A collection of works by Calhoun Community College students, faculty, staff and alumni.
poetry

“She can’t help but dance” // Rich Sneed ................................................................. 2
“Wits Too Matched” // Victoria Cottles ................................................................. 3
“Farewell” // Lance Brazelton .................................................................................. 4
“Little Footprints by the Grave” // Lance Brazelton ................................................. 7
“So Spaced Out but Still Not an Astronaut” // Caleb Lee ........................................ 8
“Keys To Success” // Lance Brazelton ....................................................................... 11
“By the Way” // Caleb Lee ......................................................................................... 12

essays

“Reminiscence” // Barbara Cook ............................................................................. 13
“Ecapegoats, Allusions, and Tradition: Comparing ‘The Lottery’
and ‘The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas’” // Victoria Cottles ................... 14
“Solitude” // Sam Abney ............................................................................................ 17
“Freedom or Fear?” // Sara Coble ............................................................................. 20

short stories

“Gunny” // Kevin Walter .......................................................................................... 22
“Jack’s Ghost” // Ellis Womack .................................................................................. 24

muse paper

“A Conversation with Calhoun’s College President,
Dr. James Klauber” // Victoria Cottles ................................................................. 28
“Calhoun’s 15th Annual Writers’ Conference” // Victoria Cottles ......................... 29
“Calhoun Community College Warhawk Student Ambassadors
Spread the Gift of Warmth This Winter” .................................................................. 31
“Extraordinary People Night (EPN) and Calhoun Athletes” .................................. 31
“A Conversation with Calhoun’s Vice President,
Dr. Stephen Calatrello” // Victoria Cottles ............................................................. 32
“Hands On History” // Dr. Christopher Thrasher ................................................. 33
“Have at Thee! A Clash of Traveling Shakespeareans” // Victoria Cottles ............. 34

Club News, Events, and Updates ........................................................................... 34
“An Inspired Success Symposium” // Victoria Cottles ............................................. 34
“PTK’s Chapter Project: Turbo Tutoring for At-Risk Students” ............................ 35
“Sigma Kappa Delta’s 2016 National Convention
in Minneapolis, Minnesota” // Ashley Sims .......................................................... 36
“Encompassing Home with Literature and Writing:
Wherever She May Roam” // Victoria Cottles ......................................................... 37
“Spring Theatre Review: Diana Son’s Stop Kiss” // Ashley Sims ............................. 38

On the Cover: “Blue Violet” // Klayton Riley

She can’t help but dance” // Hudson Sneed ......................................................... 2
“Nature Sprite” // Amanda Johnson .......................................................................... 4
“Pretty Lady” // Kathy Bost ...................................................................................... 5
“Out of the Darkness” // Juliana Guillen .................................................................. 6
“Big Flatts Churchyard” // Victoria Willey .............................................................. 7
“Voyager” // Amie Murphree .................................................................................... 9
“Beach Horse” // Jane Blevins .................................................................................. 10
“Perspective” // Anjana Henry .................................................................................. 13
“Blue Boat” // Patricia Hrivnak .................................................................................. 14
“Camouflage” // Anjana Henry .................................................................................. 16
“Autumn Creek” (detail) // Judy Baggett ............................................................... 18
“Be Still” // Jackie Segars .......................................................................................... 19
“Sunrise at Orange Beach” // Gary C. Walker ......................................................... 20
“Happy in Blue” // Saundra Murphee ........................................................................ 21
“Vittone’s” // Kathy Bost .......................................................................................... 22
“Disobedience” // Lance Brazelton ......................................................................... 40

art

On the Cover: “Blue Violet” // Klayton Riley

She can’t help but dance” // Hudson Sneed ......................................................... 2
“Nature Sprite” // Amanda Johnson .......................................................................... 4
“Pretty Lady” // Kathy Bost ...................................................................................... 5
“Out of the Darkness” // Juliana Guillen .................................................................. 6
“Big Flatts Churchyard” // Victoria Willey .............................................................. 7
“Voyager” // Amie Murphree .................................................................................... 9
“Beach Horse” // Jane Blevins .................................................................................. 10
“Perspective” // Anjana Henry .................................................................................. 13
“Blue Boat” // Patricia Hrivnak .................................................................................. 14
“Camouflage” // Anjana Henry .................................................................................. 16
“Autumn Creek” (detail) // Judy Baggett ............................................................... 18
“Be Still” // Jackie Segars .......................................................................................... 19
“Sunrise at Orange Beach” // Gary C. Walker ......................................................... 20
“Happy in Blue” // Saundra Murphee ........................................................................ 21
“Vittone’s” // Kathy Bost .......................................................................................... 22
“Disobedience” // Lance Brazelton ......................................................................... 40
She can’t help but dance...

The early evening sun is making its last stand of the day.  
The fading magical glow has paired perfectly with a familiar spirit.  
When you are three and free and the guitar plays D…  
You can’t help but dance and clap and hop.  
Her smile is the conductor directing where and when the next spin will go.  
She can’t hear her parents’ call for the moment has captured her…  
Urging her to let go and come back and play where she used to be.  
A flash or two or three, a post is written in cyber space eulogizing her performance.  
With each moment the sky fades deeper as the street light interrupts nature’s adieu.  
Bedtime is calling.

By: Rich Sneed
Wits Too Matched

With purpose, a lone, shimmering salmon swims straight and true
Through the river, to a place where his kin is born anew.
He navigates the road with skill and wit
Avoiding all the traps and clever pit
Falls littering the river on this fateful day
Overcoming blockades and foes that stand in his way.
He passes defeated trees and slumping vines
That stretch to capture him close by the water lines
But his quick fins and pumping gills
Assist in his escape with additional thrills.
Smooth rocks that cut rivets on the shining top side
Deal glancing blows that mean nothing to his gleaming hide.
Now on the occasion of once, or twice, or maybe thrice
He’s danced past a bear intending to make him a fish slice
But forward he presses, on through the tumbling cascades
Until he reaches the river’s end, where upon the horizon fades.
He cooks up a plan, longing to feel the sun on his scales
To feel warmth from his gaping mouth to the tips of his tails.
He bursts from the waterfall spout with amazing strength
Bright light catching every radiant color down his length.
And just like that, arching and curving in the air,
Our hero is side-swiped, caught unaware!
A great thunderbolt eagle unlike any other bird,
Having spot the salmon in the wind, caught him with speed unheard.
Unbeknownst to him, while enjoying feelings on high,
He had become a sparkling and obvious glint in the sky.
Not that hard to be seen by
A great thunderbolt eagle unlike any other bird,
Having spot the salmon in the wind, caught him with speed unheard.
Unbeknownst to him, while enjoying feelings on high,
He had become a sparkling and obvious glint in the sky.
Not that hard to be seen by
A determined beast with a watchful eye
Floundering in the wind, he was made easy to snatch
And hastily, the eagle caught him in a grip unmatched.
And now, the final battle, the last stand!
Begins with pierced flesh in a clawed hand
He gives a great wriggle, but not mighty enough!
For his strengths lie only in how well he can play a bluff.
His wounds are deep, his sight beginning to fade.
There’s almost no hope of his life being regained.

The feathered villain puffs out her chest with amounting pride
As she circles the air, boasting her triumph o’er the hero who tried
To evade her iron clutches, her keen eye, her powerful wings!
With no more strength than her usual playthings.
With one final loop, she begins the glide around
To her nest where her chicks are starting the count down
To when their mother will bring them the glorious feast
Of trapped within her hands, an unusually clever fish beast.
But alas! Our hero sees a vision of his kin in the pool below!
Trembling with fear as they watch this horrifying show
Image clear in his mind, his spirit returns like a summer storm
And with it, a genius idea our hero prepares to perform.
Our champion flicks his great tail towards the heavens overhead
Catching a beam of light on a scale that glows a brilliant red.
When he angles the reflection back to the eagle’s sharp orb,
She lets loose a boundless shriek almost too great to absorb.
Blinded momentarily, her steel hooks unlock
Her regal image shattered as she fumbles with a squawk.
Our hero plummets down to the lake, dancing as he dives.
Below the water, with his kin, they celebrate: “He survives!”
But feeling a weight on his back, he looks through his joyful haze,
Up to the muddled surface, to the eagle’s piercing gaze.
There she hovers, crowing and huffing with defeat,
But the promise she makes turns his victory bittersweet,
“Because our wits are too matched, clashing blow after blow
The fight would never cease if we were to follow its natural flow.
So we’ve come to an understanding, you and I,
And now I’m off to find a meal a little less spry.
But be warned you prideful brute!
Do not stray from where your kind bear their fruit.
For the sky is not yours, but my domain,
Breach this pact, and I will not hesitate to strike again!”

