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Dusk
By Layla Webster

The November sun plasters golden lacquer rays across the faces of the billboards, all lined below.
Gold so tangy as to be envious of orange.
And as your eyes sit in shock, your soul begins to weep for the death of the day, the colorful warm day, slowly bluing into evening in the East.
In the West, the candy stripes meld into a rainbow on the horizon; a colorful adieu.
A flock of birds briefly remind you of your immobility.
Looking down, the parking lot is filled with waiters dressing by their cars, smoking and chatting lightly, absorbing the last few moments of the day’s freedom before that too dies in the Dusk.

Haiku for Echo
By Jonathan Tyler

I know how Echo
Feels. I look at you; you do
Not see me. We waste.

For Klaire
By Nick Gardner

I thought of you today.
Just once, when I awoke.
Of the curve of your lips when your name touches my tongue.
Of the music of your speech, the delicate enunciation of the sweet tune of the bells of your voice.
And though your accents are not my own, you feel more familiar to me than the paths I walk every day.
The light in your eyes shining as sapphire or emerald, but so, as to shame any other hue.
Surely truth is in no other shade.
I thought of you today.
Just once, when I awoke.
And that thought carried on into the day.
I heard others speak but paid no heed to their words.
There is nothing more perfect in my ears than your laughter, except perhaps when you softly say my name.
I need nothing more than to hear you or see you or allow my thoughts to linger on you.
(I say allow, though I have no choice and want none, and were there, still my choice would be you.)
I need nothing more than those to increase my pulse.
And I know our hearts beat together.
I thought of you today, my beautiful Klaire.
Just once.
And nothing else.

Giles County Sunset
Dan Dillon
Magic
By Jonathan Tyler

I learned at an early age
That my father could perform
Feats of wonderful, terrible magic.

For instance, he could bend over a dead car
And wave his metal wand and strange contraptions,
Say a few choice words—— and the car would start and run!

I have seen him take planks of wood, cut them,
Arrange them in odd ways, take his metal wand and contraptions,
Use his choice words, and turn the wood into tables and bookcases!

At those times, that magic man was wonderful in my sight.
I wanted to learn how to do his strange magic
And I dreamed about it every day and night.

Then I came of age. My father put the metal wand in my hand.
But the cold metal would not heed my commands. Those strange contraptions
Ran away. Dead cars stayed dead and Frankenstein furniture was burned.

During this short apprenticeship, my father turned his magic words
On me. They came flying at me like hurricane debris. I was a big boy.
He made me small. His words cut me down to size.

To this day, I avoid my father’s magic shop. But I follow
His vocation. I learned magic of a different sort. I use my wand
Of various materials to try and revive and create like him.

See Daddy, I can do magic, too.

Name
By Nick Gordner

My butcher knows my name
and my cut,
but the papers will never
feature my exploits in bold,
even on page eight.
My tailor knows my name
and my cut,
but I will never be adored
world wide, the subject of universal adoration.
My friends know my name
and the honey and cut of my heathen tongue.
I do not dwell on making myself
a revered figure to all.
Only to those I love.
It is not the length and breadth of those
who know your name.
It is the cut of those who do.
I am only myself, nothing more,
nothing less.
And while I try, to the point of sweat,
to make the cut of the legacy of my name,
the blood I inherited my first day
burns in shame if ever I cannot fit
the measure.
I hope the universe takes no offense
but I do not know it’s name.
And if I do not know your name,
why should it rankle in me
that you do not know mine?
Pulse
By Mary Teresa Toro

Cars stream like blood cells through the arteries and veins of the city. Its pulse is measured in red and green - stop, go, stop, go speed up, slow down, hurry, hurry, wait, hurry, hurry, wait tick, ticking turn signals blink, blinking lights headlights, taillights, rushing through the day, rushing through the night hurry, hurry, wait hurry, hurry, wait

get there, be there, do there, stay there leave there, do it all again... in reverse

slow, slow, slow, tick, tick, tick, time passes,
the White Rabbit whispers “late, late, late”
blink, blink, blink, veer right, veer left, change lanes
go, go, go, hurry, hurry, hurry

until the stroke of a traffic jam, the aneurysm of a detour, the heart attack of flashing lights

Reincarnation
By Sarah Abney

A woman with what we call a “quirky” style, my grandmother was a master at any craft involving needles and thread. Sadly what she possessed in skill, she lacked in taste. Amongst the garish shades of orange and mismatched textures of exquisite crochet knots and cheap yarn, I see a woman who was trying to be a trend-setter. She sang when justified, leaving audiences puzzled at the low tone devoid of chime. Nana was a very intelligent woman who could learn anything, but never ventured toward college. She has been gone now for five years. She was the first death I really ever mourned. Convinced that I favor her the most in likeness and disposition, a family can chafe a spirit fierce in its individualism. Yet it is an honor to share a sweetness that wished every guest and relative goodnight and the same eyes whose color had for my lifetime been hidden by cut-rate, tinted lenses. When I inspect my reflection in the mirror, testing a wearable collage of patterns, colors, and textures, I see what I think my grandmother had all along tried to realize. As melodies and harmonies emerge from lips fuller than hers with a rasp and rhythm, I often wonder what Nana would think of the sound nurtured by gospel, folk, and rock. As I sit in literature class, and listening and analyzing, I wonder if she would smile, knowing that the love for stories came from those dispatched cassette tapes she recorded in closets while reading books to me from thousands of miles away.
Synchronization
By Mary Teresa Toro

They say that through their lives lovers’ heartbeats synchronize.
I pray that this is true, so that if yours should stop... mine... will too.

The Mirror
(with apologies to Sylvia Plath)
By Mary Teresa Toro

She must live in the space between the clear glass and the silver backing, I see her each time I approach staring back at me, quizzical yet wise.

Who is this woman? This one with the grey hair, wrinkles experienced eyes that seem to know all my secrets

She wanders into view, throughout my days, looking back at me, she of the lined face, jowls, and sagging neck.

She seems to know me well, yet I, for all the times I see her, still do not know who she is, or how she came to live within my mirror.

The following poem was written as a response to an assignment in a literature class. Students were instructed to create a poem by weaving words, phrases, or lines from Judith Ortiz Cofer’s poetry collection A Love Story Beginning in Spanish with their own words, phrases, and lines. The words in bold were taken from her poems “Here is a Picture of Me,” “Where You Need to Go,” and “5.”

Freshman
By Samuel O. Spann II

Taller than my parents, no longer a pre-teen, I am skinny and brash, thirteen or fourteen. Far from that place where I first wailed for life, Far from that place where I carry my wife. To my delight my acne has cleared. Only to be replaced by a patchy beard. Still shy and awkward from that previous stage. Can’t break the fear of talking to girls my own age. Independence and freedom seem so far, But now my goals are simple, like driving my dad’s car. I know where I want to go, But not sure if I’ll ever get there.
I awaken each day to look at the sky for directions, But what I’m left with are these damn morning erections.

Memories
Rebecca Jones
The following poem was written in response to an assignment in a literature class. Students were instructed to write their own mock epic after having read and discussed Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*.

**Taking the Plaza, A Mock Epic for the Innumerate**

*By Mary Teresa Toro*

The lovely strip of coveted land
lay between the buildings grand;
the vast expanse of grass and tree
became a joy for all to see
as winter blossomed into spring,
when once again the Byrd did sing,
and flowers bloomed along the path
between the buildings, Harris and Math.
In each the students spent the day
in one with numbers and formulae,
the other to the Muses loyal
read Wordsworth, Twain, and Conan Doyle.

Then came the day that fateful spring
when each side dreamt the self-same thing,
a fair to showcase all their learning.
Prize within their hearts was burning!
If Fate or Muse, no one can say,
but each desired the same May day,
one for books and poetry reading,
the other for science and data gleaning.
They could not share, nor mediate
for one to pick another date.
Nothing the battle could forestall
both Math and Harris wanted all.
Math to the left, Harris the right,
each was itching for a fight.
Words and Numbers, face to face,
neither could retreat with grace.
The Sneed advised, “Don’t awfulize!
Mayhaps the plans can be revised.”

The Rood, who would protect his ladies
from Math and Science (thus from Hades),
invoked the goddess of the rhyme,
of fitting word, iambic line.
“Calliope, hear our entreaties
Protect us please from Archimedes!
From Galileo and Pasteur,
you are our defender sure.
From Euclid and Pythagoras
you must come and rescue us.
We have served you without ceasing
while your devotees increasing.
We teach poetry and prose
protect us now from all of those
who see but numbers, signs, and lines
instead of rhythms, poetic rhymes.
Save our souls and psyches, too
from those who Clemens would eschew.”

Then peaceful Rood to end the fight
crossed the plaza to put things right.
Armed but with his wit and smile
he crossed the lovely, lonely mile.
The Numbers, taking him for a spy,
captured, bound him, covered his eyes.
They led him trembling before a table.
(Calculus Two read its label.)
“A test to gain freedom, here is your task”
at the table they sat him, removing his mask.
“O horror! God help me,” cried the poor Rood.
“How could a test be made up so crude?”
On the table before him were pencil and paper,
but tho’ wit had served him for years as his rapier,
a quadratic equation he could not unravel
he’d ne’er seen like it in all of his travel.

