally. The void I feel when I go days without talking to him lets me know that he's really there. His superhero status in my eyes is once again taking over. Before I left, he told me that he would always be there for me, no matter what the situation, no matter what time of day or night, or even if he has to drive up here at a moment's notice to fix the world-ending problem.

Everything is circular. It always makes its way back to where it was before. My outlook and view of my father and his decisions he has made in bettering my life is no exception to the rule. I thought he was changing and becoming a person that I didn't want to be or have anything to do with, I was changing and becoming a person that I thought I would never be that no one would love, but he did. He once again became the superhero father that was created as a child, stopped believing in as stupid teenager, and see once again as a less stupid college teenager.

## My Early Childhood Friend

Sara Armstrong

When I was a baby, at some birthday or holiday, I received a baby doll. It had a cloth body and a round, bald, plastic head. It had blue eyes that would stay open while it was upright, but they would close if it was laid down. Its outfit was pink on one side and yellow on the other, and two Velcro strips held it together in the back. The holes for the hands and feet, as well as the middle front of the one-piece, were embellished with a white cloth which was polka-dotted with multi-colored dots. It also had white plastic shoes that were hard to fit over its fluffy feet, and over time they both magically disappeared. It had a little button nose, and the mouth was a simple hole just big enough for the pacifier, or “buh,” as I called it as a wee tot, to fit into. So of course this baby doll became known as “Buh Baby.”

For all practical purposes “it” was a “she,” and we did all of the typical little girl things together. We would hold tea parties for ourselves, as well as our other stuffed friends. I would dress her up, even though she only had one outfit. We would watch television, play games, and look at books together. And at nighttime, she would always sleep next to me. We were practically inseparable. She was pretty much my best friend, seeing that at that young age most children don’t know anyone else their own age.

Buh Baby went with me everywhere. Every Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night she was dragged into church right beside me. Everyone needs Jesus, so of course my most prized possession had to be sitting in the third pew next to me whenever the doors were open. I usually had her wrapped in a blanket, precisely the way my mommy had showed me many times. After a while, everyone at church knew Buh Baby and knew that we were a package deal. Wherever there was one of us, you could bet that the other one of us was not far behind. And if I ever forgot her, I was questioned regarding her whereabouts.

Contrary to popular belief, Buh Baby was not always in a beautiful and pristine condition. Her eye lashes often had an unusual way of plucking themselves from her eye lids. The hole that was her mouth was often stuffed with random things, from blades of green Easter grass, to a missile from one of my brother’s guns. When you shook her, you could hear all of the random objects jingling in her head.

If ever we would sit down and draw or color a picture, Buh Baby always found a way to get marker on her head or foot. Her dimples and other facial characteristics were not easily noticeable. So I took it upon myself to fill them in with a pen. Any time she made suicidal leaps from my arms onto the ground, she would scuff up her head or get dirt on her sleeve. Needless to say, Buh Baby had to have a bath every once in a while, as did all children. My mom would place her in a pillow case, tie a knot in the open end, and put Buh Baby into the washing machine. But do not be alarmed. She was always washed on the gentle cycle.

One winter I thought it very necessary that Buh Baby have a coat. The weather was cold, and her paper-thin outfit was just not enough. My mother took it upon herself to crochet a coat for Buh Baby. It was made out of pink, white, and yellow yarn, matching the shades of her clothes. It had a hood and little bunny-shaped buttons. Buh Baby wasn't human, but she still deserved the best. She was as much a part of the family to me as someone else's pet is to them.

The most important feature of Buh Baby was her pacifier. It was, as many of her other accessories were, pink. It had a round handle that stuck straight out of her mouth, as opposed to the dangling handles of most pacifiers. Buh Baby always had to have her buh, otherwise she was simply Baby, and that surely wouldn't suffice. So Buh Baby always had her buh, and I always had my Buh Baby.

One day, when I was about five, the unthinkable happened. Buh Baby lost her buh. We had been walking next door to my grandparents' house when the incident occurred. I had placed Buh Baby safely and securely into her carrier that fit over my shoulders. With Buh in place, we set out on our journey. When we got inside my grandparents' house, I took the carrier off my shoulders, put it down in a chair, went to unbuckle Buh Baby, and almost lost it. Standing there staring at her, I became so sad. Her one distinct feature, the one that she was named for, was missing.

We searched for the longest time for the missing pacifier. I retraced my steps back and forth between my house and my grandparents'. My family helped me look outside and inside, all throughout both houses, in the car, everywhere. But the buh was never found. From that day forward, Buh Baby just wasn't the same. I wasn't the same. My mother could tell that I was really upset about losing this seemingly insignificant object. She tried to find a match on the Internet, but the best that she could come up with was a yellow, translucent pacifier. It looked different, felt different and just wasn't the same.

For the early years of my childhood, Buh Baby was as close to me as any friend. But we started to grow apart the day she lost her buh. She began to stay home during church services. She no longer accompanied us to town. Over time I stopped sleeping with her. She eventually found her way under my bed, only to be found months later.

To many people, a doll is just a doll. But when I was little, Buh Baby was the world to me. And without her buh, things just weren't the same. She can still be found in my house, but where I'm not exactly sure. She could never be thrown away because it would be like throwing away years of memories. Some of the earliest memories of my childhood are encompassed in a dirty, ragged, aged stuffed doll. But I wouldn't have it any other way.

## The Dirt Road

Beth Ash

As I was driving home for Labor Day weekend, I suddenly turned toward my house and realized...this was the first time I had driven on a dirt road in over two weeks. My mind fled back to the last time I had gone down that familiar dusty, dirty path. It was August 20, 2010. That day, the dirt road led me away from home, but today it was bringing me back again. Foolishly, I expected everything to be the same but I was in for a big shock. Life had gone on without me.

As I turned into the driveway, everything looked the same. Yes, the house and buildings had remained the same. The house was still the same cherry red, and the horse and dog eagerly greeted me. There was my brother's truck, my mother's and father's cars, and the old faithful Chevy farm truck sat in its place of prominence. No, nothing had changed down to the cat under the front porch bench. It was the same home I had left a mere two weeks earlier; however, I soon found out that changes had happened. Before long, I would begin to see them.

Grabbing the bag that I had packed to come home, I went into the house. There was my piano, my music, and my special spot on the couch. As I walked into my room, I faced my first of many shocks.

This was not my room! I don't know where it went, but everything about this room was different. My books were all gone. They now sit on my shelves in my dorm room. The bare bookcase in my room made me feel as if my friends had fled. I was a traitor for leaving them all in Russellville. The pillows on the bed were not my pillows. They were extras. I now had the pillows saved only for guests.

"Empty-closet syndrome" was the next affliction cast upon me. Where was my wide selection of clothing? The answer was simple. Just like everything else I owned, my clothing now resides in my dorm room in Russellville. My possessions had abandoned me. They had a new home.

But this was still my home. It might be a little different, but it was home. For three glorious days I could have my own room, a couch, and home-cooked meals. It was going to be pure heaven!

If I thought my house was different, life had changed even more. Contrary to my thoughts, a way of life can change drastically in two weeks. When I went to the football game, I was no longer sitting in the stands playing my instrument. I also had to pay to get in the game! With my seat in the band went my free entrance to the game. It was something to which I had never given much thought. This time, I truly had to stop to think. I am no longer a student at Pea Ridge High School.

Church had also changed. A new visitation program had started, and I had not been involved in any of the planning. I knew nothing about what was taking place. I felt a little out of place. But the people had not changed. Their consistency put me immediately at ease again, and I enjoyed the service immensely.

On Labor Day, I packed up my bag of clean clothes that my mom had insisted on washing for me. I packed up my snacks and my backpack and threw them into the trunk of the car. I drove out of the driveway with the eyes of my parents and their waves reflecting in my rear view mirror. By the time I reached the end of the driveway, they had become mere blurs as I stubbornly refused to smudge my mascara by crying. As I blinked away the tears, I turned once more onto my dirt road.

The road, itself, was much the same. It was the same dirt and the same straight road with some new ruts and potholes. But once again I was reminded of the times I had taken this road for granted. It had taken me away from home, but each time it had faithfully brought me home.

It was on this trip home that I truly began to realize that I was growing up. Now, I am eighteen, attending college, and I am, in many ways, on my own. But I realize that my family, my friends, and my home will always be there if I need them. The life lessons I have been taught will also be there for me. They have held true for eighteen years and will continue to guide me in the rest of my life.