--by Victoria Cottles
Farewell

I say my farewell to this foster life I was forced to live,
The depths of the projects were my orphanage.
I put those angel wings on my back like a jet pack,
And fire them up like a rocket ship because I'm on my way.
I exhaled a ghost, and just like my soul it evaporates,
Will my name be on the guest list at the golden gates?
At the Heaven Hotel, will I have a halo to stay in town?
Or thumb a taxi to ride the highway to hell back down?
No turkey on Thanksgiving, but still I love my mother,
We went from no food in the fridge to having a feast like the Last Supper.
In my prince of Egypt robe, I'm showered in gold; welcome to my palace,
I hold out my gold pinky ring when I take mini sips from my gold chalice.
The diamond crown matches the diamond ring, and everybody claims that I changed,
But every time I glance in the mirror my identical twin still looks the same.
Mirror mirror on the wall; who's the most ambitious of them all?
When you reach these heights, people think the world's in your hands like a stress ball.
But it's on your shoulders like a wounded soldier, and it's hard to carry,
I keep my mouth closed like a virgin's legs, and if I do speak a blessing is born like the Virgin Mary.
Lucifer fell from Heaven, but I didn't wish upon his star,
So you don't have to shed no tears when you see those bullet holes in my car.
I got shot by a shooting star and baptized in a wishing well,
My dreams will take me far, so I say my farewell.

—by Lance Brazelton

Nature Sprite
By: Amanda Johnson
Little Footprints by the Grave

Roses red as blood; Violets blue as the sky,
Life is a beautiful blessing and Jesus said so am I.
GOD sent me from Heaven, and I don’t know the reason,
So I try to learn something new when the world substitutes seasons.
Every day’s not going to be sunny; I can hear a dark cloud around the way,
But if Mother looks into my eyes then she’ll know that everything’s okay.
She said I was by her side when I didn’t have to be there,
Now the graveyard knows what size shoes I wear.
We recited a prayer and stamped it with a kiss,
Then she held me and said ignorance is truly bliss.
Father can you tell me what my mother’s words mean?

--by Lance Brazelton
So Spaced Out but Still Not an Astronaut

Friend…
Dare I mention sacred moths again?
Dare I mention travels on foot?
Dare I be completely straightforward, with tact in one hand and a whimsical love, (prone to fainting) in the other?
I may run out of air breathing and for conjuring up ideas-ideas that keep me jumping from my sleep-casket.
Recurring dreams. For six years. At least forty-eight installments in all. Probably more.
I cannot keep you out.
You have obtained a wonderful, sad visitors pass and I want you to keep it.
What did I say about sidewalks last time?
I lost that notebook…I lost its secrets!
I may be manic or obsessed.
I may be vague and ridiculous and presumptuous.
Most likely, I am a displaced refugee from a bygone century; but I have simple wishes that ought to come true.
Should I create another Facebook account to find you again?
Anxiety placed us where we are now though.
Thank you anxiety, you are a swell driver.
Swell driver.
Swell driver.
As for you…
I guess I will see you tomorrow or next week.
Or next month.
One day you will have to materialize in real-life form.
Whether I have to murder anxiety or not, I swear you will.

* I held you in imaginary snow
  Your hair in your face and between our lips

* * *
* * *
* * *
* * *
* * *
* * *
* * *
* * *
* * *

--by Caleb Lee
Beach Horse
By: Jane Blevins
Keys to Success

I’m spirited away with the Midas touch,
When I turn your life to gold don’t get out of control,
   This is a gift to you;
Not from Lance, but from the heart of his soul.
I couldn’t open the door to success, somebody locked it,
   I don’t have the keys, or none of the copies.
So I lace up my Timberland boots,
When I kick the door down off the hinge just be ready to shoot.
Let’s do this for the people with a dream,
With no track shoes to chase it or deep breaths to pace it.
Let’s do this for the people with a blueprint,
   With a vision in their head, but no equipment to make it.
Let’s do this for the people with a voice,
   Who want to speak up, but have no microphone to record it.
Let’s do it for the ones who want to go to college;
Dust bunnies live in their pockets so there’s no money to afford it.
Let’s do this for the people who fought so we could be equal,
Please have mercy on my sins because the serpent’s so lethal,
   It injects thoughts saying I can’t believe like an atheist,
   It left bite marks by my Jesus Christ necklace.
They’re reckless, and crashed into my emotions,
Struck a match, dropped it, and created an explosion.
Don’t fight fire with fire because it upgrades to hell;
They burned my ancestors alive so cremate me while I’m breathing.
The world spins like an ice ball and it does get colder,
People breathing down my neck trying to peep over my shoulder.
   First I pause,
Then I close my eyes praying to GOD just let me be last in time.
   I pray to the Lord that my soul’s not erased,
   I pull that black ski mask down over my black face.
Draw a cross on my chest, wrap my heart up in a bulletproof vest,
And pray to GOD I don’t die stealing the keys to success,
   Let’s do this for the people with a dream.

-by Lance Brazelton
By the Way

Wall-side memories.
It rained and you felt transparent and gray.
It was January and you took your pills and drank a lot.
The water was icy cold.
The crumbling stone wall frowned at the ground and the ground felt sad for the wall.
The wall was a bit masochistic and loved the sour flavor of its own slow destruction.
It was March and you drank a lot and took your pills. Then, drank a lot more.
The ground- the very Earth shifted itself away from stone wall.
It was May and you drank too much, and smoked too much, and didn’t eat right or exercise.
The water was solid ice.
Stone wall crumbled a little more.
You felt the vibrations of this powerful destruction in your fingertips and in your skull.
It was July and your discolored liver begged for mercy.
The cigarettes drew maps to get back to their gas station homeland.
The water was warm and stagnant and disgusting.
Stone wall cracked and cracked, and laughed harder and harder, and harder still.
It was August and you were killing cares with ease.
Liquor and tobacco were consumed to the point of extinction.
The water was mud.
Just mud.
Stone wall looked at his skeleton.
A red star winked at a white star.
“September?”
It was October and neglect socialized with dust inside of your glorious collection of empty alcohol bottles.
The mud that was once water tracked itself over to a different town.
Stone walls skeleton is where birds go for lunch.
He doesn’t move and he doesn’t see the birds.
A red star glares at another red star.
“November?”
It was December and you are a dog.

--by Caleb Lee
Reminiscence

I had chosen the topic for my final essay before the Thanksgiving break. I had given it a great deal of thought and had begun a rough outline. I was quite satisfied with it, and then my husband and I, along with our eight-year-old twins, went down to Mississippi to celebrate Thanksgiving with my parents. Mother is still doing well, but Daddy is rapidly failing. As I sat, looking at his hands folded gently, I was brought back to James Wright’s poem “Two Postures beside a Fire.” At that moment, the words of that poem touched me deeply.

Daddy is 93 years old. His once black, thick, hair has turned to a wispy white, and “I watch my father’s hair; / As he sits dreaming” (lines 1-2). He was a farmer who served in the Army Air Force during World War II. During the war he maintained the engines of the fighter planes, which led to his profession, after the war, as a bus mechanic. Daddy had “Wrestled and mastered great machines,” and now his strong hands have become frail and thin (9).

Daddy is proud of me, and openly and affectionately tells me so. He believes that “I have done strong things among men and become a man (woman)” (13). He is especially proud that I have persevered in my desire to go to college and that I am doing so well. He is only saddened thinking that we did not do enough together as I was growing up. He was busy making a living for our family. I, also, wish that we had done more things together, but I tell him that it is all right.

As I sit and watch Daddy, I realize that this might be my last visit with him. Since I last saw him six months ago, he has been hospitalized several times. The doctors are always amazed that he recovers as well as he does with each episode, but I do not know when the last one will be, “so I’ve come home” (5). I want him to know how much we all love him, and he delights in our boys, who love him dearly. My prayer is that he will delight in us again, six months from now, when we make another visit.

Time has a strange way of changing us all. Wright’s poem is very emotional for me when I think about my relationship with my Daddy. When the narrator says, “I too sit near his stove, the lines / Of an ugly age scarring my face,” I realize that my face is lined with age, and that my hands are thin and frail (18-19). As I look at Daddy, I embrace the knowledge that we are both aging. Daddy and I are finally doing something together: We are growing old, together.