“If you would help your wordy nation
you must solve this here equation,”
jeered the fans of Math and Science.
“Words will not prove of reliance.”
The Byrd Brains heard this with alarm,
they knew the Rood had no math charm.
When from the crowd, above the fray,
came the voice of Leigh Ann Rhea,
“Fear not, my friends, the answer is clear.
I’ll Google it from my iPhone here.”

But Drew the Red and Py the Clever
had begun a new endeavor.
They snuck to Math and nabbed the Duke,
knowing Harris would not rebuke
their plans to even up the score
by testing Duke with Harris lore.

“Show some knowledge, you of Math,
tell us of the Wife of Bath.”

Math replied with much delight,
“Write the formula for flight.”

“We’ll not show you any mercy
until you parse this poem by Percy.”

“Speak of squares, and roots, and cubes,
and the volume of a tube.”

“Victory is within your reach
you have but to give a speech.
Speak to us of Geoffrey Chaucer.
You’ll not get another offer.
Bare your soul, show your might,
recount for us the tale of Knight.”

“Define for us the prime and real
numbers. You must have a feel
for how to plot the slope of curve.
Tell us if you have the nerve!”

“Explain the work of Emily Dickinson,
Poe, and Tolstoy, Heinrick Ibsen,
Wadsworth, Emerson, and Thoreau.
Tell us, tell us if you know.”

Insults given and received,
but no peace could be achieved.
The Nunn invoked the Lord above
to fill the people with His love.
Then through the plaza, down the aisle
came Jill, the dancing anglophile,
along with Kenny, the dancing dean.
Such a jive had ne’er been seen.
They swayed the people and to the beat.
The crowd admired their dancing feet.
When who on a cloud should now descend
but Edwards, Denise, the absent friend
to make appearance and end the fray,
she came to school for just one day.

The faculty cheered, the students laughed.
The crisis ended! Peace at last!
To enhance the party mood
at the freeing of Duke and Rood
the Brewer came with cool libations
sharing them with both the nations.

So peace to the Plaza was restored,
and the fair was set forevermore
a joint event for Word and Math
to share the once disputed path.

Aboriginal Joy
Sharon Ford
Refuse to Give Up

By Cierra Doughty

The ball spirals through the air straight into my skinny arms. Frantically searching for a teammate, I freeze and press the ball against the middle of my chest, right where my heart is located. Sweat is rushing down my forehead. My heart feels like a stalled car engine trying to start as I spot a teammate in the distance. Persevere. I lock my eyes on my teammate and chuck the ball in her direction. Cheering starts to arise from the stands. I need to run, but my lungs are being squeezed by a boa constrictor. I reach for my chest and then hear my coach yelling at me. I glance up. I passed the ball to the opposing team.

Pectus Excavatum was the condition I was kindly blessed with as a child. My sternum was caved in, compressing my heart, lungs, and liver. A few times when I was tempted to eat cereal out of my bowl-of-a-chest, I could sense my mom's look of disapproval and decided it would be inappropriate even for an eleven year old. It affected all kinds of things, including my ability to play basketball. However, I was determined not to give up.

Emergency room visits turned into weekly visits, as breathing became increasingly difficult. Every doctor and nurse I journeyed to all had the same opinion: my condition was only mild. There were even some doctors who told me I could not breathe because I had a psychological issue. I refused to believe that. Fortunately, my wonderful mother found a children's hospital that was an expert in my condition.

Along with finding the children's hospital, my mom researched and discovered the Nuss procedure, a surgery that could fix my condition. The hospital required a number of tests before I could be considered for surgery, so I became a walking pin-cushion and a firm supporter of a different EKG method for a month. When the results returned, the look on my mom's face told me what the little white piece of paper announced. I was definitely a candidate. The minimum score to be considered for surgery was a 3.5, and my score was a 6.7. As cats chased dogs in my stomach, I scrambled to pack up my entire room for the week long trip. After driving twelve long hours, my dad sped into Norfolk, Virginia. I observed the hospital as we drove by. The tan, brick building reached to the clouds with hundreds of gleaming windows in the front, a few push-pin light poles scattered outside, and an overwhelming sense of welcome. My family checked in at the Ronald McDonald House and then headed down to Virginia Beach for a relaxing pre-surgery day. My mind kept playing with the thought that the surgeon was going to slowly cut tiny slits on the sides of my chest, push a titanium bar through the slits, and pop my sternum forward. I scraped those thoughts out of my head as I prepared to fast for the night. No food or fluid was allowed before surgery.

Arriving to the hospital earlier than the birds, I flopped around to different plain white-walled hospital rooms for five hours before I prepared for surgery. The hefty, white-bearded anesthesia doctor let me pick out which flavor of anesthesia I wanted to breathe in to put me to sleep. I picked my second favorite fruit, strawberry. A nurse walked in after that, guided me to another room and instructed me to hop up on the large hospital bed. I gripped on to the side rail as she injected some strong, berry-smelling, pink liquid into my right arm. Suddenly, I felt the urge to laugh as I caught a glimpse of my three-eyed parents waving at me. The image of my parents slowly faded as I rolled into my operation room. I glanced toward the surgical technicians and my surgeon waving at me while I was transferred onto a cold, metal operating table. Fortunately, I had a thin, plastic pillow to keep my head comfy. I spotted a white beard as a small, clear mask was being lowered to cover my nose and mouth. Without warning, my hospital gown disappeared, and embarrassment flooded my mind. My first instinct was to inhale the anesthesia like a heavy smoker. Strawberry was a good choice.

The ball spirals through the air straight into my skinny arms. Planting my feet securely on the wooden floor, I search for a teammate. I rotate my body on one foot and place the ball on the left side of my chest, right where my heart is located. My heart is pumping fast but normal as I spot my teammate run to an open spot. Persevere. I dribble the ball closer to her and quickly chuck it in her direction. Cheers arise from the stands. I glance up. My team just scored.
Rising to the Challenge

By George A. Ayers

I was always a serious child, at least more so than others my age. For this reason, people would sometimes mistake my quiet contemplation as fear or timidity. They could not be more wrong. I simply learned at an early age to weigh the consequences of my actions or statements before committing to them. Some adults would do well to adopt such a policy. It is for this reason that I sat quietly for a moment when the challenge was made to me by my own platoon sergeant. “Hey, Ayers, come on with us. We are going to climb Fuji tomorrow.” It was not stated in the form of a challenge, but I knew what it was. I was the youngest of our group and, therefore, unproven in some ways. I had been in the United States Marine Corps for less than a year. I had been living in Japan for three months. I lived near a small village at the base of Fujiamo Mountain, more commonly referred to as Mount Fuji, the tallest mountain peak in Japan. The hut I lived in was a short walk from the base of the mountain. Every day when I emerged from my quarters, I would see Mount Fuji, towering, monolithic, and majestic in the distance. I was Private first Class George Anthony Ayers, and everyone else in the room outranked me. As I looked around the room, I studied the other five men, their faces chiseled by years of hard duty, training, and combat. These are the kind of men who have kept America safe through sacrifice and hardship for over two hundred years. I felt a deep respect for these men, but I needed their respect as well. As the words came out of my mouth, I almost could not believe what I was saying. I agreed to go, and since tomorrow was a Saturday, and thus a day off, this would not be official duty, just six friends out for some fun. I went to sleep that night with a jittery anticipation of what was to come the next day.

The following morning all six of us gathered at the front gate of the small base and prepared to begin our journey. It was a cool, crisp morning with a bright sun shining and a slight breeze blowing. The cool wind whipped the tails of my jacket as I approached the group. Sergeant Gaines saw me first and grinned as he said in his usual gruff voice “Are you ready Ayers?” as if he were surprised that I had even showed up at all. I assured him that I was ready. Our group consisted of Sergeant Gaines, Sergeant Austin, Lance Corporal Bennett, Sergeant Jackson, Staff Sergeant Ridley, and me. After proper greetings, we started toward the mountain.

As we got closer and closer, the mountain began to take up my entire field of vision. I soon realized that if not for Sergeant Gains’ gracious invitation I would not be going up this mountain. During my initial three months in Japan, I had always viewed Fuji as most people view the moon. It was something intriguing, even beautiful, but something that would forever remain a mystery to me, forever unreachable, and yet here I was starting up to the summit.

By midday we were approaching the snow-capped portion of the mountain. Everyone was holding up quite well considering all the beer consumed the night prior to our climb. Fuji is not the type of mountain that requires a lot of special equipment to climb as long as established trails are utilized. Also the mountain is a dormant volcano, so there is no true soil to walk on, only volcanic ash. In fact there is no grass, and few plants for miles around Mount Fuji. This only adds to the surreal atmosphere of the mountain because since there is no plant life there is no animal life to speak of. There is a feeling of total isolation at this elevation, so it was easy to imagine I was the only person left on Earth.

As we reached the peak, we knew our celebration would be brief because we were burning daylight as they say. After a toast, beer of course, and a few minutes to take in the view, we started back down. We made our way quickly out of the snow-capped portion, which was a good thing because volcanic ash with a layer of snow on top makes for very treacherous footing. Our quest continued to go relatively smoothly until we were about three quarters of the way back to the base of the mountain.