While life will never be quite the same ever again, I now know what is truly important in life. Faith, family, and friends are what really matter. I now know that no matter what happens and no matter where I go, I will always have people at home who love me. As long as I have someone who loves me, I will always be rich. I will never be alone, and I will always have a place where I will be at home.

For the last month, my life has been completely different. Eighteen years ago, I started out on a small dirt road in Pea Ridge, Arkansas. But now, my road has changed. Somewhere along the way, I got on the interstate and into the fast lane. I soon got off at Russellville. My life's road is now under construction, and the change is from dirt to pavement. When I graduate from college, my road will be almost complete. I will, at least, have the necessary means of travel to get to where I want in life. A whole new world of places to go and things to see will open up to me. But no matter where this new road takes me, I know that at the beginning lies a dirt road that started it all. I know that even if my road becomes paved and improved, it will always lead me back home and back to the dirt road where I truly became who I am today.

## A Funny Thing Happened

Neil Bruner

I absolutely love to duck hunt, so it comes as no surprise that I was ecstatic when my dad told me we were going on a guided hunt in Missouri during the week that historically was the best week for hunting. To make things even better, the week before the hunt was spent traveling to various family members' houses, exchanging gifts, and sharing immaculate dinners served around small, over-packed dining room tables surrounded by rarely-seen, smiling and laughing relatives. It was absolutely perfect.

On a Sunday after church, my dad and I loaded our gear into his truck and let the dog, Breeze, into the cab to ride up to Missouri. The excitement in the truck was electric; even Breeze seemed to understand the magnitude of what was about to happen and danced energetically for the entire trip. The drive seemed to last forever. Our excitement quickly turned to anxiety and the speedometer steadily climbed as we neared our destination.

When we arrived at the address of our resort, we were surprised to see a quaint little house in the middle of a regular neighborhood, and stepping out of the house, waving at us, was our guide, John. John and his family, which lived in the house with him, were more than hospitable. We sat around the dinner table with them and ate a meal that John's wife had prepared. Afterwards, we sat around watching football and talking. When it was time for bed, my dad and I retired to our own rooms, complete with bunk-beds. It was unexpected, but perfect.

On the first day of our three-day hunting excursion, we drove to a nearby cow pond. After setting up our decoys, chairs, guns, and, most importantly, snacks, we sat chatting, joking, and watching as legions of ducks came and went in the twilight before shooting time. As soon as the sun peeked up over the horizon, we settled down, and, even with my dad's horrendous shooting and John and me relentlessly chastising him, we shot our limit of ducks and spent another hour eating a hot breakfast while watching the immense variety of ducks and geese flying overhead as we played with Breeze. It was perfect.

The second day, after much debate, we decided to return to the same cow pond. This was a difficult decision because the weather forecast called for ideal wind conditions for that cow pond, but, as any good duck hunter knows, the voodoo and mystical forces involved in the hunting of ducks dictate that you should never, under any circumstance, hunt the same spot two times in a row. We were lucky this time; however, it took us from seven in the morning until almost noon to shoot our limit in ducks. In the afternoon, my dad and I spent time together bowling, watching movies, and just hanging out. This, as the rest of the week thus far, was perfect.

Then came the bittersweet last day. We were excited to return home but were saddened at the idea of ending such an amazing hunt. That morning we decided we had exhausted all of our luck and did not wish to test the mystical forces and voodoo behind duck hunting any more than we already had. The weather forecast called for snow, and because of this, we decided to go to a larger, more sheltered cow pond. My dad and I had also decided that we were only going to hunt until ten a.m. so that we could meet my mom for lunch and celebrate our very successful trip. This provided a challenge for the two of us to do our best calling and shooting so that we could get our limit, get out of the snow, and get home to see my mom.

The hunting was wild. Ducks were dropping in, unseen until the very last second, through the snow. This made for fun but challenging shooting and was an absolutely amazing experience. Because of this difficult shooting, we were down to the wire getting our limit and going home before ten. Because we only needed one more duck, my dad and I decided that we were going to wait for one more group of ducks to come in before we left, and I was going to get the final shots. A few minutes later, it happened.

Sitting waiting for our last groups of ducks to come in, I finally had some time to take in the beauty of my surroundings. The pond was brown as every cow pond is brown, but this one seemed so much more elegant; the way it was embroidered by paper-thin sheets of ice, crackling with the motion of the wind-swept water, transformed this ordinarily disgusting cesspool of cow filth into something of ethereal beauty. Even the barren trees around its edges took on a mysterious beauty with the dusting of snow they wore and the icicles that draped from their branches. At that moment the cow pond ceased to be an artificial, filthy tub for cows and became something so much more powerful but refined: nature.

In an instant, the snow began to let up, and the faint, distinctive cackling quack of a male mallard could be heard. Immediately, John began to call and coax the bird to choose our pond to rest in. The silhouette of the mallard could be seen floating in lazy circles, lower and lower with every pass until I could just see its bright orange feet and bill and a hint of blue flashing from its wings. Then, with resolve, the mallard decided that John's calls were a friendly duck and floated gracefully into the pond. The bird was bowed into the shape of a lower-case "m" and descended impossibly slowly to the water right in front of me. Then, a split second before its outstretched feet disturbed the surface of the water, a flash in its eye met my eye. For a split second that seemed to last for days, we connected. The betrayal of the duck's trust was apparent, and the utter shock at such a betrayal made itself clear, and for the first time ever, I was ashamed of what I was doing. Our split-second connection spoke volumes about the duck's freedom and daily struggle for survival, and despite all of the ducks I had already thoughtlessly shot and would shoot and despite all of the hopes riding on my final shot; I did not wish to kill this bird. To everybody else, though, this bird's death meant victory and celebration.

Overcome by my urge to please my family, while the bird was flailing in the air motionless, trying to gain altitude and escape, I quickly pulled the trigger to end it all. Then a funny thing happened. I missed.

The entire way home, I was brutally harassed about my inexcusably horrendous shot made on a motionless bird. Even my mother who had never fired a gun couldn't help but poke fun at me while we were eating our victory lunch. But my father wasn't the only one tasting victory in his favorite Red Robin's burger. I was proud that I had missed that shot and watched that bird fly away, never to trust the suspicious call of a human ever again. In fact, it was the perfect end to a perfect trip.



## The Importance of an Insignificant Object

Shanyce Day

Within my group of friends, we often find ourselves playing volleyball; however, only a few of us actually seem to own one. I am one of those people. We also happen to name many of our inanimate objects, such as our vehicles (Genevieve the truck and Rosaline the car), laptops, and guitars. Because my volleyball has a smiling face on it, it seemed inevitable that he would need a name, and as it turns out, he looks like an Albert. He went everywhere with us: to the lake, to the park, to friends' houses and he lived in my truck so he would always be there if we needed him.

To most people, a volleyball is insignificant. You can find one at almost any Wal-Mart or sports store, so why would such a common object be so valuable? Well, Albert is special. He always has a smiling face, even when we are hitting him back and forth across a net, smacking him in the face. He never quits, and doesn't even argue with being abused. He is particularly important to my group of friends and to me because of his story.

The first summer we had Albert, we ventured to the park about once every couple of weeks. There are a few parks near our hometown, and a couple of them have sand volleyball courts.

Since we took him everywhere, I knew that it was a possibility that we might one day abuse him too much. Once, I noticed a hole starting to come through on the side of Albert's face, so naturally I put a Band-Aid on it. Of course it was no normal Band-Aid, as Albert is no normal volleyball, but a square one with the Batman symbol on it, making him even more important to us because of our love for things that have superhero symbols on them. We used him so much this last fall that one of the seams actually burst open! As a result, my mom became a volleyball surgeon; she performed surgery on him the very same day and had him stitched up in no time. We thought he looked just like new.

We went camping one weekend last summer, and, naturally, Albert came along. You should know that for fun we love to just stand in a circle and try to keep a volleyball up in the air for as long as possible, hitting it back and forth, keeping records of how many times we hit it without letting it hit the ground. Anyway, as we were playing, someone noticed that the Albert's stitched up seam was coming loose. We were so worried. But, one of our friends had the bright idea of using duct tape! We wrapped a strip all the way around the broken seam and it was perfect! We couldn't even tell that his stitches had come loose.

This happened quite a few other times, as well. Fortunately, every time this happened, just the outside layer burst and not the inside liner that actually holds the compressed air.