- by Barbara Cook

Work Cited
Nothing is as unnerving as finishing a story with a character screaming “It isn’t fair, it isn’t right,” before she is stoned to death (Jackson 266). In Shirley Jackson’s short story “The Lottery,” the protagonist, Tessie Hutchinson, is killed for winning a prize she does not want. In the same manner, Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” describes how a child must be kept locked away in the dark in order for a city to prosper. The heavy influence of society prevalent throughout both stories can suggest several disturbing interpretations. “The Lottery” and “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” are two unsettling stories because the characters, settings, and themes allude to how overwhelming and unmoving real societies can be when doing what they believe is necessary.

The main driving point for the plot for both stories is the use of Tessie Hutchinson and the child as scapegoats. Both are considered necessary sacrifices for the happiness of others. “The Lottery” suggests the villagers believe that the lottery hails a bountiful harvest, according to their saying “Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon” (263). Some villagers might believe that if they were ever to abandon the lottery, their village might not be so successful. Similarly, the child locked in the basement in “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” is known by all the people in the city. Not one person offers aid to the child because they believe, or sense that, the child’s unhappiness secures the prosperity of Omelas. One might even go as far as to say that the village and Omelas orbit around Tessie Hutchinson and the child because they are the scapegoats needed to keep the communities moving forward.
These stories may be interpreted as literary allusions to real world places and societies. In real world geography and global studies, there are areas called sacrifice zones: small, poverty-ridden countries that sacrifice their resources, time, and lives to support far off developed countries like the United States. To put things into perspective, the village and Omelas are first-world countries, and Tessie Hutchinson and the child are sacrifice zones. The village from “The Lottery” is secluded and, therefore, may represent developed countries that live in bubbles and are oblivious of the outside world; the village ignores Tessie Hutchinson’s cries of pain in much the way many Americans turn their heads away from small countries that cry out for our aid. Omelas is a prosperous city that “depends wholly on [the] child’s abominable misery” just as America is a prosperous country that thrives off the hard work of smaller countries (Le Guin 607). The people of Omelas know the child is there and will take everything they can from the child’s grief, but when the child cries “‘[p]lease let me out. I will be good!’ They never answer” (607).

The most disturbing theme of “The Lottery” and “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” is the use of tradition. The village has forgotten the original use of the lottery, but it still continues this horrible and sacred practice because that is how the village has operated for generations upon generations. The people of Omelas do not know why, but they do understand that the child cannot know happiness because in that same hour they know their beautiful city would wither and die. Likewise, not one person questions the tradition in “The Lottery” even if it is a family member who is chosen. Even more disturbing is the speed at which Tessie Hutchinson’s cries of pain are drowned out by the crowd surrounding her; the villagers do not even realize they are committing an act of cruelty because they have been conditioned for this behavior all their lives. The light-hearted foreshadowing of “Bobby Martin hav[ing] already stuffed his pockets full of stones” is just as eerie as the moment when Tessie Hutchinson voices her objection, but is quickly drowned out by the crowd surrounding her (Jackson 259). The power of a large group accustomed to violence and easily overwhelming one person is something that is often seen in real world societies. The children of Omelas, and some adults, do object, but their voices also fall on deaf ears and they leave because “[t]hey know that they, like the children, are not free. They know compassion” (Le Guin 608). They break away from their perfect lives because they know they cannot maintain a peaceful existence if another must suffer. Even if a tradition is still followed, that does not make it right, or fair, or just. These two stories are instances when not one light could pierce through the darkness. These stories are truly tragic because small voices that object cannot compete against years of tradition and conditioning.

The scapegoat characters, secluded settings, and dark themes tie together to create two stories of epic proportions. Any stories like “The Lottery” and “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” that can hint to shocking parallels and truths between each other and to real life are frightening because they strike so close to home. Just like Tessie Hutchinson crying “‘It isn’t fair; it isn’t right,’” sometimes what a society does out of necessity is cruel and morally horrific (Jackson 266).

- by Victoria Cottles

Works Cited
Le Guin, Ursula K., “The One Who Walk Away from Omelas.” Arp and Johnson 603-08.
Solitude

What is trending? What is Mark saying about the new Disney trailer? Well Barbra said this about John. These are questions and statements that come across social devices every day. Although they may seem incredibly trivial to an outside observer, to the user, especially an adolescent user, those statements and questions mean everything. We have to know what our friends are saying. They mean so much to us that we are willing to chain ourselves to our social technologies so we will not miss a moment of interaction. There is nothing inherently wrong with this desire. However, it becomes a problem when we are totally dependent on the devices and the people who are made available. People cannot afford to simply be alone with themselves. They must be constantly stimulated by someone or something to give meaning to their lives. That is not to say that social interaction is wrong, but the greatest of personal discoveries that can be made are only achievable when an individual is not being manipulated by outside influences. Although social technologies allow us to communicate with each other on an unprecedented level, they are gradually leading to the extinction of self because those technologies do not allow us to be alone, make decisions for ourselves, or find true meaning.

At history’s earliest periods, mankind has always communicated with each other in some form or fashion to accomplish a task. Whether it was to bring down a wooly Mammoth or build the Burj Khalifa, communication has been necessary for human growth. Modern technology has greatly aided in this pursuit (Turner 105). Scott in Kyoto, Japan, can send business projection models to his company’s CEO in Ft. Worth Texas, just by using his iPhone. They also can use Skype to have a video conference call with another potential client in Dublin, Ireland. At the same time, Scott can be building his company’s Facebook profile to present a friendlier face to the public. Despite the remarkable efficiency of the devices, they are not primarily used by these people or for these reasons. More commonly, they are used by people to communicate with others they see every day. Kids text each other in class even though they are only three desks apart. Employees pass the time at work by scrolling through Facebook and commenting on a friend’s choice of socks. Videos, games, status updates, opinions, and pictures bombard users everywhere they go. Whether they know or not, every time these users access these resources they are conforming to outside influences. A small part of who the user is slips away.

Getting sucked into this swirling goulash of social networking is quite easy. In fact, it starts as early as childhood. Parents have the right to be concerned for their child’s safety. However, cell phones have somewhat negated some of the personal responsibility of the child. In times past, if children were alone and presented with a difficult situation, they would figure it out for themselves. However, as Sherry Turkle states in her article “Growing Up Tethered,” children do not have to rely on themselves or make adult decisions if they know Mommy is only a few digits away (430). Instead of the child learning to fend for himself, he grows more dependent on his parents. This dependency further escalates when the child reaches adolescence and young adulthood. These individuals soon begin to seek out a place in cyber space where they can be a part of something bigger and greater than themselves, rather than finding a place in the real world (McGonigal 446).

As these virtually-bound people begin to search for meaning in their lives, they begin to seek out causes greater than themselves. As Jane McGonigal, who has a PhD in performance studies, states in her book Becoming a Part of Something Bigger than Ourselves, “[m]eaning is something we are all looking for more of: more ways to make a difference in the bigger picture, more chances to leave a lasting mark on the world, more moments of awe and wonder at the scale of projects and communities we are a part of” (446). This noble goal is not pursued in the real world, but in the digital world. We play epic games to feel like we are saving the world, when in reality, all we have done is wasted countless hours and consumed unhealthy amounts of junk food. We create multiple lives in the virtual worlds to feel better about our own supposedly uneventful or stressful lives. As Turkle states in her book Alone Together, “[w]e are not just multitasking, but now multiliving” (160). However, there are some aspects from these virtual worlds that do cross over to reality, but not aspects one would think. Aspects such as violence, determination, and problem solving do not commonly present themselves. What transfers over is the inability to think for one’s self.

In 2014, the Ice Bucket Challenge for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis disease, became widely popular. It was a noble cause that was widely advertised on social media and other mediums. However, no one asked, “Where does the money actually go?” Research of the disease primarily involved the use of stem cells as a cure. Whether the use of stem cell use is ethically wrong or right is irrelevant. The point is that almost no one took the time to think about what the money was going towards. Everyone did it because everyone else on social media from the local pastor to Ariana Grande was doing it. No one took the time to look it up because they were distracted by the bombardment of notifications on their phones (Buelow 211).

Even in these causes, these shackled individuals are left feeling hollow. The cause that they support will fall out of popularity.
The hundreds of new friends made during this period of time are not meeting the standard of “instant access” as they once did. Thus, the users detach from these newfound acquaintances. With nothing left in this group, they begin to continually throw themselves at new groups and new causes. They friend hundreds of new people, yet still feel incredibly alone. This, of course, forms a paradox.

A person may be physically alone, but that individual cannot stop being bombarded by notifications and status updates. Yet at the same time, one is not satisfied by these relationships, so he or she perpetually strives to become more like the current trends. This turns the user into one of one million instead of one in a million. The only way for an individual to know this is happening is to know oneself without outside influence.