Suddenly I was struck hard from behind. I was knocked off my feet. Instinctively, I flattened out my body because the last thing a climber would want to do during a fall is begin to roll. After sliding several yards down the mountain, and mentally seeing my life pass before my eyes, I looked back to see Sergeant Bennett lying next to me. Bennett had twisted his ankle causing him to topple into me. After assuring everyone I was not injured, we took a look at Bennett’s ankle and saw that it was already starting to swell. He could walk but with some difficulty. Since I had been walking in front of the group, I noticed something else I had not seen before, they all looked like hell. It would seem that the festivities of the previous night had finally caught up with them. Unlike my colleagues, I always have, and still to this day, drink only in moderation. This being the case, it fell upon me to help Bennett the rest of the way down the mountain. As soon as we were back on level ground, Sergeant Bennett was able to walk back to the base unassisted. When we finally reached our huts, all we could do was take a shower and get to bed. I had been gone for the better part of a day, but I felt like I had been gone for years.

The next day was Sunday, another day off from official duty, which was a blessing because we all needed another day to recover. The following day was Monday, a regular work day. As I stood in formation, I received silent nods of approval from several of the men who were with me on the mountain. This gave me a great feeling inside. From that day to my last day in the country of Japan, my relationship with these men was changed forever. Even though we eventually split up, we stayed in touch for many years after.

I never looked at the mountain quite the same after that, I still looked at it with the same awe some might reserve for looking at the moon or a distant planet. There was just one thing that was different: I had been there. I felt a bond with Fujiamo Mountain that I never thought I would experience. That day, I learned another valuable lesson, which has never left me. There is nothing wrong with being afraid of something. It all comes down to how a person handles the fear. Courage is not the absence of fear. Real courage is when someone is afraid but can control that fear and do what must be done in spite of it. I have never forgotten that lesson, and I never will.
The Absurdity of Political Correctness

By Mary Teresa Toro

“I’ve become awfully tired of the term ‘politically correct,’ especially when it’s used as a blunt instrument with which to squash another point of view.”

John MacLachlan

Political correctness (P.C.) is an attempt to remove all potentially offensive (racial, handicap-related, sexist, or in any way discriminatory) language from every facet of public life; from the boardroom to the playground, the P.C. police are hard at work attempting to make life and language non-offensive. The proponents of P.C. believe that if language can be made fair and equal, life will be made fair and equal. The problem is that political correctness does not level the playing field; it marginalizes the mainstreamed, but does not mainstream the marginalized. In the vain attempt to unite everyone it has only “resulted in ‘thought-policing’ and the abuse of everyone’s right to mental and linguistic excess,” and has served to widen the gulf between groups (“A-Z ”). As actor Hal Holbrook says, “It causes us to lie silently instead of saying what we think.” Forcing people “to lie silently” will never result in a change of heart; it will only breed resentment and anger, not understanding and harmony. In The New Thought Police, Tammy Bruce maintains that political correctness “has evolved from changing the wording on MEN WORKING and LADIES’ ROOM signs into a comprehensive and culturally debilitating pattern of thought and speech control” (xi). The attempts to make all facets of life politically correct have led to the proposed editing of some literary works such as Huckleberry Finn. The problem with replacing the offensive word “nigger” with “slave,” is that “slave” is an equally offensive word to many. There is simply no politically correct way to portray the dehumanizing evil of slavery; revising the language does not do justice to the story or the historical facts behind it. Forcing the words of Huckleberry Finn into a P.C. language mold would destroy the essence of the story. How poor and ineffective would Huck’s pivotal meditation and decision to help Jim escape be if Huck’s language were sanitized? The declaration “All right then, I’ll go to hell” would lose its soul-stirring effect if it had been preceded only by P.C. thoughts and language (273). Would Mark Antony’s moving speech in Julius Caesar be as stirring if worded in the politically correct “Friends, Ro-persons, and Country-people?”

The Encyclopedia of American Studies explains the difficulties of achieving political correctness, noting that “what some would see as extreme censorship of attitudes and curtailment of freedom of speech, others would consider as sensitivity to difference and responsible speech” (“Political Correctness”). Due to pressure from P.C. interests, some literary works have been removed from libraries. Certain groups or individuals have objected to content which they find offensive, and rather than avoiding these works have decided that no one should read them. Sadly, many of these self-styled censors have never read the works they seek to banish, but base their judgments on hearsay, or on a word or phrase taken out of context.

In his tongue-in-cheek Introduction to Politically Correct Bedtime Stories, Modern Tales For Our Life & Times author James Finn Garner states that “[t]oday we have the opportunity - and the obligation - to rethink these ‘classic’ stories so they reflect more enlightened times” (ix). Garner then goes on to explain that the original title of the book Fairy Stories for a Modern World was changed because it was heterosexually biased (ix-x). Thus even a satirical book about political correctness was edited for political correctness. Reworking the story of Chicken Little, Garner explains that “[i]t should be mentioned here that the name ‘Little’ was a family name, and not a derogatory, size-biased nickname. It was only by sheer coincidence that Chicken Little was also of shorter-than-average height)” (57).

The P.C. epidemic is not merely an American phenomenon. Henry McDonald, Ireland editor for The Observer, reported that the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) in Belfast has banned the use of the word “brainstorming” because it might offend people with brain disorders. It has been replaced with the politically correct, but ludicrous “brain shower,” which, as Dr. Leigh Ann Rhea said, is unfortunate because some people can only muster a few drops or a sprinkle. Also on the list of banned words in Ireland, according to McDonald, are “nit-picking” and “manila”.

The marginalizing effects of political correctness are many and far reaching. Not only does P.C. stifle free expression but also it discourages public discourse. Individuals become reticent to express opinions that might be viewed as P.I. (politically incorrect) for fear of recrimination in their workplaces, schools, or even in their church communities. Jobs have been lost, promotions denied, and mandatory counseling ordered for those who uttered words or phrases on the P.I. list. Individuals have been savaged and ridiculed by the press for the inadvertent or unintentional use of a word or phrase that is deemed unacceptable under P.C. guidelines. Karen Abbott in an article in the St. Petersburg Times wrote that “At its worst, the idea of politically correct speech makes normal people nervous that their conversations are being monitored by the Thought Police.” This fear on the part of “normal people” is not unwarranted given the ability of anyone with a cell phone to instantly upload video to Facebook, Reddit, and YouTube. The very real threat of having a slip-of-the-tongue or misspoken word memorialized makes nervousness and reticence even more understandable.

Children of generations past would sing-song “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Today, however, the
prevailing attitude seems to be “words can really hurt me, and therefore you must never, ever say a single politically incorrect word to, or about me.” This is an absurd and wholly unrealistic expectation. Stereotyping and negative words and thoughts are part of human life. As author P.D. James has said, “I believe that political correctness can be a form of linguistic fascism, and it sends shivers down the spine of my generation who went to war against fascism.” The only cure for the political correctness frenzy afflicting modern times would seem to be remembering the old saying “I disagree with what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it.”

By Rebecca Jones

James Dean famously said, “Dream as if you’ll live forever. Live as if you’ll die tomorrow.” I believe there is an extreme difference in life and living. We often get so caught up in life that we forget to really live and think that we don’t have time for what we want to do because we have to do what we have to do. I am certainly very guilty of that. Dreams are our way of seeing all the possibilities in life, realizing what really matters to us, and knowing what a limited time we have to do them.

Dreams and aspirations are wonderful things. They inspire and motivate us to do more and be more, give us hope, and show us all the possibilities that living has to offer. They guide us when we make conscious choices to get to a particular destination. They help us to never give up. Personally, I dream of showing the world that there isn’t anything we go through in life that can control us unless we allow it to. I refuse to just survive the hard things. I will thrive in spite of them. After losing my husband when I was only 31 and finding myself with three young sons to raise alone, I became even more determined to accomplish that dream. Accomplishing that, whether it is one little thing at a time or a freefall into something unexpected without a net, shows us how to do them.

Life is a moment-to-moment experience, each moment a stair-step to the next, and no precise moment will ever come by again. Dreams are the way to truly enjoy each one. In my humble opinion, a life half lived is really no life at all. I have learned that I must love when I can, laugh where I am, and live each moment for all that it has to offer. My dreams are mine, and no one will accomplish them all it will not be because I was afraid to try. Dreams help us to determine what should be important in life. Dreams help us prioritize and maximize all our opportunities, not just the easy ones. It has taken me a long time to learn that as life changes, we must also change with it, and that includes changing our priorities, attitudes, and outlooks. All of the things that were once the most important are not really all that important anymore. The cleanliness of my house is still important to me but not as important as making sure my sons have made memories they will never forget. I want them to know that life is what we make it. Dreams are the launching pad to make it all happen. I know if I don’t consciously prioritize and focus on where my energy is being spent, it is so easy to get distracted by less important concerns. Having dreams helps me keep life in perspective.