While I was tutoring my friend, Erin, in algebra, her little brother decided he wanted to play with Albert, now covered in various types of duct tape: chrome, purple and blue tie-dye, and, of course, the original gray. Since Albert had been in my truck for a few weeks, he needed to be pumped up, so Erin's brother went out to the garage to use the bike pump. After he played for a time, he brought Albert back and left him with us. While trying to explain algebra, I heard this crackling noise, like something that had been taped to the wall and was now falling off. But I thought nothing of it at the time. Suddenly Erin squealed! One of Albert's seams had ripped open, and the black liner that was supposed to keep his precious air in was coming outside. The liner surprisingly burst, leaving a gaping hole in the top of his head! As you would expect, we were shocked and terribly heartbroken. That day, Albert retired.

I tried to buy another Albert, but Wal-Mart only made them as a special promotion and now there weren't any to be found. It turns out, even just plain yellow volleyballs are hard to come by, too; it took me three or four months to even find one of those. While I was in Florida, my dad happened on one in a dive shop of a marina. That volleyball took Albert's place for a time, but it just wasn't the same.

But, that isn't the end of the story. I work for the Rogers Schools' Technology Department, and while working at one of the junior highs, I spotted a yellow smiley-face volleyball in one of the closets of the library! Two of my best friends were with me, and they were so extremely excited the moment they saw him they shrieked! Since my dad works for the school district, he called the principal of the school and told him Albert's story. He in turn called the librarian, the owner of the volleyball, and explained the story to her; when she heard this she offered to let me have the new one because it was such an adorable and hilarious story!

Right now, Albert Junior, as I have since named him, sits in my room at home, safe and sound from the abuses of being a volleyball. Because Albert and Albert Junior are so extremely precious to us, that yellow volleyball we found in Florida is now the one that we actually play with, and the others are just for show, sitting on my shelf. A stranger might suspect that the two of them are insignificant (especially Albert with the massive hole in the top of his head and the fact that he is covered with duct tape), but this is not the case; they are two of the most important objects my friends and I own.

## **Band: From Distain to Love**

Michael Godsey

Band wasn't my life. Band was actually one of the things I didn't really appreciate when I began playing in my Junior High's beginning band. Little did I know, it would become one of the most important activities in my life.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. Yes, that is an incredibly early time in a child's life to begin thinking about their future, but I only had a few vague ideas of what I wanted to do. So, knowing that I would actually get to choose the classes I would take in Junior High, I asked for suggestions from friends, mostly those whom had already been in Junior High a year and knew what all the different programs were all about. My two biggest suggestions I received were to go into Forensics, the competitive drama class, and band.

I was recommended to go into Forensics by a friend at my church. I always participated in every activity that involved acting that I could find. So, knowing this, she recommended that I should go into Forensics. So, I enrolled in the class.

My parents were the main reason I went into band. I had previously played piano for several years, but dropped out because I lost interest in it. My parents missed having music around my house, and said I should give it a shot. Plus, I could meet new friends. So, I enrolled, hoping that I would either be put on clarinet or percussion, which were the two instruments I enjoyed the most when I went to the "instrument try-out" day the district had. Unfortunately, I wasn't placed on either of those instruments; I was placed on trombone. I wasn't excited about my instrument, but I decided I would stay in band and try it for my 7<sup>th</sup> grade year.

So, I had found my two electives to take. Both band and Forensics were classes that continued all the way through Junior High and High School, so I hoped I would be interested in at least one, and I could hone my skills at something. Thus, I began my quest to find where I was going to be happy for the next 6 years, and possibly where my life was headed.

I loved Forensics. I love being the center of attention, and Forensics allowed me to be just that. I felt happy there, like it was where I belonged. I planned to go all the way through school in Forensics, even if it meant not being involved in virtually any other activities to focus on it.

Band, on the other hand, was the complete opposite. I despised playing the trombone, and my parents didn't exactly like it either. I couldn't get out of band, as it was six weeks into the semester, so we had to find an alternative solution. I and my parents decided that we would ask if there was any way I could switch to another instrument, so I wasn't miserable for the rest of the year. I was hoping to maybe get switched to clarinet, or percussion, like I originally wanted.

I got switched to the saxophone. Once again, I was stuck playing another instrument I didn't want to play. I was also six weeks behind all the other saxophone players in the class, as they had been playing since the beginning of the school year. Now, I wasn't only playing an instrument I had no interest in, I was handicapped in the class because I was now behind.

Little to say, I loathed band, while I loved Forensics. At the end of the year, my band directors had us all fill out a little piece of paper that said whether we were going to take band the next year. I was the only person in the class of six that marked "No" on the slip. When my band directors saw this, they called me into their office to ask me why I wasn't going to take band anymore. I told them it was because I wasn't very good, I wasn't that interested in band, and I was going to take Forensics, which would take up most of my time. However, they talked me into taking one more year of band, as I had not had any experience with an ensemble. So, I decided to take both Forensics and band.

Over the next year, slowly I began warming up to band, while I was fading to the background in Forensics. I was enjoying myself, and even though I wasn't the best player, I was overcoming the plateau where I wasn't getting any better. In Forensics, I was not a favorite of the teacher, so I was not given much chance to shine. I still enjoyed the little time I got at the forefront enough to want to stay in the class. So, I continued being enrolled in both band and Forensics into my freshman year, the third year I had been in both.

It was that year that everything changed and became reversed. Forensics became the low point of my day. I was not respected as a performer, or even as a person, by the teacher or many of my fellow students. This led to my somewhat forced decision to no longer continue being in Forensics, which was a complete turn from what I planned to have happen. At the same time my plans for my Forensics were crumbling, I suddenly began building new plans for band. I had gotten better, by leaps and bounds, over the summer, and was now a lightly awarded player, as I had made the Junior High All-Region Band for the first time. I realized I had a talent for band, and music in general. This led me to make band my focus in high school. It was there, in band, that I was greatly awarded. I made All-Region multiple times in concert and jazz band, performed in multiple honor bands, and, at the pinnacle of my high school career, was an All-State Tenor Saxophone player. Now, I'm an Instrumental Music Education major, pursuing my goal of becoming a high school band director.

I wanted to drop out so many times, but someone, or something inside of me, would always talk me out of it. Band, and music, is what I was put here for, even if I could not see that many years ago. It was the bane of my existence; now, it is the purpose for my existence.

## Wilson the Mascot

Shawn McKay

Arkansas Tech Wonderboys and Golden Suns. Vilonia Eagles. Arkansas Razorbacks. Though they may not be the most exciting animals or objects in the world, mascots have a way of bringing pride, excitement, and oftentimes some comedy to the school or other area or group of people that they represent. Although most mascots are living animals or people, they do not have to be. Sometimes, mascots can be things that most people would believe to be just an ordinary item or even trash. People often overlook insignificant objects that are important to others without giving it a second thought. I personally have an object that most people think is unimportant, but it actually means a lot to me and another small group of people.

While in my junior year at Vilonia high school, my friend Joe and I discovered an object that we never thought would be important to us at all. One night while helping the junior high band at a football game, we came across a tennis ball lying in the ditch that wrapped around the football field. The green fur that covered it was peeling off, and it was covered in mud. It had lost most of its air pressure because of the long camping trip that it took outdoors, which made it pretty much useless for its intended purpose. If you looked closely enough, you could barely make out the word "Wilson" that had been painted on it by its maker. Because we were slightly bored, we rescued the ball from the ditch and started to toss it back and forth. After playing catch with it for over fifteen minutes, I started to think. Maybe there could be a way that we could make this ball into something more than just an old torn-up ball. Then it came to us. We had just discovered the high school drum line's mascot. We could take him everywhere that the drum line went and some places that the members of the drum line went. He could be our new best friend. It only seemed right to call him what was tattooed on his body: Wilson.

Wilson went everywhere with the line. He went to all of our games and all of our competitions. He brought us luck and made everyone around him a little bit happier. If he was not around during practices or games for some reason, we always seemed not to do as well as we knew we were capable of doing. While in the presence of Wilson, our drum line got voted best over-all drum line at an invitational contest in Cabot. Out of the fifteen or so bands competing, we got first place in that category, and I believe we owe it all to Wilson. We also got straight first-division ratings two years in a row in the four-states marching contest in Texarkana, Texas, along with doing well at other competitions throughout the years while he was with us. He went so many places with us that the drum line came up with a fairly long life story of how Wilson ended up in the ditch beside the field.