Many make the argument that they can simply shut off the devices that bind them, yet as mentioned earlier, a dependency has been formed. For instance, Scott wants to see what time it is. He checks his phone, but at the same time he sees a flurry of comments and opinions about his wife’s new dress. Solitude must be achieved in order to dissolve the shackles we have willingly put on, and simply being physically alone is not the answer. Social technologies can be a blessing or a curse; the ultimate determining factor is the user.

- by Sam Abney

Works Cited


Be Still
By: Jackie Segars

Opposite: Autumn Creek (detail)
By: Judy Baggett
Freedom or Fear?

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” These words, spoken by President Franklin Roosevelt on March 4, 1933, are ones that we should always remember. Although Roosevelt was addressing America in the midst of the Great Depression, his words can be applied to daily situations of life. There are several circumstances today in which everyone can be afraid. Many of us may fear standing up for ourselves, some of us could have fear of failure, and others may even be afraid of fear itself. A possible theme of Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use” and Nadine Gordimer’s “Once Upon a Time” is that we get to choose between living a life of freedom or allowing fear to control our lives. Both stories reveal how fear may determine our actions and restrict us from living in peace, but they contrast how applying different strategies for coping with fear affects the outcome of the situation.

These two stories depict how our actions can be dictated by the things that make us afraid. As illustrated in “Everyday Use,” Mama and Maggie have lived their lives in fear of Dee. Alice Walker hints in the first sentence of her story that Mama is trying her best to make a good impression on someone when she says, “I will wait for her in the yard that Maggie and I made so clean and wavy yesterday afternoon” (147). It seems as if Mama may be afraid of what Dee will think about the home when she comes to visit. Mama allows fear to control her actions by always giving Dee what she wants and never standing up for herself and Maggie. The story “Once Upon a Time” depicts a similar situation dealing with fear. Nadine Gordimer shows that although the narrator of this story has not taken the safety precautions that many others have taken, she still has “the same fears as people who do take these precautions” (229). She lies in her bed, concentrating on the noises she is hearing until she decides to tell herself a “bedtime” story. Her scared thoughts influence this story, as she depicts a family living in fear of their surroundings.

Not only can fear dictate our actions, but these actions can restrict us from living a peaceful life. Because Mama and Maggie have always given in to Dee’s wishes, her visit only brings discord. Instead of enjoying their time together, Mama and Dee get into an argument about Dee taking the family heirlooms. When Mama finally refuses to give Dee the antique quilts, “Dee looked at [her] with hatred” (153). Had Mama put Dee in her place long ago, her family would not have the tension they are currently facing. Similarly, the family in “Once Upon a Time” is constantly in conflict with the people outside the city gates. This conflict causes them to continuously take greater measures of protecting themselves. Because they live with such fear, their minds are continuously burdened by always trying to concoct a new strategy for staying safe. One strategy many families incorporate to keep out the danger is to install alarm systems throughout their homes. As the narrator illustrates, “everyone soon became accustomed to [the alarms], so that the din aroused the inhabitants of the suburb no more than the croak of frogs and musical grating of cicadas’ legs” (231). She explains that instead of thieves, pets or mice generally set off these alarms. Apparently, the citizens of the suburb have more concern about this situation than necessary.

As the theme of these two stories demonstrates, we can make two choices about how to handle fear. In “Everyday Use,” the climax occurs when Dee selfishly asks Mama, “Can I have these old quilts?” (152). Mama has to make a decision. Will she continue to allow Dee to control her, or will she stand up for herself and Maggie? Mama’s epiphany comes when she chooses not to allow Dee to take the quilts. At the beginning of the story, Mama has this to say about herself: “Who ever knew a Johnson with a quick tongue?” (148). However, her decision to stand up to Dee and the sharp, quick words she uses exemplify that she has gone from a woman who was afraid to stand up for herself to someone who chooses not to let herself and those around
her be bullied. In “Once Upon a Time,” the narrator also creates a story in which the characters suffer from giving in to their fears. The climax of this story transpires when the little boy acts out the fairy tale his mother recently read to him and “pretended to be the Prince who braves the terrible thicket of thorns” (233). At this point, the family experiences the heart-wrenching tragedy of losing their son. The narrator’s epiphany can be identified as the moment she acknowledges the consequences of giving in to irrational fear. As Gordimer depicts that people can try so hard to protect themselves that they end up harming themselves, readers can assume the narrator in this story recognizes the childishness of her fear of the noises around her. Just as Walker demonstrates the importance of standing up for oneself in “Everyday Use,” Gordimer teaches readers of “Once Upon a Time” that they can choose to harm themselves and those they love by being afraid.

Alice Walker and Nadine Gordimer both use their stories to teach readers a lesson about fear. These stories exemplify how being afraid of things can dictate our actions and limit the amount of peace we have in our lives. They also demonstrate that the choices we make about how to handle our fears determine the outcome of these situations. Both authors condemn the idea of living in fear by illustrating how we can be harmed by giving in to it. This recognition calls readers to conquer their fears and live a free and happy life. As Roosevelt explained many years ago, the only thing we really have to fear is being afraid. When we choose to be courageous, we can finally appreciate the freedom that comes by conquering our fears.

--by Sara Coble

Works Cited
Gordimer, Nadine. “Once Upon a Time.” Arp and Johnson 229-34.

Above: Happy in Blue
By: Saundra Murphee

Opposite: Sunrise at Orange Beach
By: Gary C. Walker
Gunny

He was an ordinary hero from an era over long before I was born. I had taken him on trips to treat his ailments. Now, I would carry him home.

“Gunny” had been a resident at the Veterans Administration nursing home for almost a full year. He and his kin had been hopeful at first. Unfortunately, the ravaging disease eating away at his body, while slowed by modern medicine, would not stop until it consumed him.

Outside his room, built into the wall was a display case. Filled with pictures and mementos, it was a shrine of only a few square feet but shared a lifetime of experiences.

A black and white photo showed a young boy of sixteen wearing the dress blue Marine uniform. The high, stiff collar sporting the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor forced his head erect. The black-brimmed, bleached-white cover sat upon his head covering the close-shaven skull of a new Marine, fresh from Parris Island.

“He lied about his age,” his wife told me while on one of our trips. “Pearl Harbor, you see. Couldn’t stand the idea of staying home any more than any other boy, but he had the size to pull it off. Good farm stock will do that.”

An aged yellow piece of paper sat in a frame on the top shelf. A commendation to Gunny when he was a Lance Corporal, for deeds performed in combat while on Iwo Jima. He charged a machine gun nest, grenading it, allowing his unit to advance.

After the war came peace and time for love and family, which Gunny promptly pursued. A wedding photo of the young corporal and his bride, who now sat in the chair at his bedside, rested on the second shelf next to three more, each showing not...
only their children, but their families as well. Seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren were on display.

Gunny left the Corps, or rather, the Corps left him as it downsized during peacetime. With a growing family depending on him, Gunny turned back to his roots and took up the plow with some success. But the clouds of war were gathering, and knowing that with his knowledge and experience he could save lives of Marines, he re-enlisted for the Korean War.

A picture on the third shelf showed a frigid scene of ice and snow. Now a sergeant, Gunny stood with another Marine near a large olive-drab tent. Each man was bundled in parka and helmet, rifles slung over their shoulders.

“He’s never talked about the men with him over there,” his wife said once. “It’s really strange. In War II, that’s what he always called it, he would tell me about his buddies, but never what he saw. Korea he never talked about at all. I think it was because of the men he lost. He was their sergeant and felt the burden of each death, as if he’d been responsible somehow.”

The next photograph on the shelf was of Gunny in warmer climes, sleeves rolled up on his uniform, accenting the large biceps as his hands rested upon his hips. A wide-brimmed campaign hat sat low upon his head, eyes glaring at the camera from just below. The teen who passed through the Island had returned to train and set the example for a new generation of youths, turning them into Marines destined for history in a place called Vietnam.

The lowest shelf of the case held three cherished items. In the center were Gunny’s ribbons stacked three wide and three high, with one extra sitting centered atop the others. Holding that place of honor was his ribbon for the Bronze Star with V (for Valor). To one side of the ribbons was Gunny’s black baseball cap with its Eagle, Globe, and Anchor embroidered in the center of its front, surrounded by the lettering “World War II – Korean War Veteran.” Across from it sat Gunny’s dress cover turned with age, the leather brim once shiny black now showing cracks, its emblem luster-lost.

I had been to his room several times and knew the way without having to be directed. Pulling the stretcher along behind me with my paramedic in tow, the first thing that struck me was his now empty case. Gunny’s children had collected his items along with their mother, making the long ride home ahead of us. Her vigil was over.