Life will never truly be enjoyed if we have the wrong attitudes. We must realize that life is a limited time gift and there are no second chances. We cannot be afraid to do the things we want. We also cannot only live in the moment with no thought for what may come next. We must find a happy medium, a task I have a great difficulty with at times. So often I get caught up in the excitement of something that I forget to take a breath and look at the big picture. I suppose I am learning that particular lesson out of necessity. I have learned that I must love when I can, laugh where I am, and live each moment for all that it has to offer. My dreams are mine, and no one will accomplish them all it will not be because I was afraid to try.

Life is a moment-to-moment experience, each moment a stair-step to the next, and no precise moment will ever come by again. Dreams are the way to truly enjoy each one. In my humble opinion, a life half lived is really no life at all. I have learned to live my life, not simply endure it. I am constantly adding items to my bucket list with the realization that while I may not accomplish them all it will not be because I was afraid to try.

3rd Place
Sigma Kappa Delta
2014 National Essay Writing Contest
The Argument for Generation Y
By Sarah Hammett

If you were born within the nearly twenty year span from 1982 to 2004, you are considered to be a member of Generation Y. This generation is also referred to as “Millennial,” or on a more negative note, the “Me Generation.” The latter nickname is referring to the generation’s reputation to be self-centered, bratty. Older generations love to complain about Generation Y, taking issue with everything from “participation trophies” to the fact that Generation Y came of age parallel to the internet’s increasing role in everyday life. Millennials have been called many things; narcissistic, entitled, overly interested in being wealthy, and not interested enough in politics and current affairs. But, let’s dispel the negativity once and for all. As a member of Generation Y (born in 1990), I have long resented the claims of those in older generations that we are going to ruin civilization. Maybe it’s my Millenial narcissism talking, but I think the fact that Millennials are more civic-minded than our elders is illustrated by the fact that this summer a new TV channel called “Pivot” launched. Aimed towards Generation Y, Pivot’s focus is on social advocacy. Its television shows, its news program, its documentaries, and even the movies that it shows, all bear that message. During its programs, the show provides links to help specific causes during their programs. For instance, if there’s a scene in a movie where a character is being bullied, then a link flashes on screen saying, “Go to this website to see how you can prevent bullying.” Our need and near-obsession for social advocacy stems from the connection the internet gave us.

Of course, older members of our generation are probably better in many ways than the youngest members, some of whom aren’t even teenagers yet. But wisdom does come with age. I’m not disputing that. I’m disputing the notion that if a kid receives a participation trophy, he’s going to get a big head or he’s going to become entitled. Some experts even go so far as to state that participation trophies lead to careers and changing jobs often. That is not true, my friends. We change jobs often because we are in a very tumultuous job market. We came to age in a recession. Jobs disappear overnight, and we have to move on. We are not being picky. When I was a teenager, the jobs that teenagers traditionally held at entertainment stores, movie rentals, book stores, and photo developers were all being replaced by their digital counterparts. Trust me, iTunes is not in the business of hiring sixteen year olds who are still working on a high school diploma. There’s always fast food, but there are only so many Taco Bells, and even fast food took a hit in the recession.

I received participation trophies in soccer. I do not think I am Mia Hamm. I do not feel that my plastic trophy warrants me a position in any job I want. I do not feel like that trophy makes me better than anyone. It made me equal to everyone. Despite popular myth, we still recognize excellence in sports in my generation. Here’s the thing, seven year olds on a soccer field? They’re all pretty much the same. There might be that one kid who’s really into it, and who will go on to play soccer in high school, maybe beyond. That kid will be rewarded for her dedication down the road. She knows if she works hard, there might be a scholarship, there might be a state championship. When’s the last time someone got a participation scholarship? When’s the last time the losing Super Bowl team received participation rings? Exactly. Kids realize that sooner than you think. I knew it at seven. I knew that I was only getting that trophy because I was a child on a rec team, not because I was a great athlete, but I still loved that trophy. It validated all the time I spent learning how to kick with the inside of my foot. All the time in practice, I really just wanted to watch Rugrats.

Participation trophies have never been about making every four year old on a t-ball team feel like Babe Ruth. It validates them for trying. If they were interested in t-ball, maybe that trophy was the first taste of getting something for effort. Maybe it inspired them to keep going. All participation trophies ever did for me was reward me for trying, so I keep trying.

Now, studies say that Generation Y is moving more towards socialism than older generations. I don’t have a defense for that one. If there are Gen Y-ers reading this, it’s a bad move, guys. It doesn’t really work even if the sentiment is there. Socialism is not a narcissistic idea. It is many things, but that is not one of them. You can’t call us full of ourselves and then also say we want everyone to be equal.
Rumor #2: We Don’t Want To Grow Up

We are called the Peter Pan generation because we live with our parents longer. That’s not necessarily a thing that is confined to our generation because Generation X is the Boomerang Generation. They moved out of the parents’ home, and then came back. I’m sure I speak for most Generation X and Y-ers when I say most adults do not live with their parents by choice. I hate to keep using the recession as my go-to defense, but it’s obviously the culprit there.

We also like our cartoons. I don’t know of any other generation that is so hung up on their childhoods as we are right now. On any given day at Calhoun, I can spot at least twenty adults in cartoon t-shirts, myself included. It’s nostalgia. The 1990s were good times, my friends. Most people relive their childhoods. When I was a kid, merchandise had Looney Tunes and Betty Boop on it. Okay? We’re not the first ones to get hung up on this sort of thing; we’re just the ones doing it right now.

We’re also putting off rites of passage, like getting our driver’s license. I can speak to this a little, I’m twenty-three and don’t have mine, yet. It wasn’t really necessary as a teen, and I just never got it. With the whole eco movement and the ever rising cost of gas, bikes become the go-to transportation, especially in cities. It’s just not an in-demand thing, anymore. Public transport systems are no longer to be feared. I watch TV shows from the 1980s and see characters horrified at the prospect of riding with the weirdos on the bus or subway. It’s not like that anymore. It probably wasn’t even that bad then. I have been on public transportation in places like Washington, D.C. and New York and never came across anyone who I was remotely terrified of. There are many business people and a lot of people sleeping. These days, people have a greater chance of getting hurt in a mall or movie theater than on a subway. Even Huntsville has a public transport system now. I am a big fan of our shuttle. Fifty cents can get me anywhere I need to be in this city, granted I have to leave a few hours early.

No generation is perfect, but if people are upset with the way the world is now, we’re not the culprits. The oldest members of our generation are barely in their thirties, and the youngest are in elementary school. The majority of us are still in college. It’s like a father watching the ashes of the family home smolder and blaming the nine year old because an adult carelessly left the stove on. Yes, we can vote, but so can most people over 18. We are still the minority of voters, by math alone. As of right now, a person has to be born in roughly 1995 to be voting age. During the 2012 elections, 1994, and maybe a few late-1993’s. That’s only ten years of our twenty-year span. There are at least three generations of people ahead of us who can still vote.

We are not the law makers. A few of us are CEOs (We’re also the generation of the “Young Billionaire,” and people say we aren’t ambitious enough). For the most part, the powers that be are not people in my generation.

Give us some slack, and give us some time. One day, we’re going to inherit the mess that generations before us have made. We’ll do our best to clean it up. We are routinely named the most civic-minded generation. The number of us that donate to charity or volunteer is way ahead of other generations, yet they call us selfish. We are the most educated generation ever, based on college enrollment, yet they call us lazy. According to Pew Research, the most important thing to a Generation Y-er is to “become a good parent.” Yet, we are supposedly materialistic. So why are we dragged through the mud?

We scare them. There’s never been a generation quite like this, and they don’t know what that means for the status quo.

Don’t worry. We’re not going to let them down. We are poised to be the next Greatest Generation. We were mostly children when 9/11 happened, and we came to age during the Web Revolution and the Great Recession. These things have shaped us. We have learned by the mistakes of those older than us, and we’re still learning. The world is changing, and we are the ones who truly understand what it’s changing into. Give us, therefore, the benefit of the doubt and some time. We have got this.

No More Horizon Version V

Chris Wade
Winning and Losing

By George A. Ayers

Losing a parent can be a devastating experience for anyone. Looking back now I sometimes feel like I lost my father twice. As a child, I was not close to my dad. As a matter of fact, I feared the man most of the time. My father was the owner of a night club. For this reason it was not unusual for me to go several days out of the week without coming face to face with him, which was alright with me because anytime I found myself in the same room with him I would search my memory for something I might have done that day that could get me into trouble, even though I had done nothing wrong.

Discipline was swift and severe in our house, probably the type that could get a parent arrested according to the rules and standards of today because that same discipline usually involved a thick leather belt. At the time, however, it was considered a standard parenting technique, and I have on occasion witnessed similar practice in the homes of friends and classmates.

As I progressed into my high school years, I became an average high school athlete. Perhaps I thought there was too much violence in both sports. My father was just simply too busy to come. Neither of my parents ever came to any of my wrestling matches or football games. My mother thought there was too much violence in both sports. My father was just simply too busy to come.

While growing up, I was always an avid reader of comic books. I was fascinated by the characters in graphic novels. I admired the heroes, their sense of justice, and fair play. More than anything, I admired the heroes for their powerful physiques. It is this influence that prompted me to begin improving my body through weight training.