The short version of Wilson's life story, before being discovered by us, begins with his mother. While she was pregnant with Wilson, she suffered a fatal tennis racket accident. Even though she did not survive, Wilson managed to survive. Without any parents to help him through life, Wilson decided to leave his home and ended up in the

ditch by the football field. He was helpless and in bad shape. Luckily for him, Joe and I rescued him right before he was about to give up. The actual story goes into a lot more detail and tells of his history up to this point.

Wilson had a special place in our drum line's hearts as well as a special, physical place where he was actually kept. While we were at school, Wilson's home was between two of the drums on the tenor drum set that Joe carried, at least until he graduated. After that, Wilson was kept in my drums throughout my senior year. During the times that we were not in the band room, Wilson was with me at all times, in my stick bag. He went to many places with me, and I will always remember those events because of him.

One of the places Wilson went with me to was the all-state music conference in Hot Springs, Arkansas. For three days and nights, I got to stay in Hot Springs because I made to All-State band. So I wouldn't feel completely selfish, I brought Wilson along to share in the adventure. He went with me to all of my rehearsals, to all of the restaurants, to exhibits, and he stayed at the hotel with me. As I walked through the convention center where the All-State clinic was held, I got many weird looks and I got laughed at a couple of times because I was bouncing a tennis ball through the building. After I told them his story I got even weirder looks from the people who asked me why I had him. Even with all the looks I got from people I had never met before, I still think today that it was well worth taking him there with me.

More recently, Wilson accompanied us to Florida when we went to Disney World for our band trip. He got to share in the long trip there on busses and was part of the contest that we played while there. We got many pictures of him next to a lot of famous things at Disney World. For example, at Epcot, we took a picture of Wilson next to his "brother," Spaceship Earth, which is the center of that specific park and is shaped like a giant ball. We also got pictures of him under the giant Mickey Mouse hat at one of the other parks.

While we kept Wilson in the band room, we always had to keep a close eye on him because of the non-percussionists who did not appreciate him in the same way that we did. The other students only saw him as a tennis ball and treated him as such. When he was taken by non-drum line students, Wilson was thrown around, dropped on the ground, shoved into places that he didn't want to go, and worst of all, was not with his family. It was always a struggle trying to recover him after he had been kidnapped, because everyone took him and wanted to keep him from us. There were not many people in the band who did not know who Wilson was. He had become famous and was loved in the world of the Vilonia band program by all the students except for a select few.

Although Wilson was loved by most of the people he encountered, there were a small number of people who did not see the importance of our mascot. They insisted that he was just a tennis ball and that he could not have a personality and did not need

to be cared for in the way that we cared for him. They refused to even try to see him in the way that we see him.

Wilson might be just a tennis ball, but that does not mean that he cannot be important to a lot of people. Our drum line has liked having him around for the past two years, and I hope he will continue to be taken care of by the current and future drum line members at Vilonia. Currently, Wilson is being taken care of by one of my friends who, I believe, will take good care of him. If he succeeds at taking good care of him, Wilson's story will be extended for another year and possibly for many years to come.

Being a tennis ball, Wilson can easily be looked over by most people who look at him. They will never see what we see in him and for that reason, I feel sorry for them. He might just be an insignificant tennis ball to most, but to the Vilonia drum line and to me, Wilson is the mascot that we were very lucky to have found, and now I cannot imagine what it would have been like without him.



## Giving Up

Caitlin Oswalt

It's a process. It always starts with a thought. The thought then forms into an idea. And inevitably, the idea becomes stuck. It's trapped, tangled, and immovable. Somewhere, in the midst of all of the planning, the idea gets utterly and completely lost. Maybe it's thought of from time to time, maybe even planned out over and over, but rarely does it ever get past being stuck.

It was my senior year of high school. I had been pushed and shoved by my mother to take an art class, and had reluctantly agreed to take drawing. The teacher – whose name was Mrs. Wentzel, although I eventually just called her Tonya – was a short, little Asian woman who talked a lot and was very exuberant. My initial impression was that I was not going to like her or her class; she was too demanding and expected too much effort for an art teacher. I had to get through it, however, and I resigned to doing the minimal amount of work required to get a good grade.

The semester progressed, and I drifted through with a low A. I drew what she told me to draw, and I admit that I almost enjoyed it. I began to see that she was demanding only because she really cared about her students. She wanted us to be the best that we could be, and she held us to that standard.

At the end of the semester, Tonya sat down in front of the class, took out a notebook, and began to read the requirements of an art competition. "Personal strengths" was the name of the game, apparently. She said that entry to the competition would not be required, but it would take the place of three projects if we did decide to do it. Naturally, I decided to do it – all of my friends were, and it was one project instead of three – how could it get any better? So I took to trying to find an idea, and I inevitably got stuck. I had no idea what I was going to do, or how I was going to do it.

I floundered around for two weeks, taking random pictures and trying to figure out what to do. Really, though, all I was doing was wasting my time, so I decided that I might as well have fun while doing it. I got really dramatic, and somehow ended up with an amazing picture. That, however, was as far as I got for another two weeks. I tried drawing the background, and then I tried painting the background. I tried drawing the figure, and then painting the figure. None of it worked. I was yet again tangled in the mess of not knowing what to do or how to do it.

So I did the only thing I was good at: I gave up with trying to force it, and just played around.

It started with a ball of tape. I wadded it up for no reason, and was feeling the texture and the way it was soft and gave way in some spots and crinkled and hardened in others. I could mold it into the shape I wanted it to be, press it down, and it would

stay. So I started to sculpt the figure. I began with the torso, feeling the way it sloped and twisted, the way it stretched and arched. I added one piece of tape at a time, smoothing each piece carefully over the stomach and the arch of the back, the hips and chest. I made the arms and the legs in the same way, each one individual, yet all reaching for a common goal. The toes pointed and the muscles reached, stretching themselves. With each piece of tape, the figure came alive. The arms reached up and grasped at their unknown goal. The whole body worked together as a single unit, twisting and reaching, striving upward.

I made two others in the same fashion, each one with their own goal, each one carefully molded into their rolls. They became something more than a project, they became something that I loved to watch grow and come alive. They became a symbol of my ambition, my ambition to do the best that I could, even if I did not know how. So I put myself into them. I sculpted a bust, and attached these figures to it, all three struggling to reach the top, none quite making it, but each trying, nonetheless. I made a few extra touches: hands holding it up and a small ladder at the bottom.

I was finally done. I had worked for a month and a half on it, staying at the school with my teacher until ten and eleven at night, going during lunch, and working on it at home. It was the most work that I have ever put into anything, and I had finally finished. It came time to submit it, and it all of a sudden became very difficult to stop working on it. I had slaved away at it for so long that I did not know what I was going to do after I no longer had it to work on. I submitted it though. And I waited for weeks. It was torturous.

One night, I got a call – I had made it into the top fifteen! I was ecstatic. I had to bring it in to be judged for the final ranking, and then wait another two weeks, but I was okay with that, it surely could not be as bad as the month that I had had to wait before. I was right, it flew by. By that time, I had come to terms with the fact that whatever place I was awarded would be all right. I had worked on it, and done the best that I could have done.

I ended up getting fourth place; not quite first, but definitely respectable out of the 300 entries.

I then wanted to try everything. I figured that if I had done that well on a sculpture, then surely I could do that well on a painting. So I started painting. Each stroke felt right, each color came alive. Shapes formed out of seemingly nothing, right in front of my eyes. The way it looked and felt when I just let go – stopped trying to force it – became incredible. I figured out that it was not only about the idea and the execution; it was about the process and learning along with it. It was about evolving with the piece, and changing myself when I needed to, not forcing the piece to go in a direction that it did not want to go. I would come up with an idea, start on it, and then the end product would inescapably change into something completely different, but different in a way that was great beyond anything that I could have ever imagined.

When I tried to force an idea, I would get stuck and entangled, unable to move forward until I gave up.  
So I give up.



## Smile

Jesse Wyatt Owens

I embrace the idea that I live a genuinely cheerful life. Everything has its ups and downs, sure, but, overall, I strive—well perhaps not strive because this implies I put forth effort—I *enjoy* a life of joviality. With this, I often express this jocundity through a simple, yet practically constant, smile. This is, indeed, a simple gesture; the act takes little muscle movement at all. Yet, it's the *motivation* that some scowl-faced individuals lack.