Gunny’s once strong frame was now a ghost of itself. Skin once bronzed by tropic sun over rippling muscle now draped bones, looking as a half-collapsed tent of pale canvas might. The mouth that once commanded men in battle now opened in silent scream with sunken cheeks and jaw agape.

We placed him gently upon our stretcher, taking as much care with Gunny in death as we had in life. Covering the corpse with a clean sheet, we tucked and fussed until all was perfection.

The nurse provided us with the flag which would go with him to his graveside. Even greater care was taken as we arranged it over Gunny.

We marched with the body-laden stretcher away from the living area at a reverent pace. As we approached the main hall, from the cafeteria came a group of the residents returning from the afternoon meal. Looking up from their discussions and seeing our small procession, silence crashed upon the men like a wave.

“Attention on deck!” a voice cracked with age but familiar with command rang from the group. The impromptu platoon parted and lined the walls of the hallway, some men moving slower than others, but all with a purpose.

“Present Arms!” The familiar command brought stiffened fingers to corners of eyes, rendering a final tribute to a fallen comrade-in-arms. As I walked between the ranks of these graying men, in my mind’s eye I could see them as they once were; knit sweaters and plaid shirts became khaki and olive drab uniforms, thin white hair turned black and full, bent backs straightened, and aged eyes cleared. For a moment, these men became as they had been, for while bodies age and falter, the human spirit does not. A brother’s watch was done.

We made the trip to Gunny’s home town without incident, neither of us saying much, lost in our thoughts about life and death. The funeral home was waiting for us and took possession of the body. I thought back to Gunny’s display case and the history it had depicted and I wondered: what will my case look like on my last day?

--by Kevin Walter

Opposite: Vittone’s
By: Kathy Bost
The following short story is excerpted from a lengthier submission. The writer agreed to allow the publication of a briefer version due to word limit constraints.

**Jack’s Ghost**

“He who fights monsters should see to it that he himself does not become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you.”
— Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

*Rattatatatat!*

The insane chattering of the tommy-gun clutched in the man’s hand barked through the empty warehouse. Crouched behind a crate, detective Jack Messer glanced at his longtime partner, Tom Jones. He mouthed words to him, counting the number of bullets fired, waiting for the inevitable pause.

The gunfire finally ceased, the steady drumbeat being replaced by a dry clicking.

The other man nodded, and they sprinted around the corner, covering the area where the gunman stood with gunfire and diving behind a crate as the gunfire resumed. Jack glanced at Jones. The slightly rounder man was puffing heavily.

“Not going in easy is he?” Jack replaced the clip in his pistol, and Jones’ eyes widened. “Are you sure?” Jack nodded. He stood in one deft motion, aiming and firing his pistol.

The bullet arced through the air not at the gunman, but at the box next to him. It struck the box, the magic contained in the bullet releasing and causing it to explode.

The box tumbled over and landed by the gunman, the shockwave carrying the man off his feet, the gun skittering out of his hands. Jack and Jones cleared the boxes they were using for cover and charged the man.

The murderer known as the Downtown Mower lurched to his knees, bending them to stand before he found himself nose to mouth with Jack’s pistol. He stood slowly, hands raised, insolently eyeing the tommy gun that Jack stood in the way of. Jack’s hand never wavered, “Cuff him.” Jones grinned and removed his handcuffs, stepping behind the man.

...“You know the one thing I don’t get?” Jones said, as Jack turned their squad car down a street. The roads were not heavily congested, fitting the time of night.

“What’s that?” Jack asked.

Jones glanced back at the handcuffed man in the back of the car. “He didn’t have a Talisman on him. He was so intent on us not catching him, but when the time came, there was no great wind, no spurts of fire, not even an earthquake.” Jones glanced out the window. “You’d just think...He’d be prepared or something.”

Jack shrugged. “He just wasn’t smart. He had a big gun and thought himself a big man. He was wrong.” The station drew into view, and Jack steered the car into a parking spot. “And now he’s paying for his mistakes.”

He pulled the car into a parking space. “All right, let’s go get him booked.” Between the two of them, Jack and Jones dragged the man out of the back of the car.

As Jack and Jones returned from lock up, their captain met them in the hallway.

“Good job, boys,” he crowed, clapping them both on the shoulder. “Another case successfully closed.”

“While you were out, we received a tip on an illegal Talisman smuggling ring, but we can start on that tomorrow, for now, go home, go see your families.”


Jones shrugged, “Whatever suits you. Tell Rachel I said hey.”

Jack nodded and, turning, began to walk out of the building. “Will do,” he called over his shoulder.

Jack pulled up in the short drive to his house, a rose sitting precariously in the passenger’s seat next to him, its vase sporting a seatbelt snapped across it. He parked the car, taking the key out of the ignition before turning and unsnapping the vase from its harness.

He heard Fred Astaire’s “Cheek to Cheek” playing softly on the radio and smiled. It was one of her favorite songs to dance to, and she made him dance with her whenever it came on the radio. Picking up the roses, he turned, expecting to sneak into Rachel’s bedroom and surprise her. He paused, confused for a second, but then shrugged. Rachel must have just come in. He stepped in, sitting the vase of roses on the table and hanging his coat and hat on the rack by the door.

He heard Fred Astaire’s “Cheek to Cheek” playing softly on the radio and smiled. It was one of her favorite songs to dance to, and she made him dance with her whenever it came on the radio. Picking up the roses, he turned, expecting to sneak into Rachel’s bedroom and surprise her. He stepped into the den, and the vase slipped from his hand, shattering on the floor.

Rachel was stretched on the floor, her head tilted backwards and her reddish-brown hair bloomed outwards, her eyes staring sightlessly at the ceiling. Her skin was pale, and her blood slicked the floor in a starburst around her.
With a strangled cry, Jack dove to his knees, slicking the front of his dress pants as he slid to Rachel’s side. “Rache! Rache!”

He picked her up, cradling her against his chest. “Wake up! Come on Rache, please wake up!” Her hand slid down, brushing his leg.

His shoulders began to shake as tears peppered Rachel’s face. He pressed her body close to him as he sobbed; he allowed himself a moment more to grieve, before the instincts bred into him kicked in.

Standing and taking several deep breaths, he strode through the blood to the phone. Blindly dialing, he held the receiver up to his ear and waited for the line to click.

“Get down here now.”

“Jack…?” Jones’ voice came through the phone line, tired and puzzled.

“No.” He hung up and crossed into the other room, ignoring the blood trail he was creating with his feet. Taking his coat from the peg it rested on, he crossed back into the room, placing it reverentially over Rachel.

Maguire suddenly felt a viselike grip encircle his arm as he was pulled roughly to his feet. His mind registered something as being off, so he reached for the Talisman and the sharp needle contained in the center of it, before another hand closed around his. “Nope.” A voice spoke, harsh and in his face. “I wouldn’t resist arrest.”

Jack looked down at the junkie he held a foot off the ground. The man struggled feebly, his eyes refusing to focus on the man in front of him; he seemed as if he wasn’t aware of anything around him. Still…

He pressed down on the man’s wrist, squeezing until his hand opened and the Talisman fell out. He inverted his hand and caught the Talisman, pulling it quickly out of the way. The junkie reached outwards for his fix, but Jack pulled it backwards. “Tell me what I want to know.” The man whimpered, his hands grasping for the Talisman.

Jack looked outwards for his fix, but Jack pulled it backwards. “Who would I go to if I wanted to kill someone…preferably with magic?” The man reached for the Talisman, his hands shaking. Jack slammed him up against the wall. “WHO!” He bellowed. Jones glanced at his friend worriedly.

The man jerked, “Sinatra…anybody who wants anybody dead would go to Sinatra…But he don’t like using magic…or so I’ve heard.”

Jack narrowed his eyes. “Where would I find this Sinatra?”

“Authorities are still on the hunt for escaped convict Orson Price. Price, a former millionaire and owner of Price Industries, escaped from his cell at Alcatraz this morning at 6:00 by apparently blowing a hole in the wall. Authorities urge—”

Jack shut off the radio, leaping to his feet. He remembered the two black coated men and recognized them for what they must have been, agents of the Bureau. He threw his coat on and stormed out to his car, pulling it out of the driveway and back towards the station.

“No, Jack!” The captain boomed. “I let you off the hook once, but not this time. This isn’t our case anymore, the Bureau’s taken command of it.” Jack’s face hardened.

“Sir—”

“Stow it!” The captain slapped his desk. “Not this time, Jack. Hand over your gun and badge until this whole thing’s over. I don’t need you getting involved.”

Jack stepped forward, and his knuckle dusted the captain’s chin, sending him sprawling backwards into his desk, unconscious. “I’m sorry, sir, but I wasn’t asking,” Jack muttered.