Midway through my tour of duty in the Marine Corps, I had a couple of years of good hard training behind me. I was on a street in Santa Monica, California, when I spotted what I am sure was one of the first, if not the original, Gold's Gym owned by Joe Gold himself long before the business became a franchise and a household name. I approached the building, and as I was peaking inside through the window, I could see someone inside waving me in.

Once inside, I could not believe what I saw. The gym was full of professional athletes and pro bodybuilders that I had read about but only seen in magazines. A minute later they had me stripped down to shorts and practicing posing. Five days later, I competed in my first bodybuilding show. I placed third in my class, and from then on I was hooked.

I completed my enlistment in the Marine Corps the following year and returned home to Chicago, Illinois. I was a man now with many experiences behind me. I believe my father sensed this because I knew instantly that our relationship and interaction were different. Still, I wished that there was more to our relationship.

I entered several shows over the next couple of years, always placing in the top five but never quite reaching the very top. At least my dad had become much easier to be with and relate to. We found ourselves having long conversations about very personal and candid subjects. We even purchased a large van for the purpose of starting a father and son business. I was living a dream.

Then one morning I woke up suddenly. I knew what Dad would want me to do. I got dressed and went straight to the gym. Eight days later I was a bodybuilding champion, my first win. And it was a big one! I realize now that we do not see the full potential in ourselves, and even when we do we may not put forth the level of effort and thorough preparation to achieve the desired goal. Since that day, I have won many titles in many states from New York to California. I win because my preparation and attention to detail have risen to a high level. I know that anything worth having is not free but requires great sacrifice. I endeavor every day to transfer these same principals into other areas of my life. It is not easy. I am a work in progress; however, I continue to evolve.
Autumn Mallard
Linda Coseglia

Winter Photograph
Rhonda LeClerg

Corner Icicles
James Brian Burrus

Perspective
Rebecca Jones
The Decision
By Sarah Hammett

Sometimes, she got frustrated with how her life had turned out, through no fault of her own. She hadn’t told her brother to join the Army. She certainly didn’t tell him to marry a woman who was also enlisted. She didn’t hold a gun to their heads and force them to have four sons in a ten year span in between three dual deployments. She didn’t convince them to reenlist one, two, three, four more times. To ignore every opportunity given to them to leave military life behind and watch their children grow up without interruption. To stop fighting wars they didn’t even agree with and start going to Little League games and school recitals. But, they didn’t, or couldn’t, whichever one it was. So, Celeste, Aunt Cici as she was known in these parts, was left behind to deal with the consequences of her brother’s and his wife’s decisions. Come what may, she had to be ready for it. So, every time she dropped the nephews off at school, every time she helped them with their homework, or supervised a Skype call to their parents in Afghanistan, it was in the back of her mind that this might be a lifetime gig. The boys’ parents might come back broken, fragments of the people they once were. They might not come back at all. Every time that it all became too much and she wanted and needed to walk away, she reminded herself that the boys hadn’t made those decisions, either. They were leaves in the wind, not a single one of them in charge of their own fate. They were at the mercy of God and the United States Military.

That very first deployment, when she had become Not Mom for eighteen months to two little boys who had no idea what was happening, she had been so innocent and naïve herself. She was in way over her head. She had never cared for a kid by herself, or for that long. But, she was Aunt Cici, and they were her nephews, and they were so small and so scared, and so was she. It was the three of them against the world. That’s when her relationship with Gentry had become more serious than “dating.” Because he was there in that house with them, all the time, helping with midnight feedings and first days of kindergarten. He was Not Dad.

During the second deployment, there were three boys. She and Gentry had been living together during the “off season” as he called it, when at least one of the nephews’ parents was available to their children. So, when they shipped off for yet another dual deployment, Gentry went with her to her brother’s house. For nine months, they played house. She had always been too busy helping with her brother’s family to consider having one of her own, but that was when she really started thinking about it. When her sister-in-law came home first, she revealed to Celeste that they weren’t going to reenlist a fifth time.

“We miss the boys. What’s the point of having children if you can’t be parents?”

With their decision to become civilians, Celeste realized that she would be relieved of her own duties, as well. She would be free. When she thought about that not so far off future, she thought about Gentry. She was tired of playing house. She wanted the real thing.

Then the news came that they had to ship out one last time.

“I promise, this is it,” Celeste, her brother had told her when they said their farewells. “I know you’re tired of living my life for me.”

She assured him that the boys were in good hands, and waved as he marched off with the rest of the soldiers.

Gentry was waiting for her when she got to the house. The boys were asleep. It had been decided that an airport farewell was too emotional for them.

“Eighteen months,” Gentry said, but he wasn’t scared. They had done this before, they would do it again.

She spent a long time in her nephews’ room that night, watching them sleep. They felt like hers, she thought, though she knew they weren’t. They were just little boys who barely knew their parents. Not Mom, she reminded herself. Maybe one day, but never to them.

She reminded herself that this was hard on everyone. Her, and the kids, for sure. But, her brother and his wife, as well. They had made a commitment to their country, and they had to see it through.

Their days had grown predictable. Gentry made breakfast, usually oatmeal with slices of banana because the middle nephew, Jasper, didn’t get enough potassium in his diet. Gentry went to work, dropping the older two boys off at school on the way. She stayed behind with the rest. Housework, cooking, all day long. Two days a week, she worked at the local high school while Gentry played the role of stay-at-home dad. She hated to admit it, but sometimes he was a lot better at that whole domestic thing than she was. She had worked full time before she became Not Mom. She missed it.

She and Gentry counted down with the boys on the kitchen chalkboard every night.

“Six months down,” Gentry said one night.

“Twelve more to go.”

She was at the oldest boy’s soccer game when she found out. She was snapping pictures of her nephew playing goalie, admiring the way the silver three on his back shined in the sun. Then, a woman with mousey brown hair tapped a skinny finger on Celeste’s shoulder.

“You’re Celeste, right?” the taper asked. Celeste nodded. “I’m Mallory. Five years ago, I slept with your boyfriend. I’m sorry I have to tell you, but my sponsor says it’s the only way I can make amends for my mistakes. So. Sorry.” She walked away then, weaving through the coolers and lawn chairs back to the parking lot.

Five years ago. She looked at #3 on the field, and did the math in her head. He would have been six. The first deployment. She and Gentry hadn’t been as serious then. They were only at the beginning.

Still, the wound stung. Though she had no proof, only a name, in her heart of hearts, it felt true. The infidelity in itself was forgivable. But, keeping it a secret as they raised four kids together wasn’t. He hadn’t betrayed just her, but
all of them. She looked again at #3 and wondered what she would say to him and his brothers. #3, or Sterling as he was known off the soccer field, would be the only one who fully understood what Gentry had done, and why he was leaving. Sterling would be devastated, but the younger boys would be crushed. To them, it would only seem like Celeste was kicking out their Not Dad. Those poor boys, always on the verge of losing a parent, would actually lose their favorite person in the world over adults being petty. She knew kicking Gentry out would automatically make her Enemy #1 to her nephews. It would only make them hate her.

She made it through dinner without causing a scene. For a brief moment, things were preserved the way they had been before. They ate frozen pizza and answered the kids’ many questions about how things worked and what the family was going to do that week. Baths were given, stories were read, foreheads kissed, then finally, sleep.

She and Gentry retreated to the living room. A movie was put on, but she couldn’t remember what it was.

She told him about Mallory. He confirmed that it was true. He had met her before he met Celeste. It was timing, he said. That was all. They had only been dating for a few weeks. It was before the deployment. His official defense was “It was one time, Celeste, five years ago.” But, it wasn’t the amount of times it had happened, but that it had happened at all. That it had been hidden. She told him as much. He apologized. She found a new complaint, he apologized again. The cycle went around at least three times before she broke it.

“Are you going to leave me?” she asked him.

“Celeste, if I was going to leave you for Mallory, I would have done it sometime in the last half-decade.”

“Not just for Mallory, but at all.”

“No.”

“Do you want to? Do you think about it?”

“No.”

She wanted him to leave her, she realized.

This was just another decision that had been made for her life without her consent. She had a boyfriend who lied. And she realized then if this wasn’t forgivable, maybe she didn’t love him at all. He had only been part of the package deal of this life. Not only did she have kids that weren’t hers to keep, she had a husband that she had never married. Did she love him because of who he was, or because what he did for the nephews?

Still, she knew she couldn’t make him, or let him, leave. They needed him here. She was so angry about this, so convinced that her life was an uneven playing field. But, what could she do? Anything? Nothing? Something, she decided.

She proposed the deal she had been thinking about all day.

“I don’t want to be with you anymore, Gentry. I don’t think we’re together for the right reasons.”

He started to speak, but she stopped him.

“I know some part of you knows this too, or you’ll come to terms with it eventually. But, we have to keep the charade going a bit longer. For the sake of the boys. This is the last deployment. This is the last time we have to play house. Twelve more months of being the happy couple, and then we go our separate ways. The boys adore you. I know you love them, too.”

“I love you, Celeste,” he argued. She shook her head.

“Maybe. I don’t know. I think I love you, I don’t know. Regardless, I can’t figure it out right now. Cause I can’t risk having to cut you out of their lives right now. We just have to keep going as we have been.”