What *does* motivate one to smile? That is quite an interesting question, and I have never found a definitive answer to it. I find I have numerous stimuli that paint a smile on my face. A child's laughter lightens my heart and places a smirk on my mug. Perhaps a bit of mischievousness twists my mouth into a grin. Knowing that others truly love me warms my soul and makes my face glow. The mere anticipation of an exciting event causes me to crack a smile. Expressing myself artistically creates an enjoyment which simply must be expressed through my countenance. All of these initiate me to smile, and it is purely a reflexive reaction based on my thoughts at a certain time.

Though I am initially motivated through these unconscious influences, I also enjoy the benefits a smile rewards me with. I have heard friends and acquaintances alike refer to me as someone who is very cheerful, enthusiastic, and lighthearted. Compliments such as these seem undeserved considering the minute effort I put forth to receive them. On top of this, smiling also radiates confidence, gaining the respect of peers and elders alike. It reflects that you believe in yourself and your ability, and it shows you possess a positive attitude.

A smile to a stranger in an empty area eliminates that strange awkward feeling of avoidance which plagues nearly everybody multiple times each day. It is somewhat silly to act as if someone is not there when they are but several feet from you. Acknowledging that person is undoubtedly more beneficial to both individuals passing by than attempting to avoid each other. Who knows the extent of the impact a smile you offer to a stranger can have. Perhaps that person's day had been absolutely dreadful, and he or she contemplated giving up on their life. Perhaps a simple smile from a complete stranger would give the person the ambition to drive on with his or her difficulties.

Delving deeper into this, a smile can spell the beginning of a new friendship between two total strangers. A job or school setting grants many opportunities for people to get to know each other. Smiling lightens a mood and allows for conversation to begin and flow naturally between two previous strangers.

Oddly enough, the benefit of a smile I appreciate foremost is a smile in return. Never have I given a smile to someone and not received one. This gives me the impression it is guaranteed that when I smile at someone, I will get a smile back. I

savor every smile I see; it is a beautiful expression that makes me feel loved. A personal marvelous aspect of this benefit is that I naturally smile. Therefore, I receive them quite frequently without even expecting them.

My smile, along with all others' smiles, tells a story, though, only a few listen intently enough to understand and appreciate it. If one were to listen to my smile in the early morning, it would tell him or her that I am weary, yet I find it humorous that I still trudge on through my drowsiness, glossy eyes and all. If one were to listen to a grandmother's smile while she baked cookies, he or she would know the elder woman enjoyed simple pleasures. If one were to listen to a mentor's smile after a long day of teaching, he or she would know that that mentor's pupils accomplished something important that day.

Though it is not a pre-meditated act, I enjoy sharing my story with others. I find that, if I share my story with someone, that individual will almost always share their own with me. Often times, in this case, the returned story is a mere "Thank you, I needed that." *That* makes my day brighter. Through my smile, I want others to know that true happiness and joy are not pure fantasies. They can be experienced if one *wants* to experience them. I find no profit from leading an unhappy life. So, I live with a blissful heart. This is my story, and I hope many people listen to it.

What motivates one to smile? Smiling is a simple act which takes no great amount of effort and benefits both you and others around you. Plainly stated, there stands no good reason not to smile.

"There's a time for laughter in a world of business" is a phrase that I conjured up recently which I now use as the motto for my outlook on life. Busy people may go about their busy lives, but a simple gesture of kindness, love, and cheerfulness takes no time out of anyone's day and revitalizes everyone's life.

Simply take one moment to visualize a world with everyone wearing a smile—a genuine smile expressing happiness and love. Every life seems more vivacious. Every person seems more alive. Every face seems brighter. The simple thought of it puts a smile on my face.

## **My Worst Job**

Weston Rutledge

My worst job took place in the common setting of a local supermarket. It was the most frequently used grocery store in town, next to Wal-Mart of course. The supermarket, which is named Hudson's, is an older grocery store that has stood in the town for many years. The aging sign that sits along the roadside shows daily sales and coupon listings; it was probably grand and welcoming back when the building was first erected. The walls and floor of the aged interior had obviously had minor fixes and restoration through the years. Even the shopping carts squeaked along slowly as if their wheels were gasping for air from the prolonged years of overuse. But the most revealing sign of the store's old age was its undesirable scent that simply could not be ignored. The smell is hard to explain. It is as if everything that had entered the store through the years had left a certain stain in the air, and the scents, together, all concocted an aroma of the store's ancient premises and distant past. I will never forget the smell, and each time I revisit the old store, I am instantly reminded of all the experiences I encountered.

Now most people might say I just like to complain and that a job at a supermarket is a job that many teenagers acquire and do well in performing. Many elder people tell me they worked twice as hard and didn't earn nearly as much as I did, so I should be grateful I have the chance to work here at all. I respected the advice, but for some reason the job began to eat me from the inside out. The continuous routine of my tasks struck a deep hatred within me. The job itself was simple: either sack groceries into bags to be carried out for little old ladies or stock items along the shelves.

I began my career at Hudson's supermarket stocking the seemingly endless shelves with a variety of items. The work was boring and lonesome. Instantly I became disgusted with the store's soundtrack that must have dated back to the 1950's. The same songs played over and over again until they were embedded into my brain. I found myself singing them unconsciously, until someone would laugh or tell me to shut up. Being on stock duty, I was targeted for information on the whereabouts of certain items. My initial thought would be to just start wondering around the store until I found the item in hopes that five or ten minutes would be spent away from the endless shelves upon which I stocked. But, unfortunately, I would always resort to walking the great distance to the front of the store and asking a manager or more experienced worker for the information. Upon my return to the customer, I would become hurried and embarrassed for making him or her wait. After providing the location of the item, I would give my apologies and return to the dreaded shelves, unsatisfied. I had still failed to learn where most of the items were located after three months on the job.

After thinking I would never escape the infinite aisles of consumer goods, I was moved to sacking groceries in the front of the store. Finally, something new to grow tired of. It wasn't bad at first, receiving small amounts of items to bag and carry out. But as days became crowded and hectic during the weekdays, my life was chaos.

Constant sacking of items, cart after cart, only to be followed up by unloading the items under the hot summer sun in the thick, collared shirt I was forced to wear. I know there are other jobs that require way more physical effort, but pushing carts full of groceries up and down the slanted parking lot starts to wear me down—not to mention dodging traffic and elderly drivers who never even see you walking by. It wasn't long before I grew tired of my new tasks at the front of the store; in fact I began to wish to return to the isolated aisles to stock. No matter where I went however, the painful music in my ears played on.

The tasks I have explained so far became tolerable as time passed and the routine took over my body. But a number of different experiences in the suffocating store caused my time at Hudson's supermarket to become miserable—all the instances involving customers of the old store. Working at Hudson's introduced me to the dealings of the general public; contact and conversation is made nonstop throughout the work day. I'm not for sure, but these dealings could be the reason why I despise people and constantly try to avoid them. I'm being extremely critical of course; not all people are rude and ungrateful. But this seemed to be the case with numerous customers, as they drove away before I barely had the trunk closed or throw food on the ground after watching me sweep the floor in front of them. I came to grow weary of trying to be helpful and remaining polite during the process. It seemed like my efforts went unnoticed and was always subpar. One of my managers fits the mold perfectly. He was never satisfied or was constantly complaining about a job-not-well-done. Perhaps he was intimidated by everyone else, being that he stood at a menacing height of five feet and two inches. It was like taking orders from a grumpy Smurf. I can think of one instance that still makes my body temperature rise to this day. I had sacked three carts full of groceries for a middle-aged woman, all in the usual paper sacks. She watched me the entire time, as if she was taking note of how I carefully inserted each item into a sack like a puzzle. When the girl standing behind the register revealed the final cost, the woman proceeded to inform me that she wanted her groceries in plastic bags. I had to remember to breathe and hold back my tongue as I removed every single item and placed them into a new, plastic bag.

It seems like this particular job was the equivalent of hell, but I am simply stating what made the experience so terrible. There were good times and learning opportunities along the way of course, but my time as a Hudson's supermarket employee remains as my worst job to date. I would focus on the positive aspects of the job, but I can't seem to get the monotonous sound of that dreadful music to stop playing.