He swept out of the office, going down to evidence and showing them his badge, demanding to see the trench coat he had covered Rachel’s body with, her dried blood still staining the coat. He signed out the blood stained duster and walked out of the building.

He slipped the coat over his shoulders and walked through the quickly darkening streets, his hat shading his eyes.

He drew up to Lefty Maguire’s stoop, where the junkie lay snoozing. Bending down, he gathered the tattered rags of the man’s collar and heaved him up in the air. “Where is he!” Lefty muttered incoherently. “Where’s Price!”

The mouth of Jack’s pistol was pressed up against Maguire’s head. “Where. Is. Price?” Lefty moaned inarticulately. “I don’t think that one’s going to be able to tell you anything.”

Jack whirled and came to face Sinatra who was leaning against a wall, tapping his hand against it. Jack squeezed the trigger of the pistol in his hand, and Lefty slid to the floor without a sound.

Sinatra smirked. “There they are, those killer’s eyes. They’ve opened just as I said they would.” His smirk widened. “Shall we play?”

He rushed at Jack, knives extended between his fingers like claws.

Jack leapt backwards as the claws cleaved the air he had previously occupied. “You’re still only dodging. Fight back!” The knives struck out again, and Jack barely sprung to the side, a gash opening on the side of his face.
His other fist caught Jack across the face, and he stumbled back. "Pity," Sinatra shook his head. "I thought you'd be a challenge." He thrust forward with the knives in his right hand again.

Jack ducked under his arm, caught his wrist and elbow, surged forward, and aiding his momentum, sent Sinatra flying forward.

Sinatra landed on his back with a whump, and Jack strode over to him, pistol in his hand. He brought it up and aimed it at Sinatra.

Sinatra chuckled, coughing. "Do it then." Jack glared down at Sinatra, and then glanced over at the dead body of Maguire. Reluctantly he lowered the pistol.

"I knew you wouldn't." Sinatra's foot snapped up and caught the pistol, knocking it away. He began to leap to his feet, Jack's fist meeting his neck in midair, slamming him back to the ground.

"That...was unexpected..." Sinatra coughed, lying on the ground. Jack turned, walking over to his fallen pistol, bending down, and picking it up. He turned and walked back, leveling the pistol at Sinatra. Sinatra looked up, rubbing his throat.

"I'm sorry, boy, but you're not quite ready for that yet." He flicked a knife, and Sinatra leapt to his feet. Pulling a pistol out of his coat, he fired at Jack, causing him to duck behind the stoop Maguire had previously occupied.

When the alley had fallen silent, Jack peered around the corner of the stoop, finally stepping out from behind it.

Sinatra had disappeared, the alley now only containing Jack and the dead body of Maguire. Jack walked cautiously over to the knife that Sinatra had thrown. A scrap of paper was pinned to the ground underneath it. Bending down to read it, Jack saw an address had been hastily written on it.

Jack stalked across the room to the elevator, punching the button to summon it.

The cage rattled down the elevator shaft until it stopped with a clatter in front of him. He shoved the cage door open and stepped inside it, slamming it back with a click. The lift began to rise, and Jack settled back, pistol held in a sure hand.

The cage squeaked to an uneasy stop, and Jack stepped off, looking up the last few steps that led to the door that opened onto the roof.

He climbed up the stairs, eyes locked on the door. Not bothering to try the handle, he kicked the door open.

The small group of mages turned as the door slammed into the wall. Price, at the center, strode forward, smirking, "Jackie-boy, you found us."

The gaping maw of Jack's gun aligned itself with Price's heart. "You killed Rachel."

Price sighed, "We've done this already Jackie-boy, at the trial, several times."

Jack snarled, "The courts failed, so I'm here to fix their mistake."

A sneer unfurled across Price's face, "Then come have a go, if you think you can pull that trigger."

Jack slowly pulled the hammer back on the pistol in his hand.

The rain began to beat down upon the roof in sheets. "Would it ease your grief if I told you how hard she was to kill? How the baby growing inside her confused the spell so very very much?"

He sneered at Jack's confused expression.

"Did you not know?" He chuckled darkly. "That's understandable. She would have just found out herself." He smirked. "Was it yours, I wonder?"

Jack's gun barked as he squeezed down on the trigger. Price seemed to flow through the air, disappearing and reappearing a moment later a foot to the right of where he'd been previously, and the bullet passed through the empty air.

Jack turned and fired another shot, and then another when that one missed. Six shots boomed from his pistol, all of them striking exactly where the man had stood a moment before.

The gun clicked, and Jack became aware of a figure standing behind him.

"Jackie-boy...you're empty."

A hand began to close on his shoulder.

Price stood up and walked to loom over Jack, "That's better...Don't worry, Jackie-boy, you'll see Rachel again very soon."
Jack glared at him through the pain-haze fogging his senses.
Price glanced behind him. "Corrine." A girl standing next to the blond-haired man shook her head, tossing her short, black hair. Her blue eyes stared down at Jack worriedly as she drew her dark blue duster around herself, taking a step back.

Price shook his head. "As I figured." He glanced up. "Oh Simon!" The blonde-haired man strode forward, sneering. He squeezed down on the Talisman in his hand, and fire sprang to life in his palm.

"You'll see Rachel soon," Price smirked as Simon crouched over Jack, flame inching nearer and nearer to Jack's eyes. "But not quite yet." The flame touched Jack's skin, and he cried out in pain.

Jack awoke hours later, curled up in the fetal position. He uncurled slowly and forced his eyes open, the skin around his eyes in agony. He saw a glint of metal on the ground and crawled towards it.

... 

Jones stood before the twin headstones, holding a vase of flowers in his hands. He set them between the headstones, sighing quietly as he stepped back to examine the writing.

Rachel Elaine Messer
1902-1930
and
Jack Colt Messer
1900-1930
"Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord, I will repay"

Jones sat the flowers down between the graves. "I'm sorry, brother. I'm sorry I couldn't save you from yourself. I'm sorry you couldn't save Rachel. I'd give my life to have you both alive and happy right now."

His hands balled into fists. "We're going to catch Price, and this time we're going to do right. I don't care how, but somehow he's going to hang. I promise you that."

They'd found Jack's body burned to a cinder on top of the roof, his pistol and badge near his body.

The memorial service was short but heartfelt. The captain had spoken a few words, calling him a "tough old son" and a "stubborn hound." They buried Jack and Rachel at the same time, lowering them side by side in their graves. That had been a week ago.

Jones turned to walk back to his car when he spotted a figure. The man leaned back against a tree, his black trench coat swallowing his form and his black fedora shading his features. A similarly sable scarf was positioned around his neck, and as he looked up to meet Jones' eyes, Jones saw he had a black eye mask on his face.

The only drop of color on him, a trail of blood against a night sky, was a red tie that hung down the front of his black shirt. He strode towards the grave, a flower in his hand, and Jones watched transfixed as the masked stranger knelt reverently by Rachel's grave, murmuring under his breath.

He stood and turned, and Jones caught a glimpse of red hair and his heart froze.

His hand flashed out and caught the man's sleeve. "You..." the man easily slipped his hand out of Jones' grip and kept walking.

Jones stood dumbfounded. "You're...you're Jack."

The man shook his head. "Jack Messer's buried under that stone. Can't you read?"

Jones shook. "But how did you...?" The man turned, and blue eyes that were once Jack Messer's but were now rimmed by red scar tissue and covered by a black mask met his own.

"Jack Messer is dead...I shot him myself."

The wind blew his coat, and it rippled away from him.

Jones clapped him on the shoulder. "Jack..."

The figure seemed to consider for a second. "You can call me 'Astaire' if you need call me anything. I'm Nobody, but I will bring down Price by myself."

Jones shook his head. "But how did you...?" The man turned, and blue eyes that were once Jack Messer's but were now rimmed by red scar tissue and covered by a black mask met his own.

"Jack Messer is dead...I shot him myself."

The wind blew his coat, and it rippled away from him.

Jones saw a tommy-gun and a large .44 Magnum at his belt.

"Who are you then?" Jones studied the eyes under the mask. "And what do you plan to do now?"

The figure seemed to consider for a second. "You can call me 'Astaire' if you need call me anything. I'm Nobody, but I will bring down Price by myself."

Jones clapped him on the shoulder. "Jack..."

The man shrugged off Jones' hand. "Jack's dead. Read the stone."

"But you're..." Jones began to protest. His voice dwindled down to a whisper, and he slowly nodded. Looking up into Astaire's face, he opened his mouth, tentatively working his jaws.

"So how does it feel...being dead?"