“So, what do you suggest?”

“We live here together, nothing changes until their parents get back. We share the same room, we still pretend to be in love for their sake. They can’t know we’re questioning things. They can’t know that we ever had this conversation.”

“So, a year of lying.”

“You did it for five years already, what’s one more?”

“It wasn’t a lie. It just wasn’t full disclosure.”

“Okay, well, now it’s a lie.”

“Alright. Because I love you. Maybe you’ll figure that out.”

“Maybe. Either way, we got twelve months to see.”

That was it. It was settled.

Nothing would change. Nothing had to change. But, everything did.
The Quiet
By Sarah Hammett

For the first decade of Ben's life, he had been an only child. Life had been quiet then, just him and his mom. They lived in a tiny apartment, and they never had a real tree for Christmas because she said it was too much of a fire hazard in the “pine box” they lived in.

Then, she met Phil at the gas station. She had gotten twenty dollars in gas to find she only had ten dollars left in her bank account. Phil handed her a crisp bill with Andrew Jackson on it, and Lizzie was her. Violet was by the front window, playing by herself. The baby lay gurgling on his carpet, chewing on a plastic giraffe.

There was a knock on the door just as the soap went to commercial.

“Someone's at the door!” four tiny voices chorused to him.

He got up, stretching, and picked the baby up. He had barely gotten to his bedroom door when he heard a woman's voice saying, “Is your mother home?”

“Hey!” he shouted, trotting down the stairs. “Couch!”

His mother came and led the lady to the backseat while I was tying the couch down.” He had known it was her. She smiled sweetly at him, ducking around him as he opened the door. The woman wanted the couch his mother had posted online.

“Mom!” he shouted. “Couch!”

His mother came and led the lady to the garage. Little girls ran in and out the front door, fighting over teddy bears, singing silly songs. Ben helped the woman load the couch into the back of a red truck. The woman paid his mother, and then she left. His mother shut the front door and loaded the couch. She could have slipped her into the backseat while I was tying the couch down.”

“Uh,” one of the girls said, “should we call 911.”

“No,” their mother said at the same time Ben said “Yes.”

“Ben, you're being ridiculous. She was not kidnapped.”

“Then, where is she?”

They searched the house again. Nothing. “Where is she?” their mother sobbed as Ben dialed 911.

It was all over the noon news. A woman in her thirties, blonde hair, average build. Last seen in a red pick-up truck.

She turned herself in at 12:14. No Violet, and no reason to suspect otherwise.

The police came and searched the house themselves. The neighborhood was searched. Their mother questioned.

“Ma'am, were you aware that there are no fewer than four sex offenders in your neighborhood?”

The sex offenders were taken in for questioning.

Phil came home from work, shaken and crying.

“How could this happen? How did she just disappear?”

And the neighbors whispered behind closed doors how the couple down the road had it coming. No one could keep up with that many kids.

There was a press conference on the six o'clock news.
“Please, please, bring her home,” his mother sobbed while clinging to Phil.
But, still no Violet.
And then finally, someone called the hotline with something other than wild speculation.
Violet was recovered behind the abandoned barn about two miles from the house. She had a balloon animal. She couldn’t tell them who had picked her up, where the balloon came from, who dropped her off. She was taken to the hospital, but none of their worst fears were realized. She was simply a four-year-old girl missing for twelve hours, no worse for the wear.
The police said the investigation would be ongoing.
“We’ll find who did this.”
His mother and Phil thanked them, and soon the house emptied out of everyone who didn’t live there. Things returned to the way they always were. At bath time, Lizzie and Cora fought and cried. Beth refused to sleep in the only pair of clean pajamas she had, and instead went to sleep in her church dress. It was life again, but Ben didn’t mind it so much, now. He went to his room and took his biology test with his TV turned off. When he was finished, he asked his mother if he could tuck Violet in that night.
“Where did you go today, Vi?”
She shook her head. She didn’t know, or couldn’t say.
“Were they nice?” he asked her. “The people that took you?”
“No one took me,” she told him. “I took myself.”
“You ran away?”
“I was going to come back. I got lost.”
“Why did you go at all?”
“Because of the noise,” she told him. “I wanted to find the quiet.”
“So, where did you go?” he asked her again. This time, she smiled. He would understand, she thought. So, she answered.
“The library.”
Art

Dali Self Portrait
Greg Belisle

American Dream
James Brian Burrus

The Tourist
Emily Quinn

Curse of Color
Chikundra Rawls
Swim
Hunter Vroonland

Run
Monica Yother

Fragile Alchemy
Kathryn Lansing Vaughn

Stormy Seas
Jo Peterson
One of the more extraordinary episodes this year occurred on November 21, 2013. Dr. Beck spoke to Muse student editors about the situation involving the evacuation due to an unidentifiable box located on a train in Decatur. Calhoun’s campus police stayed in constant contact with local law enforcement and the local EMA office and sent out a CCC alert as soon as the situation called for it. She assured, “Our first and foremost concern, in an emergency situation, is to be sure that our employees and students are safe. We are very diligent in our efforts.” Not long after everyone evacuated, they learned that the situation wasn’t dangerous, but the overall mindset was better-safe-than-sorry. In a way, it was a blessing in disguise, allowing Calhoun to practice its emergency procedures under the pretense of a real emergency, not a drill, but without any real danger involved. A major problem that day was the traffic on campus as a few thousand cars attempted to leave at one time. Since then, Calhoun’s campus police officers and maintenance staff have done a traffic flow study and trained, so in case of another evacuation, officers and staff will be directing traffic to get students off of campus as quickly as possible. Calhoun had a professional development program recently that focused entirely on handling emergency situations—anything from an active shooter to bad weather. “I am very pleased with the relationships we have with the EMAs and the police departments,” Dr. Beck told us, “on both sides, over in Huntsville, as well. It’s a very good spirit of cooperation.”

Just as the administration looks for ways to increase safety, they also continue to improve the ever-expanding area of online education. Calhoun has had a slight decrease in success rates in online courses over the course of the last three years. Currently, the success rates in traditional courses average 4% higher than online courses. Overall, it is not that much of a difference, but it appears the difference aligns with some changes that were made. A quality assurance initiative that has produced improved course design, facilitation, and improved assessment has been implemented. Prior to this, students were able to successfully complete a class without necessarily mastering the content. Because of this, Calhoun has significantly upgraded the requirements for online classes and requires all faculty members who teach online to be certified. The withdrawal rate for online classes has remained steady over the past three academic years.

Withdrawal in both online and traditional classes averages just under 13%. Dr. Beck then told us, “We’ve been improving. We have a three-pronged initiative at Calhoun to promote student success in their courses.” The first, she told us, is a certification program that requires faculty to be certified, and then a set of standards and a review process have been adopted to ensure the components for student success are in every course. In other words, every course has a set of standard requirements that are required of all faculty if they are going to teach online. Then when instructors are ready to teach online they are reviewed by someone who knows their course material. A collabora-

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Thank you!

As faculty editor, I extend a tremendous thank you to Beth Butler, Calhoun’s Graphic Designer. Muse would quite literally not be possible without her expertise. With her designs, the magazine has won several Sigma Kappa Delta National Literary Magazine Awards. She singlehandedly designs the layout for the published submissions, and she always does so in an amazingly efficient and creative manner. Her talent makes being the faculty editor a pleasant job, and so as Mrs. Butler plans her retirement, she will know that the student editors, Muse contributors and readers, and I sincerely miss her!

— Dr. Leigh Ann Rhea

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An Interview with the President, Dr. Marilyn Beck

By Emily Middleton and Kailyn Lindsey Reid

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A collection of articles by our students about events around our campus during the 2013-2014 academic year

Muse Paper

Student Editors

Emily Middleton
Kailyn Lindsey Reid

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Dr. Leigh Ann Rhea
Faculty Editor
Beth Butler
Graphic Designer
tive effort between distance learning and recruitment and advising in the form of a Blackboard training module was developed. It was incorporated into the college orientation courses so that all students are introduced and know how to access materials for their online classes.

Calhoun now offers over eighty online courses. The school has increased that number by over 50% from the fall of 2012 to the fall of 2013 because of student demand. Dr. Beck told us that they “were filling all of our classes just about the first day or two of registration. Moving forward, we are continuing to expand our offerings due to student demand, but we don’t want to get too far out that we get ahead of ourselves in regard to quality.”

On a related topic, Calhoun had a pilot group to test eBooks with thirty sections in the fall and fifty sections in the spring. In the fall, which is the most complete data they have, the average amount saved by students purchasing eBooks over a hard copy of the book was $32.27. The total amount saved by all students was an astounding $33,573. Dr. Beck thinks that it will not be long until everything is made into eBooks; she thinks the pilot was successful and possibly, by next fall, “we’ll make a big jump.”

Success this year, however, is not limited to technological advancements. Calhoun’s Health Sciences faculty, staff, and students had the honor of placing 44 in the 50 Associate Degree producers for Registered, Administration, Research and Clinical Nursing graduates on June 24, 2013. This distinction goes beyond Calhoun for being the top degree producer in the state of Alabama. According to Dr. Beck, the honor is more about the quality of education and what professions are needed in the community. In this way, Calhoun is focused on the needs and future of the students and the city. The school’s administration has been pleased with the overall ranking on the national level and wants to ensure each student a future career that will be stable and for which they can be passionate. Calhoun is looking into what the future holds for the hospitals and other medical practices alike.