## Modified Mindset – Unwatched T.V.

Ryan Scantling

Have you ever noticed how sometimes entire periods of time can be completely described in one word? As an example, when many adults think of the 1960's and 1970's they think "groovy", and when most mention the years 1929-1939 they instantly think "depression". And, though there were definitely things that happened during these two time periods that could not be deemed "groovy" or worthy of the horrible label "depression", these are the irrevocable names that dominate these spans of time. My summer can, in the same way, be generally described by one word. That word being "change". From the beginning of summer with high school graduation to the end with the start of a new life in college, and my three month journey with twists and turns in between, change seemed to be the drum-beat to which my summer marched along.

A week and a half after graduation I left home to start what, now looking back, was my best summer ever! Of course I had left home before for short-term things spending a week here and a couple weeks there, but never had I left home for an entire summer. The cause for my leaving was a summer job, one of the best experiences of my life! For ten weeks I was to work at Falls Creek, a church camp in Davis, Oklahoma. Through working at Falls Creek I had the opportunity to meet some fantastic new friends, mature a lot from a dependent high school kid to a more independent young adult, and overall just learn a lot of life lessons. For example while living at the camp, which is six hours from my home, I had to learn to do my own laundry (I called mom several times for help of course), fix my own meals (I lived on Twizzlers), and buy my own groceries (thank God for Wal-Mart). But more important than learning to do all of that, I learned how to be my own person, something that I do not believe you can do if you stay in your familiar surroundings. Unfortunately for me however, since I was working at Falls Creek all summer I got to spend very little time with my family. Throughout the summer I went home only three times, one of which was not the best of circumstances.

The last time I got to see my entire family together was the weekend of July 4<sup>th</sup>. I left Falls Creek around noon on Friday, July 2<sup>nd</sup> and after the long drive arrived home in Dardanelle, Arkansas at around 6. As soon as I walked in the door one of my two sisters, Meagan, said "Are you ready to fix my T.V.?" The entire previous week I had gotten several phone calls from her complaining because she could not get her brand new T.V. to work right, so, because I am apparently the technical genius she called me (only because she needed something of course). For the remainder of the night I fixed Meagan's T.V. as she fell asleep on the couch. Early the next morning my family left for vacation. As promised my mom woke me up to tell me that they (my mother, Meagan, Jessie, and some close family friends) were leaving for vacation. I, staying because I had to return to camp Sunday night, just rolled over like most teenage boys would do, grumbling a hoarse sounding "goodbye". I didn't get to go back home again until Monday, July 19<sup>th</sup>.

On Monday mornings at camp I would usually wake up around 7:30 a.m. in order to get ready for our daily staff meeting at 8:00. This particular morning of July 19<sup>th</sup> I got a phone call at 7:23. On the other end of the line was Dave, a great guy who my mom has been dating for a couple of years. In not so many words he explained to me that my sister, Meagan, had woke up that morning and for some reason had a seizure, which was strange considering she was perfectly healthy. After telling me that the ambulance had just taken her to the hospital and that they were trying to regulate her breathing the conversation ended. Immediately I said a prayer that I remember as if I prayed it just a few seconds ago "God, I know it would be selfish for me to ask for this to work out how I want it to, so let your will be done." After that prayer I stayed in the room for about forty-five minutes, skipping my meeting and waiting for the phone to ring. Finally, I got impatient and called Dave, only to hear a soft-spoken voice with what I knew were tears choking him up "Ryan, I hate to tell you this while you're gone, but your sister has passed away."

I honestly do not remember how that conversation ended, all I know is that for a few minutes I just sat...alone, not knowing what to expect, what to do, where to go. Finally, I burst into sobs, not even tears, but sobs. I pulled myself together and called my dad, figuring someone had already told him the news. He was on the road speeding towards the hospital and I asked him "Hey, how are you doing?" "Good," he said "just hurrying to see your sister." I then realized that it was going to have to be me to tell him the news. I asked him to pull over, from that he asked me in a sad, suspicious tone "what happened?" I told him that Meagan had died.

In the next days, weeks, months, and up until now things have changed. People's lives were changed due to my sister's unexpected death. The way I spend the short times I have with my family has changed. My relationship with God has changed. Our town's support of their students has changed. The way many parents interact with their children has changed. My outlook on life has changed. God has not changed.

I now realize that though my sister died, my sister who was special to me, though we did not always get along, my sister who I wish I could say one more word to, but cannot, she died for a reason. If it was not just for me then it was for her friends, for her family, and maybe for you, to open your eyes to something new. I believe that behind everything God has a reason, and I whole-heartedly believe that Meagan Alyssa Scantling is no longer here for a reason. I also believe that though I do not see her now, I will see her again because like it was for her "For me, living is Christ and dying is gain" Philippians 1:21.

Throughout my summer there was a lot of change. My only regret is that my last face-to-face visit with my sister was over what is now an unwatched T.V.

## Problem Child

Tony Slater

My father's oldest son can be a bit of a nuisance. He likes to take things apart. Sometimes he improves or repairs them and puts them back together, and other times he leaves them as they lay with pieces everywhere. As he got older, the items grew in size and complexity.

I am the oldest of three brothers, and we all have idiosyncrasies. Mine just happens to involve a curiosity for mechanical things, which has calmed down from an obsession. My parents were very understanding when I took apart cheap toys, disposable cameras, and one of those greeting cards with the pre-recorded chips to play a song. My dad even had me occasionally do simple tasks such as putting fuses in a car.

He was not amused however, when he walked into his shop and saw a lawnmower engine taking up every bit of table space we had. Until I decided I wanted to know how an overhead valve train worked, only carpentry had been done in our small outbuilding, and my dad seemed to take those first oil stains in the concrete floor as physical wounds. He just did not seem to understand why I would want to have that small engine in so many pieces. It was ruined before I touched it, so when I had studied it enough I took it to a scrap yard.

The next time a similar incident occurred, I had an entire mower taken apart on the floor of the garage. Dad was simply appalled at the small pool of gear oil I spilled when I split apart the hydrostatic drive. He shook his head and went back into the house, which became the norm for these little encounters. This happened at least a dozen times over the last three years. He would come outside, see what I was working on, shake his head, and go back in the house. My fascination with absolute junk was beyond him.

The way I saw it, junk was free. My cousin would find an old lawnmower, give it to me, and I would make it faster and lighter or just louder and more annoying. My mother was shocked the first time she saw her son drop the clutch on a lawnmower and lift the front end off the ground about eighteen inches. She shook her head and went back in the house, and I was told by my father in no uncertain terms to wear a helmet if I were going to do asinine things like that.

Dad got serious when I started working on my truck. I was usually doing simple things, but he was quite sure I was going to ruin my nice vehicle that I had worked so hard to pay for. So I just bought another truck that would not worry him. It was awful, but I loved it. I could do whatever I wanted to it, drive it around, and not get into trouble. I learned in junior high school that the people who made fun of you were never worth worrying about, so I drove it to school. Two of my cousins immediately took me in as their apprentice in all things mechanical.

I would listen to them talk for hours as they sold parts at a local store, mentally storing every scrap of information I could absorb. I read books, magazines, and web articles. I became familiar with every numerical value on Chevrolet V8 engines.

In the meantime, I was constantly working on my other truck. I installed a radio, tuned up the engine, and painted a big red lightning bolt on it to entertain my friends. We felt quite liberated having a vehicle to which we could do whatever we wanted.

My dad was softening up a bit, my mother even rode in it twice, and my brothers were in absolute heaven. They thought their brother's rust bucket was the coolest mode of transportation they had ever been exposed to.

At this point, I knew my stuff. My dad started to ask my advice about local shops since I knew so many of the mechanics. He knew that I was knowledgeable, but he was not convinced of my practical skills. Then I decided to rebuild the engine in my behemoth. My cousins and I pulled it out one afternoon, and I stripped it down and continued my studying.

My mother never really objected to any of this. Dad, however, did not realize the mess that a truck engine would make, compared to a lawn mower engine. I had tubs, buckets, and boxes of parts. There was oil all over the floor, and it wasn't just drops. I got all the new parts I needed, and got my engine about halfway put back together. A mistake at a machine shop cost me my block, and without an engine I had to sell my truck for scrap.

The truck was gone, but the damage was done. I was an official shade tree mechanic, capable of doing almost anything if I had a book or a computer. I had accepted it as fact that my Dad would probably not think of his eighteen year old son as capable of automotive repair, and it did not bother me too much.

My dad's truck is mildly sacred to him. Only the best shops have ever touched it, and it gets the best treatment he can afford, because it is the nicest vehicle my parents have ever owned. He drove the truck he bought when he was twenty years old until they finally decided they could afford something else. We were all very proud of it when he brought it home.