--by Ellis Womack
A Conversation with Calhoun’s College President, Dr. James Klauber

By: Victoria Cottles

Muse editors sat down with Dr. James Klauber in late February 2016 to discuss his first year as Calhoun Community College’s President. His bowtie was crisp and bright as we launched into a discussion about hard work, lightsabers, and turning Calhoun into a college centered on quality education and student success.

You have a law degree, so have you been applying those methods to your position as president? Yes, I apply those tools I learned in law school every day because the position of president is vastly different from being a faculty member. Contracts, employee disputes, and mishaps are constantly rolling through my office, and it takes someone with knowledge of legal principles to handle those situations.

Last year you said you wanted to raise the graduation rate from 29% to somewhere around 45%. Have you reached that goal? What are further plans for improving this?

We’re making incremental progress. This will not occur over night. Our biggest project right now for improving graduation rates is the continuing development of our Student Success Center, which will open this fall. It will give students the opportunity to get tutoring assistance for free regardless
of degree program. We’re also going to be implementing a program called Starfish in the next year or so which will assign advisors to students during their time at Calhoun. We’ll also put in all the syllabi an attendance requirement. I believe there needs to be a certain amount of accountability for all the students attending Calhoun.

**What would you say is your greatest accomplishment during your first year as Calhoun’s President?**

I think that would be the Student Success Center. It’s the first project we immediately took on a year ago. That’s the first one, and another accomplishment is the process we’re going through right now of assessing the online classes to make sure they’re up to national-level quality. As we move forward and finish the process we’re going through right now of assessing the online classes, I would like to implement one at the Huntsville campus, as well. Then after we finish going through all the syllabi an attendance requirement, I believe there needs to be a certain amount of accountability for all the students attending Calhoun.

**Have you come across any challenges pertaining to the students, faculty, or the college in general since you began?**

I think anytime you take a college through monumental change, which we are, there’s bound to be challenges. At this point, we’re turning Calhoun around from the Student Access Model college, which only focuses on the quantity of enrollments, into a Student Success Model college that is centered on quality of education and student success. Believe it or not, there are some people here at Calhoun who don’t want to change, and that’s just the fear of the unknown talking. Once we reach the pinnacles we want to reach and they see the positive benefits of the changes, they’ll say it was their idea all along.

**What’s your favorite part about being the college president?**

I spend time with the students. I don’t get to do a lot of that. Unfortunately, this position requires a lot of time in the office, and I don’t get out like I want to, to ask students what their majors and dreams are. That’s why I come to work every day; I want to help students realize their dreams and succeed in their education.

We would like to include a “Day in the Life of a College President” segment in the article. Could you describe your work day for us?

Most days I get to the office about five minutes before anyone else does, and then I go through and answer my email until my first appointment, which is around eight. Depending on the day, I might have three or four direct reports I meet with and discuss what is happening in their functional areas. I try to keep my hand on the pulse of the college because I have to delegate responsibilities, and we need that time to communicate ideas, visions, and the paths we need to take. Most of my day is spent off campus at Chamber of Commerce meetings and running back and forth between Decatur, Huntsville, and Athens. Once a week, I drive down to Montgomery to meet with my boss, the Chancellor. Any time left over is used to meet with faculty to hear their concerns and discuss them. At the end of the day, I go home and spend some time with my family before doing some professional reading and answering more emails. That’s my life in a nutshell, and I love every minute of it.
Calhoun’s 15th Annual Writers’ Conference

By: Victoria Cottles

On October 20 and 21, 2015, north Alabama’s local history was celebrated by hundreds. Jeremy Schaap, award-winning journalist and ESPN host, was introduced as the key speaker of Calhoun Community College’s 15th Annual Writers’ Conference. Schaap, who insisted he was terrible at sports in his youth, is known for his success for covering all manner of athletic events, individuals such as Bob Knight, and news stories. Schaap indicated most of his interest in writing and sports is owed to his late father, Dick Schaap. His two books, New York Times best-seller Cinderella Man and Triumph: The Untold Story of Jesse Owens at Hitler’s Olympics, were the topics discussed at the Writers’ Conference, but Triumph took center stage. Triumph was studied at Calhoun during the weeks leading up to the event, so Schaap responded to students’ questions about Jesse Owens and his impossible journey to the 1936 Olympics and all the stops along the way.

Triumph is about the spectacular moment in time when the world collided in a midst of social and political unrest, the Great Depression, the rise of a hero and a villain, and the impending doom of war. Schaap explained that his goal when writing Triumph was to shine Jesse Owens, a native to rural Oakville, Alabama, in a light that made him more like the human he was instead of the perfect image the country projected onto him. This meant a heavy amount of research to include details of Jesse Owens’ life that had been lost through the natural progression of time. Schaap was thorough in his research and careful to justly convey the truth and specifics behind the infamous Hitler dismissal of Jesse Owens at the Olympics. Schaap confided he felt quite comfortable and at home in the 1930s era as a result of all his exploration into that particular time in history.

Many questions were asked about his writing process. He happily described in great detail the long nights bent over his notes and computer. Schaap’s unwavering work ethic is not unlike the subjects of his books. He laughed as he told the audience his writing mantra during the eighteen months it took to complete the book: “I’m not leaving this desk until I write one thousand words.”

Over the course of the week he spent visiting north Alabama, Schaap posed for countless pictures and signed an infinite number of his books. He even toured the Jesse Owens Museum and Park in Oakville for the first time and attended a reception there to celebrate Owens’ accomplishments. Triumph has been recognized as an outstanding book and account of Jesse Owens’ life. Disney has bought the rights to the book, so hopefully it will be transcribed into film in the future.
Extraordinary People Night (EPN) and Calhoun Athletes

Extraordinary People Night (EPN) is a ministry of Central United Methodist Church in Decatur, Alabama, and caters to parents of children and young adults with disabilities. It is a night for the children and young adults to come for dinner and fun with friends while providing parents and/or caregivers a much needed night out. Generally, 25-30 special needs clients are present. Each child is paired with a volunteer or “buddy” for the night. The Calhoun Baseball and Softball players love the role of buddy. The buddy guides the child through the night’s activities, which include dinner, crafts, group activities, gym time, music, a Bible Story, and a visit from Santa Claus. The clients enjoy having a new friend to hang out with for the night and look forward to the event every year.

The Calhoun Athletes and coaches are the favorite request of the special needs children event. The young men and women sacrifice their time on a December Friday night to volunteer for the event. The players join in for dancing, singing, making crafts, playing basketball, or just chatting with the children. Both teams are now considered “regular” volunteers with the children/young adults. Some even request their favorite player. This event is a true measure of the Calhoun Athletes’ hearts and characters. Calhoun Baseball Coach, Mike Burns, speaks of the rewarding experience as one of the favorite memories of his players’ tenure at Calhoun.

Calhoun Community College Warhawk Student Ambassadors Spread the Gift of Warmth this Winter

As part of the “Annual Blanket and Cold Weather Gear Drive,” Calhoun’s Warhawk Student Ambassador organization teamed up with the North Alabama Coalition for the Homeless (NACH) to collect new and gently used blankets for those in need this winter. With freezing temperatures during the winter months in North Alabama, some people struggle to keep warm. Even during winter days, the wind and cold temperatures still don’t let up. Calhoun’s Student Ambassadors sought help from the local community to assist in spreading warmth this winter. While blankets were the main items the students needed, they also collected gently used or new winter jackets, gloves, and scarves, in all sizes. The Warhawks collected and distributed over 350 winter items to those in need in Madison, Morgan, and Limestone counties.
A Conversation with Calhoun’s Vice President, Dr. Stephen Calatrello

By: Ashley Sims

How were you selected to be the College Vice President since you weren’t in administration?

That’s a good question! I’m still trying to find that out myself! Dr. Klauber asked me just point blank if I would be willing to serve in that capacity, and I said that I would. I felt excited, exhilarated, and terrified all at the same time because I am a classroom teacher. I have been teaching here for eighteen years full time, and for four years as an adjunct before that, and I taught high school for a very brief time. My whole professional career has been in the classroom. I knew this job would represent a significant change in everything I had known up until this point. I will tell you like I’ve told the others, and the reasons why I chose to say yes to it was because I believe in Dr. Klauber and his vision for the college; I believe in the faculty and because I love Calhoun. I am old-fashioned enough to believe that when your boss asks you to do something, you do it. So, that’s how I found myself here since I guess last May. It has been quite an interesting time.

Have you applied what you know in the classroom to administration? Have you been using methods you’ve learned as Vice President and applying them to how you teach?