“We currently work closely with our hospitals and our health care agencies to determine how many workers they are going to need over the next ten years. So what we try to do is to meet the needs of the business and the few industrial nurses in our region because if we overproduce, then we could have nurses that might have to be underemployed. They may get jobs, but it may not be the jobs that they really do want.”

- Dr. Beck

As Calhoun looks into all of the possibilities for students’ futures in the medical field, they are also looking at the present. With the new insurance reform, the college will add an estimated $75 million dollars to the costs of insurance for the whole state. However, Dr. Beck does not seem worried about these numbers.

This year is full of excitement, and the student editors of Muse were pleased to discover that the Decatur campus art building expansion is about 90% complete. The bid plan is for the project to begin in July 2014. On March 4, 2014, Calhoun completed the finalization of the Fine Arts building. The construction is a 13-month process, and the school is striving to be complete a year from August, in the fall of 2015. Students studying fine arts will now be relocated to the new building for their classes. Along with a black-box theater that will seat 150, there will be a rehearsal hall. Students from both Huntsville and Decatur will be able to have performances in the newly built theater, as well as a place to design and create sets. Another exciting element of this project is new equipment for computer labs for music students with the new revelation of music enhancement. The Decatur campus is well on its way toward making the school reach even further into education and the future.

Plans to expand the Huntsville campus have been approved and finalized. Dr. Beck hopes that the breaking of soil will start in January 2015. Currently, Calhoun is partnering with Chapman Sisson Architectural group in Huntsville and aiming for the design to be completed by December 31, 2014. In an attempt to grow the resources and space for students, the school is in the process of purchasing a small amount of property so Huntsville may become a true campus. The present challenge is relocating Wynn Drive. This change will have to be taken into consideration in the designs because of entrances to the campus. Despite this challenge, the Huntsville Campus plans are continuing as hoped.

For a Life Better Achieved
By Kailyn Lindsey Reid

Humanities is not only important in the educational field but in everyday situations. It allows people to become more diverse thinkers, thinking outside the boundaries of society. In the summer of 2013, Calhoun Community College welcomed a new administrator, Dean of Humanities, Dr. Donna Estill. She is originally from Alabama and taught at Alabama Southern Community College as an English professor. She then pursued a position at Fort Scott Community College in Kansas as Dean of Humanities. We have been lucky to welcome her back to her home state as she makes Calhoun Community College her new work home.

Dean Estill is an admirer of the arts and loves to paint. She encourages students to put in the hours and learn to interact well with others if they wish to succeed in school and life. She recalls how she went from being a “bad” student to a good student in her college years. In an interview with Muse student editors, she emphasized, “All classes are important, and you will use everything you learned later in life.” Dean Estill urges all students to read at least one work by Shakespeare, and she suggests that Alabama natives read To Kill a Mockingbird.

Dean Estill says that she feels the area of humanities helps develop the brain in ways that other subjects cannot. When writing a journal for a Nobel Prize winning chemist, she learned that the humanities gave him a better grasp on the scientific process and the thoughts that surround it. Dean Estill claims that studying humanities will not only train students to be better thinkers, but will also provide achievements for our country and perspectives in our daily lives.
Building Better Leaders for a Better Future

By Tiffany Merryman

After coming to Calhoun, Dean Kemba Chambers was the Associate Dean of Instruction for four and a half years at J.F. Drake State Community and Technical College. Prior to that, she was a math instructor and Department Chair of Math and Science at Chattahoochee Valley Community College in Phoenix City, Alabama.

In her current position as Dean of Math, Science, and Pre-engineering, she would like to ensure that students have the necessary courses and skill work to transfer to four-year institutions. She would also like to enhance and get more students involved in the biotechnical and pre-engineering areas.

In an interview, Dean Chambers mentioned that, in her position, she would like to see more of Calhoun’s students learn how to do research, “especially in our discipline areas that fall within our department. We have so many students that are going to transfer to four-year institutions, and research is something they will face.”

Dean Chambers believes being acquainted with the areas of math, science, and pre-engineering is an advantage because they are core foundations for all students. Any student who comes to Calhoun has to go through that department.

A challenge of being in her position is that she is the problem solver. It is her job to make sure that everything is working and that all problems are solved. Dean Chambers said, “I wouldn’t call it a challenge, in a sense, but I just try to make sure that everything is in order and in place.” A pleasant surprise has been how well she has gotten along with the faculty in her division: “It seems like I have been here for a long time. We just fit in together.”

When asked if there was any advice she could offer to students wanting to succeed, Dean Chambers advised, “Don’t give up. Life and education is a tough process, but you have to keep moving forward. I think that’s important. There will be stumbling blocks along the way, but you have to just take them and keep moving forward. Just don’t stop.”

Students attend community colleges for a variety of reasons. Single mothers, independent adults, and those who struggled through high school comprise a large portion of the student body. Fortunately, the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society exists as an opportunity to enrich the lives of students who have striven for success. One may ask, what is Phi Theta Kappa? It is not a fraternity nor a sorority. It is an honor society. It is more than a formal recognition. It is a way in which successful students may grow through scholarship, leadership, fellowship, and service. A student is invited to join Phi Theta Kappa when he or she has achieved two important accomplishments: earning 12 credit hours toward a degree while at Calhoun and maintaining a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or higher. The student must also be enrolled in at least one class each semester at the end of the drop/add period. Members participate in many fun and fruitful projects that benefit the college and their community while building them into servant leaders.

Phi Theta Kappa originated at a women’s college in Missouri in 1910. Six women came together to form Kappa Phi Omicron, a scholarly group that would later evolve into Phi Theta Kappa as we know it today. By 1988, the honor society expanded to all fifty states. Scholarships for its members were in the works. Some scholarships available to members today are the Guistwhite Scholarship, the Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholarship, the Hites Transfer Scholarship, the AII-USA Community College Academic Team Scholarship, and many more! Unlike any other honor society, Phi Theta Kappa makes over $37 million in scholarships available to its members.

Calhoun Community College’s chapter, Sigma Lambda, unites students from both campuses. At chapter and committee meetings, students may discuss needs in the college and the community, set goals, propose fundraisers, and organize projects. Active members are a vital part of this organization; students may permanently influence the future of their community by rising up to lead and by reaching out to serve. Any Sigma Lambda member is welcome to attend these meetings. By participating in Phi Theta Kappa events, members develop as leaders and researchers, while forming friendships and unforgettable memories. United by the common goal of success, Phi Theta Kappans gain an unsurpassable advantage in today’s highly competitive economy, while improving the quality of life for those around them.

The fall semester of 2013 provided many opportunities for involvement. Throughout the semester, Phi Theta Kappa members tutored GED testers in hopes that more individuals will earn a high school equivalency diploma. Beginning in 2014, significant changes occurred to the GED test that could negatively affect testers. The cost increased dramatically, the test became computer-based, and all previously passed sections of the exam no longer applied toward completion. By providing tutoring to GED testers prior to these changes, members helped these individuals save money and gain an advantage in the job market.

Additionally, promoting CollegeFish.org throughout the semester gave students an opportunity to have fun, while finding their future colleges and scholarships. CollegeFish.org is a free website that matches community college students with senior institutions and scholarship dollars. To raise awareness of this website in the student body, Phi Theta Kappans hosted several exciting activities, including a tailgate party and a birthday party for Ike, the College Fish mascot. Not only did many students discover new financial opportunities at their future colleges and universities, but many also won prizes ranging from free pens to an iPad mini.

Spring semester 2014 contained many equally exciting events. In April of 2014, the Sigma Lambda chapter traveled to Florida to attend the international convention at Disney World. In May, the chapter is hosting a fundraiser golf tournament. Last year’s fundraiser brought in over $3,000 to assist with scholarships and travel expenses. Through our initiatives, we hope to leave a legacy and an example for future leaders and scholars who will improve our community and our college through Phi Theta Kappa.
Sigma Kappa Delta Convention 2013

By Bridgette Pylant

This year’s SKD convention was held in “The City of Roses”, Portland, Oregon in March. Portland’s rich history, cultural diversity and artistic atmosphere made it the perfect place for our members to meet. Members came together from all over the country to share interests and ideas, participate in convention activities, and listen to lectures from professors and authors.

One of the most interesting activities was a student panel that discussed the fantasy genre of fiction. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Cornelia Funk’s *Inkheart*, and *The Uglies* Series by Scott Westerfield were some of the books discussed. Each student gave an interesting and insightful look into the fantasy world about which they chose to speak.

Dr. Randy Cross, an American Literature Professor from Calhoun Community College in Decatur, Alabama, gave an informative and inspiring talk on his time spent as a Fulbright scholar in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. Dr. Cross’s talent for captivating an audience was on full display as he discussed the people and experiences provided to him through the Fulbright program.