Dad came home from work one day with a bag from the local auto parts store. He looked at me and asked, "Would you put spark plugs and wires in my truck?"

## Who Needs a Backpack?

Kenneth Smith

Intoxicated by the crystal clear aroma of freedom as a new college freshman, I let petty high school necessities become a thing of the past.' However, when reality hits them on the first day of class, college freshmen lose themselves in the chaos of the category "insignificant objects I severely needed but didn't think to bring". As a pre-medical student with a full-tuition scholarship to the university of my choosing, I never would have been a victim of such circumstances. But alas, I, too, fell to the fault of unpreparedness, just as every college freshman does.

My rude awakening began the day before classes started. With my anxiety on the rise, I very stressfully prepared for my first day as an official college student. Books? Check. Binders? Check. Notebooks? Check. Paper, pencils, pens, water? Check, check, check, and check. I briefly looked over my schedule for classes, quietly noting to myself that I would be getting plenty of exercise the next day. I had five classes in a row, with ten minutes between each class, with every class in a different building at least a couple hundred yards away from the previous one. I began to ponder the need of a bag to carry my load of books but quickly pushed the idea away. I was in college now, not high school. I was an adult, living on my own. I did not need a backpack. Only children who did not yet have the muscularity to carry their loads of books needed such absurdities. With the immature want for a backpack removed from my mind, I quickly hopped into bed and drifted into sleep. If only ignorance was truly bliss.

I awoke the next morning feeling well-rested, eager, and prepared. I hustled through my morning routine, quickly ate my breakfast, and headed out the door with a 25-30 pound load of books. As I stumbled and tripped down the stairs, the now more enticing thought of a backpack crossed my mind again. Again, in a surge of testosterone-driven pride, I pushed the idea out of my head and trudged on to my day. I hiked out of my dorm and down to a friend's dorm roughly 200 yards away, and after only 5 minutes of walking I had sweat dripping down my forehead. I then lugged my load of now too-heavy and too-awkward-to-carry books to my first class another 300 yards away from my friend's dorm. I greatly enjoyed the break my arms received in my first class, but as the end of the period approached, the sweat of anxiety took over. The task laid before me for the rest of the day was going to be a tough one, and I was already exhausted after only the shortest hike of my first college Wednesday. Back and forth across the now seemingly much-larger campus I tumbled, hiked, hopped, and sweated to my classes. Never had I thought hour-long classes would be so enjoyable! The cold air conditioning of the buildings brought great relief, and my physical stress was switched from my legs, torso, and arms over solely to my hand and ears. At the end of my class day, I slowly wandered back to my dorm, where my books more or less fell out of my twitching and tingling arms. When I recovered, I decided that maybe I should push my pride aside and listen to the more reasonable voice in my head. I skipped out of my dorm, hopped into my car, and headed to Wal-mart, where I found the one insignificant object that could end the only real stress I was encountering as a college freshman: my

very own backpack with enough pockets and space for anything and everything that I may need throughout the day.

During this train of events, I learned many lessons that will aid in my future as a college student. First of all, I am not the well-prepared, studious, first-year college student I thought I would be. My pride was well crushed through struggling to carry such seemingly light objects over such seemingly short distances. On top of that, I'm sure I was the object of much humor, hauling a pile of books around while 95% of the student body effortlessly carried theirs in bags on their backs. Secondly, I am not as open-minded as I thought I was. My ignorance of a simple need forced me to struggle through a day that could have been effortless with a backpack. To my surprise, backpacks aren't as childish as I thought. In fact, my new backpack may have been the greatest investment I have made this year (other than the investment into my college education, of course). I also learned that I should be more respectful of other, more experienced peoples' advice. When someone, who has been through what I am about to go through, tells me that I need a particular item (such as a backpack), then I should certainly take into serious consideration purchasing that item. Yes, my short but disgustingly difficult transition into the simply complex life as a college freshman has taught me very much, and for the experience, I guess I can say that I am truly grateful. In his essay, *Huckleberries*, Henry David Thoreau stated that "more can be learned picking huckleberries than can be learned simply in a classroom." In my experience, I found this to be very true. Had I not taken part in such a rigorous adventure my first day of college classes, I may not be the well-adapted college student that I am today: a college student that is well-organized (sort of), on time to class (sometimes), and humble (most of the time). I leave this statement in closing: when you transition to life on your own, the most insignificant objects can be the most important to your happiness.

## Three New Rules of Etiquette

Stevie Svetz

One day over the summer, I was sitting at a table in Hastings with J.D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye and a small caramel macchiato and minding my own business. Mind you, I had just sat down with a nice, hot cup of coffee and a used book that still smelled like an old library. This would not be the time to bother me. And still, some hippy, enlightenment-seeking, pre-teen interrupted my day. The kid had to be around thirteen, with long bleach blonde hair tipped with pink (so natural). He was wearing jeans too skinny and too short – probably his little sister's – and an over-washed t-shirt with the band name "Blood on the Dance Floor" scrawled across it. I'm not one to judge, but I was pretty sure that I was not interested in any band that involved blood on the dance floor and therefore would not be interested in whatever this boy had to tell me about his lifestyle. Sometimes, I'm wrong about people. This time I was not.

I was reading the part where Holden Caulfield breaks the record he bought for his sister – a really sad chapter, by the way – when this kid decided to interject himself into my life. He had left his perfectly fine fruit cup at his table to come talk to me at *my* table.

"Hi, I'm Trevor. Would you like a flier?" He extended a small sheet of paper, decorated with the face of a cow and several bloody steaks, in my direction.

I recognized it as one of P.E.T.A.'s fliers that they send their followers in the mail. "No, thank you", I told him, hoping that somehow translated to "Leave me alone, now." Unfortunately, he didn't get my subliminal message.

"You're already a vegetarian?" he asked from behind what I can only describe as brown eyeliner on his lips.

"No, I'm not. But thanks." This should have translated into "I love turkey and I happen to also love this part of my book. Leave me alone."

Trevor, my new friend/annoyance, began to describe all the benefits of vegetarianism. I've heard it all before, tried it myself for a year, and seeing as how I've had much longer than Trevor to decide who and what I am, I now know I am not into the whole "no meat ever" thing. His witnessing to me didn't make me feel any more enlightened.

Right then, I came up with two new rules of etiquette that everyone should follow. One: It is considered impolite to interrupt someone while reading a book, unless the building is on fire and the book is in danger of being singed. Two: It is also impolite to shove propaganda in someone's face while he or she is obviously not going to be receptive.

When I'm reading, I'm enjoying myself. I'm in another world with a host of characters I choose to have in my company, all in the privacy of my mind. Do not – EVER – invade my privacy unless it is an emergency. The meaning of the word “emergency” here being “my life or my book’s life is in danger”. Not your life. Not the President’s life. I can be concerned about that business when I’m not busy with Holden Caulfield.

Just as I thought the annoying hippy boy would leave me alone, he cocked his head like a curious puppy to read the spine of my worn-out book.

“You know”, he started, and my muscles tensed to punch his face, “That book has G.D. in it on every page. God doesn’t damn. Don’t you have better things to be reading?”

In the span of time it took for me to set my book down calmly and open my mouth, one more rule of etiquette popped into my head. Three: It is impolite to use religion, philosophy, mysticism, science, or anything else to tell me what I should or should not be reading. There is no such thing as “appropriate” literature.

Also, I’m not the wisest person on the planet, but I can tell you I’m already set in my religion, taste in music, and eating habits. Do not – EVER – try to change them to fit your agenda. No, I will not attend your church function or satanic ritual. No, I do not want to listen to Blood on the Dance Floor or any band with some wrist-cutting, depressant-hungering, attention-seeking name. No, I will not sacrifice my health or schedule to spare the life of a Kentucky fried chicken. So take your religious texts, emo bands, and anti-meat campaigns to someone who will use them.

This all ran through my head as my mouth hung open for a moment, but the only thing I could tell this vegetarian Trevor boy so bent on changing my sinful ways was, “By the way, the wallet you’re carrying is in fact made of dead cow hide. That’s what leather is.”

## The Essential Cup

Dallan S. White

As humans, many things are systematically hardwired into our understanding. We do things we do not understand, because they are what has always been done, and as such, many objects and events in life become much less meaningful and more trivial. Because of the petty importance we place on many items, we tend to view such objects and events as completely insignificant and nearly worthless to some. One such item is a simple cup. A cup is absurdly well known, and is always recognizable beyond all doubts.

As simple as a cup may seem, it has traced back for as long as humans can remember. Though it seems to be an adaptation to a bowl, it has vastly different jobs and functions. By now many would think that it's absurd to think of a cup as anything more than what it is, a plain ordinary cup, but I cannot stress enough to every man, woman and child, how very special a cup can be.

To put it as simply as possible, an easy example is due. I would never be willing to bet my life on this fact, but I am willing to say that somewhere in the world, at least one reader of this insignificant paper has a deviation of a cup sitting closely to them. Beyond that fact is yet another assumption that within a relatively small time frame, a cup or mug of some sort has sat in the very place that this is being read. Why is it that something so simple is so often by our sides? A cup, completely straightforward and undeniably simple, yet it is infinitely valuable to us in so many ways.

As with the similar bowl, a cup is essentially a storage unit. This duty has been bestowed upon cups since the dawn of time, but the wonders aren't as simply stated as such. As tempting as it may seem to many (myself included), carrying a large jug of your favorite beverage around the house is far from a probable solution to smother a great desire for a drink. Cups fill that role flawlessly. Ever accessible, and always by your side, houses are often jam-packed with armies of cups waiting to be used. They are readily supplied products are they not? Yet what makes them easy to get, is of course our demand for such products. We want an easy solution to carry around our favorite beverages to wherever we please. Hauling a large jug or bottle of juice or soda around the house isn't exactly an efficient scheme.

Beyond beverages comes the clearly evident efficiency involved in cups. They come in various shapes, sizes, patterns, materials, textures and far more. The design of a cup is limited only by those who purchase or make them. If we need to save money, we can buy paper cups in any design imaginable to supplement our short term needs. If the opposite long term cups are needed, they can be found in plastic, metal, glass and other numerous materials. The best part of all, they can be tailored to fit every necessary occasion. Personally I'm not much of a cup shopper as is the rage these days, but I do remember recently seeing multiple bargain deals for sets of dinner cups. Of course the choice in cups is all yours.

Cups are what we want, how we want it. I'd like anyone to tell me a cup won't stay by my side as I spend a moment watching TV or an amorous night alone writing papers. Even when individuals protest about the misplacing of a cup, I believe I'm safe to say that the cup did not move itself, but only did its loyal duty and stayed as it was placed. I must admit I have my own cup currently sitting next to me, and it's a horrid cup at that. My name is scrawled across the side in a permanent marking of ownership. Petite notches haphazardly line the upper rim of the cup from incessant biting as a child. This cup will live on for much longer than it already has, and its memory will go on even further, as it has been mine for the whole of my lifetime. Even with admitting the claim of ownership I can't help but be appalled by the ghastly color of my cup. Though it's my precious, nonetheless it is still an unpleasant pea soup green, which only adds to its already ancient dilapidated appearance. Nevertheless the cup belongs to me, and I will continue to utilize and adore its eternal servitude.

As I now return to writing this, I must admit I just used my cup once more to hold another much-needed drink of water. Seeing as cups are so obviously important in our everyday lives, I'm beginning to wonder whether or not the bite marks and constant use of my cup could be considered abuse. The idea of cup-abuse causes me to reflect on many of all the other uses of cups. I often see cups filled with old pencils and pens, worn out and overused, only to be stored in the ever popular cup on the desk. What of flowers? I've lost count of how many times I've seen a vase temporarily substituted with a large cup.

If we pass off these many functions as simply using our affectionate cups to their true limits, we can look on, to their true meaningful nature. We often see many people with the same cups and mugs, day after day. When that cup goes missing, the heavens collapse and the earth splits open as the owner panics to find the cup again rather than resorting to the use of another. What causes this panic? Nothing short of importance and the utmost significance of an object we casually view as irrelevant and of no value. We may view many objects as trifle and petty, only because the individual hasn't shown enough to care for what truly transpires. We find such a simple object important to us as we use it without end, for a variety of things, yet it's this same use that gives us the casual appearance of being common. I only wish I could share my pea soup green cup with everyone, that they may become conscious of and comprehend the full scale of what makes objects important in life.

## Three New Rules of Etiquette

Kelsey White

As a person gets older and shifts from child to teenager to young adult, she typically learns simple rules of etiquette. For instance, don't put your elbows on the table, always say "thank you", and don't chew with your mouth open. Sure, these are good rules to follow, but I have in mind some others that apply to all ages and can affect others around you.

For about the past year or two, my family and I have been going to the local nature trail known as Bona Dea to ride bikes. It is a wonderful trail to walk, run, or ride on for the whole community. During summer, Bona Dea is a very popular spot, and sometimes you can't even find a place to park. Therefore, the trail is packed with a variety of people. Since there are people walking, running, and biking, safety is an issue. The people going at faster speeds need to be able to pass others without the danger of hitting somebody or having to go off the trail. If one rule was followed, all would go smoothly and the trail would be a lot safer. This one rule is staying on the right side of the road. Maybe I'm just crazy, but I really don't think it's that hard to walk, run, or bike on the right side. I mean, I apologize for assuming most people already knew that. You drive on the RIGHT side of the road. On the interstate the RIGHT side is for slower drivers and the left lane is meant for passing only. Did anybody ever stop to think that maybe, just maybe somebody made those rules for a reason? They were made to keep people safe! The question I present to the public who uses Bona Dea is "Is it really that hard to stay on the right side?" Not only does this rule apply on a nature trail, but also in other daily areas of life. When you go to Wal-mart, it's going to be a lot easier to maneuver through the aisles if everybody stays on the right side. You'll really appreciate it if people understand this concept when you're in a hurry to grab something and get out; but you can't because there are people all in the aisles. School is another perfect example. I went to high school with about 1,200 other kids in three grades. The building, itself, is pretty big, but the hallways are not. When you have a massive crowd going to and from classes every hour, you really need some kind of structure to make it flow smoothly, especially when they only give you five minutes to get to class. So I say once again, stay on the right side!

So you're sitting in a room, maybe in a class or at some kind of meeting when somebody walks in late. Distracting, right? Everybody looks to see who it is, which causes the instructor or leader to feel like the people in the room aren't paying attention. Plus, the listeners have to refocus on the leader, which might not be immediate. Okay, so the late person walks in, sits down, and then starts talking to her neighbor about why she's late or just whatever. In my opinion, that is beyond rude. It's one thing to disturb the class by being late, but then you come in and start talking! Wow. For me, this instance hits close to home. Almost every Wednesday night when my youth group meets, this particular girl comes in late. She walks in, usually says something when she opens the door, then when she goes to sit down, she starts talking. It drives me absolutely crazy! Why can't people understand that if you come in late, you should slip in, making sure not to slam the door, and you should sit down quietly? Is it really that

hard? So Rule Number Two added to the list of etiquette should be “when you come in late, be quiet and try to make as little a disturbance as humanly possible.”

I think it's safe to say that at one point in your lifetime, you borrow something from somebody else. Now, I have no opposition to borrowing things. It's quite impractical to go buy something that you'll only use once when one of your friends has it. But, there is one problem I have with borrowing. My sister lives in Conway and only comes home once a week or so to spend the night. We both wear contacts and she never brings her own contact solution home. I have absolutely no problem with her using my solution. After all, she is my sister and my parents are the ones who pay for it. The move that really pushes my buttons is when she takes it into the bathroom to use it and never puts it back! So when I'm lying in bed, ready to go to sleep, I roll over to take my contacts out and surprise surprise, the solution is gone. My sister must know that I just love having to get up out of bed to go get my contact solution. I finally put my foot down one day and told her if she didn't put it back where it goes, then I just wouldn't let her use it anymore. Of course that one backfired on me. I hid the solution, and then she told my mom I wouldn't let her use my solution, so I got in trouble! All she had to do was carry it an additional five feet to my bedroom and put it up. But no, she obviously isn't physically capable of doing so. Another thing she does is to bring a glass of water to my room before bed. For one thing, it has no lid so my cat could very easily knock it over, thereby soaking whatever happened to be in its path. For another, she leaves it in my room, and I end up having to carry it to the sink when she leaves! All I have to say is if you borrow something put it back where it goes. It couldn't be any simpler, could it?

Dictionary.com defines etiquette as “proprieties of conduct as established in any class or community or for any occasion”. For the most part, society today has its rather commonly known rules of etiquette. But I feel that three more rules should be added to help out the community and make various activities more enjoyable.