The two guest authors that SKD students were privileged to hear speak were Ursula K. Le Guin and Anne Fadiman. Both of these authors have received numerous awards and honors, and it was truly an honor for the members to hear them speak and to meet them during their book signings.

Mrs. Le Guin, famous for her science fiction novels, spoke on the idea of science fiction in academia. The lecture was thought provoking and quite humorous. Her thoughts on being an author were cleverly and colorfully depicted. She noted, “It is always a hell of a time to be a poet”, and that “you can’t invent fiction”.

Mrs. Anne Fadiman is an English Professor at Yale as well as an award-winning author. Her lecture discussed the many themes contained in her book *Ex Libris: A Common Reader*. Many topics pertaining to books were discussed including the courtly love of books versus the carnal love of books, strange bookmarks, and the chore of combining libraries within a marriage. This lecture was perfect for all of the book lovers in attendance.

Thank you to all of the sponsors, professors, authors, and members that helped make this year’s convention such a success.

U-N-I-T-Y

By Makenzie Childress

“I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion” – Mia Hamm.

During fall 2013 season, the Lady Warhawks softball team overcame obstacles before the spring 2014 season even took flight. Like all teams, we have our flaws, but the way we handle the problems that approach us as a whole makes us stronger. It was a bumpy fall season, competing against four-year schools, but even though we may not have ended every game with a win, we still came out with more knowledge and experience than before. We also have had numerous sicknesses and injuries, but the one thing that has remained healthy throughout the season is the team’s unity.

Before each game, two sophomores were chosen to dig down deep and give a pep talk to get the team pumped. Hearing how much a simple game means to every member of the team makes each player want to give everything she has for those seven innings. The player’s role on the team did not matter because once you heard the words, “HOUN on three!” each of us strove to perform our role to perfection. The talks gave us all a stronger passion to play the game, and I am sure we’ll carry the talks over to the spring season.

Calhoun has a tradition of hosting an inner squad game during the fall. This year’s teams were Gil’s Gangsters and Anna’s Army. There is no doubt this “friendly” game brought out the competitive side of the Lady Warhawks.

The most eye-opening event of the year for the team was spending the day with the disabled for Christmas. That particular day showed everyone how lucky we all are to be able to come together and play softball. It was filled with laughter, smiles, tears, and a whole lot of dancing! The event definitely left a mark on the team’s heart.

This spring we plan to step onto the field with a new attitude. We all have one goal…UTAH. Each player has something different to bring to the team, and together, we will conquer!

“Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships”

—Michael Jordan
“My cold body may have been shivering, but my mind was on fire. This play forced the viewer to reach down into the pockets of his or her life and reevaluate what would be pulled out first.”

—Morgan Williams, Calhoun student

“My left the play speechless and lost in thought of how much I take for granted in this life.”

—Faith Carpenter, Calhoun student

Calhoun Theatre’s production of Our Town was delivered in a way that would have made Thornton Wilder proud. Every detail was carefully thought out and presented beautifully, which brought out emotional responses from the audience. From the set design, to staging, to lighting, and most notably - the acting, each piece of theatrical art fit together perfectly. Wilder states he wrote the play to “attempt to find a value above all price for the smallest events in our daily life.” His story of the small town of Grover’s Corners and its residents makes it possible for any generation, in any place, to accomplish that very thing.

Wilder’s use of sparse design in the staging, lighting and props worked together to keep the audience focused on every detail of the story and the characters. His use of minimalism gives the “impression” these elements aren’t important to the story; however, nothing could be further from the truth. Every aspect of the set is designed to awaken the imagination of the audience. Since every part of the story is believable and realistic, the design enhances the play by allowing it to be viewed by each member of the audience in his/her own unique way. As the audience watches the lives of the Gibbs and Webb families play out before them, it is easy for them to become invested in the story. A narrator walks the audience through time and memories acquainting them with each character. The narrator, excellently played by Phil Parker, holds the audience’s attention with side stories and funny anecdotes throughout the first two acts. As the story changes to a more somber tone in the final act, his solemn delivery of the remainder of the story, as well as his own thoughts and feelings, evokes unexpected emotions from the audience. All of these things came together to keep the focus on the actors and their characters. All of the actors certainly rose to the challenge with near perfect delivery and presentation. There were a few exceptional standouts. Kim Parker, as Mrs. Gibbs, and Angela Green, as Mrs. Webb, executed their roles as wives of prominent men and mothers wonderfully. Every expression and every line was delivered naturally. Quentin Barrentine, as Dr. Gibbs, and Damien Peters, as Mr. Webb, also did an excellent job portraying their characters as husbands and fathers. Terri-Beth Goodman, as Emily Webb, also drew the audience in to become personally invested in her character’s life. Her performance ranged from a young child to be - to life wonderfully. However, the most notable standout was Kai Ealy in his wide ranging and flawless performance as George Gibbs. His comedic timing, facial expressions, and ability to shift effortlessly from one part of his performance to the next made him the star. Every part of this production came together marvelously. Every member of the cast and crew brought their best to the performance and should be proud of their outstanding accomplishments. This was one of my favorite theatre experiences and has prompted great anticipation to see Calhoun’s next performance.

There is no better way for a reader to understand a poet’s intent than to hear the poet read her own work. On April 11, 2013, those attending the 12th Annual Writers’ Conference at Calhoun Community College were privileged to hear Judith Ortiz Cofer read her poetry, talk about the life and inspirations of a writer, and answer questions about the writing process. Listening to Ms. Cofer speak about the origin of some of her poems and hearing her presentation of them shed new light on her words.

Ms. Cofer was born in Hormigueros, Puerto Rico, and spent her childhood between the Island and Patterson, New Jersey. When her father, a member of the U.S. Navy, was home, the family lived in Patterson; when he was deployed, they returned to Hormigueros. At the conference, she read “Invisible Me,” a poem about her struggle with the English language and her “journey from invisibility and silence to voice.” She spoke of her search for the meaning of “home” and quoted Lithuanian poet Czeslaw Milosz who said, “Language is the only homeland.” She then spoke of her mother’s recent death and of grieving for her “accidental muse.” Her mother was her last tie to the Island, but she emphasized that “Puerto Rico will always be the home of my imagination.” She is working on a new book titled The Cruel Country, after French writer Roland Barthes description of grief.

She spoke of her husband, John, and her daughter, Tanya, both mathematicians. As a Puerto Rican transplanted to the piney woods of Georgia, she said her husband calls her a “Georgia mango, a fruit that cannot be found in nature.”

Ms. Cofer mentioned the difficulties she first encountered in trying to get her works published because they were considered bilingual. She mentioned the frustration this caused, especially considering that renowned Modem poet T.S. Eliot included Sanskrit in The Waste land. As Cofer sees it, Spanish shouldn’t have been a problem. She then read “Latin Women Pray,” a poem about Latin women hoping that God is bi-lingual.

After reading more selections from her numerous works and answering questions from the audience, she autographed books and posed for pictures with attendees.
Don’t Believe the Lie
By Andy Knight and Colby Nelson

Before the baseball team starts the 2014 season, the players remember all that was spoken about during the fall. The main point the team concentrated on was not believing the lie that any single player is better than the rest. Every day, people tell themselves lies to feel superior to others. In sports, this attitude will ultimately create an unbalanced team. Players have to get over themselves and think first about the others on the team. Athletes have to leave behind their selfish ways and take on the role of teammate. If Calhoun’s baseball team can accomplish this goal, they will be successful. Without total team involvement, victory cannot be achieved, no matter how skilled an individual player may be. Ultimately, leadership is the key. With strong leaders, who lead with a positive attitude rather than an ego, Calhoun’s baseball team will be hard to beat. This spring, please come out and support the Warhawks.
Dr. Harry Moore, retired English professor at Calhoun Community College, returned to his professional home on October 29 and 30, 2013, to reintroduce himself as the poet many already knew him to be.

In a review of Dr. Moore’s collection of poems What He Would Call Them, poet Bonnie Roberts compares his poems to the rural author and activist Wendell Berry and to the British-Irish poet Seamus Heaney. His poems focus on, what Roberts calls, “those moments between namings—when we look, smell, taste, touch and listen to our world, which surrounds us in nameless mystery.”

In preparation for the conference, Calhoun students read Dr. Moore’s poems and dwelt in those moments. For many, the poems became a way not only of learning about the poet’s craft, but also of reconnecting to the primal relationships with family, spirituality, mortality, and self.

Ever mindful of his audience and his career, Dr. Moore was the thoughtful, scholarly professor he has always been. Introducing his poem “Fall,” he taught students about the poem’s allusions to Christopher Marlowe, John Milton, and the mythological Icarus. As creator of Faustus, Marlowe demonstrates the frailties of pride and greed, the same characteristics that animate Milton’s Satan in Paradise Lost and that lead Icarus to fly too near the sun. Dr. Moore guided the audience through these opening allusions much as the teacher who acts as the poem’s speaker.

But more striking than the intellectualism and talent illustrated in his work is Dr. Moore’s spirit. He reminded us that “poetry preserves what would be lost.” And it was in those moments of recollection and silence, when audience members could literally have heard a pin drop, that readers, no matter their ages, their educations, or their interests, shared the communal experience of poetry.