Ultimately, whether you’re in the classroom or whether you’re functioning as an administrator, it is about working with people. With students I’m trying to lead them through a series of course objectives, trying to get them to the end. I think there’s a similar approach to the administration in working with people collaboratively to get us through institutional objectives. I think in that respect, that’s probably the one commonality between both jobs: it is ultimately dealing with people, having relationships with them, getting them to see the end goal, and helping guide those people to reach those goals.

What is the most surprising thing you’ve learned about Calhoun since accepting the position of Vice President?

I don’t know if there’s been a most surprising thing, but I can tell you that I have learned much more about what the college does on a day-to-day basis. In other words, as an instructor who taught kind of within the general ed instructional arm of the school, I didn’t really have that much of an understanding of what folks were doing [in administration]. One thing that I’ve learned is to have a greater appreciation for the diverse mission of the college and of the different units that are in place, and then to learn how our college fits into the state-wide system. You know, when you’re just teaching your English classes, you don’t really have your eye on that larger picture. That’s probably been the most eye-opening thing that I’ve learned.

What are your literature preferences?

Well, I am an American Literature specialist, so that’s always my preference when I have time to read for pleasure. Right now, I am reading two books, and I am leading a faculty discussion on What the Best College Teachers Do. I am also reading Redesigning America’s Community Colleges—not a lot of laughs in there. It is not Mark Twain. It’s not Henry David Thoreau, either. It deals with a major movement that’s going on in community colleges on the national level. This is also kind of a cool book, The Tao of Leadership. I’ve been reading through this, and it’s a very interesting set of principles based on 5th century Chinese military strategists. They basically take this guy’s tenets, map them onto his writings, then translate them, and apply them to leadership. That’s what I’m reading right now. I wish I could say that I’m spending time with Whitman or Thoreau, but this book is more like a devotional. It’s really zen-like.

Have your interactions with students changed since becoming Vice President? If so, how do you balance your reputations as a professor and as the College Vice President?

I’m actually also teaching an online class, and my hunch is that they don’t know I’m the Vice President of Instruction. I don’t interact with them in the way I would a face-to-face class. I don’t make any reference or draw any attention to that fact in my interactions with them.

If you are selected to continue your position as Vice President, what do you hope to accomplish within the college as you move forward?

That’s the million-dollar question, the one I get every day. I should probably preface the response with I don’t know whether or not I will apply for it when that time comes. I haven’t made that decision and won’t until I have to, which has been very liberating because it allows me to wake up every morning and do what I am supposed to do: come here and do the very best that I can today. With all that being said, my hope is that we would continue making Calhoun a better place to teach, a better place to learn, and a better place to work and that as a faculty, we would continue to grow closer to one another and be more collegial with each other and supportive of one another all under the umbrella of doing what’s right for our students each day, and letting
that be our pole star, by which we should all be led.

**You’re teaching an online English class as well as maintaining your responsibilities as Vice President. How do you manage both during a work day?**

Hahaha. Well, the workday never ends! I get up very early, and usually I’ve finished my first cup of coffee and logged into BlackBoard by 5:00 to see if any students have e-mailed overnight. Anybody who teaches online I think knows that the online students in particular need to have feedback, and not just during the business day. That goes with the territory. Periodically, I take a break from what I’m doing, and I turn to the computer, pull my class up, and check things throughout the day...make sure no one needs a quiz reset or something. In a sense it kind of balances out the insanity of this job—to be grounded in such things. It certainly is representing a lot more work, but it’s where my heart is, teaching. So, it’s the most gratifying.

**We would like to include a “Day in the Life of the College Vice President” segment in the article. Could you describe your typical day for us?**

I wake up early, anywhere between 4 and 5 o’clock. I’ll have a cup of coffee, check my classes, and then I’ll run. I’ll run 4 miles, and have that done by 6:15. Then I’m shaving and showering, getting ready to go. I leave the house by 7:15, and am here by 7:45. I don’t go out to lunch; I usually just eat at my desk. It’s a lot of meetings. I try to go to the Huntsville campus at least once a week, but the schedule has been so hectic, and I’m trying to get back into that. I’m usually here until about 5:15, but more often than not, work goes home with me. I usually check and respond to e-mails and do other things that need to be done. I’m usually in bed by 8:00, and then do it all again the next day.

---

**Hands on History**

Are you tired of boring history classes? I was, and I discovered that many students were as well. The new Hands on History courses cover all of the material typically included in United States History survey classes, but also include hands on activities including field trips, horseback riding, carpentry, simulated surgery, and blacksmithing. The combination of traditional and innovative pedagogies increases student success.

Hands on History students make higher grades. The overall class average in the traditional courses was 67%, which is seven points lower than the hands on average of 74%. In the traditional courses, only 54% of students earned a passing grade, but 64% of students in the hands on courses pass.

Students in the hands on courses were more likely to attend class and more likely to complete the class. Only 42% of students who enrolled in the traditional courses were present on the last regular day of class, and only 47% of students who began the traditional courses took the final examination. In the Hands on History sections, 64% of students who enrolled in the course were present on the last day of class, and 90% of students who enrolled in the class took the final examination.

Community colleges must serve the community, and students in Hands on History are far more likely to perform volunteer work than students in the traditional class. Only 29% of students in the traditional courses performed volunteer work, but 42% of students in the Hands on History did community service.

The Hands on History course is a success. The students stated, without exception, that the unique pedagogy helped them succeed, and the numbers support their assertion. Hands on History students are more likely to complete the classes, more likely to pass the classes, and more likely to perform community service than students in traditional sections of the same course.

---by Dr. Christopher Thrasher
Have at Thee! A Clash of Traveling Shakespeareans
By: Victoria Cottles

Members of Sigma Kappa Delta (SKD) love to adventure out into the world to visit other local colleges and see their theatre productions. Their favorite dramas to attend are the plays acted out by traveling Shakespeare groups, and it just coincidently happened that SKD had the opportunity to view two remarkable groups with vastly different approaches to performance: American Shakespeare Center and Aquila.

The first group SKD observed was American Shakespeare Center (ASC), which was hosted by UAH. The group acts out a different play each night they are stationed in one spot before they move on to the next destination, and SKD happened to be there the night they were performing Oscar Wilde’s The Importance of Being Earnest. ASC’s mission is to reenact dramas in a traditional style by using the same stage design and conditions Shakespearean Era audiences would have enjoyed, and this practice turned out to be a phenomenal success. The house lights were kept on, and although the stage props used were simple yet elegant, the actors were dressed in extravagant time period costumes, all to recreate the Shakespearean theater experience. The entire evening was a performance because, during the time in between flawlessly recited witty lines and clever jokes, the same actors were performing live music, taking turns with different instruments and singing. ASC's show was a truly artistic performance carefully cultivated by passionate hands.

The following week, a small group of students and sponsors attended Romeo and Juliet by Aquila hosted at UNA. The tragedy was performed by only five cast members and was highly experimental in its retelling. Everything about the set design was minimalistic; the props were white wooden rectangles stacked in a variety of placements and positions, the thickness of the smoke on stage was a subtle effect that added an element of mystery, and the actors were minimally covered in articles of clothing symbolic to each character they were portraying. As expected in a tragedy, the actors were drenched with rich Shakespearean language and loaded with emotion and passion. The sound effects allowed for brief moments of tension and vulnerability that drew the audience into the world the performers were creating on stage, and by the end of the play, the audience was left squinty-eyed and dazed from the sheer intensity of the whole spectacle. This passion-driven performance was a true success in transporting its viewers to another time and place.

Club News, Events, and Updates

The Interfaith Club meets on the first Monday of each month in room 19 on the Huntsville Campus. The purpose of the club is to promote the understanding of world religions and spiritual philosophies so that we can foster support and acceptance of religious diversity.

LGBTQS Club meets every Wednesday in room 19 on the Huntsville Campus. The purpose of the club is to help make Calhoun Community College safe and welcoming to all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We want to promote respect for all people, irrespective of one’s background, and develop friendships that light homophobia, marginalization, and violence.

Black Students’ Alliance (BSA) hosted a variety of events during the Spring 2015 semester, including the following: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration on January 21; the African American Film Festival on February 3; A Tribute to Maya Angelou on February 10; an African-American Dessert Competition on February 17; and the 25th Annual Gospel Fest on April 17.

On January 20, 2016, BSA hosted Calhoun’s Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration with keynote speaker Creigh C. Beverly, Professor Emeritus of social work at Wayne State University. The program also featured special musical performances by the Calhoun Community College Chorale. In early February, BSA coordinated African American Film Festivals, featuring Selma, on both campuses. On February 9, Rev. Niger Woodruff presented a session entitled “An Open Discussion: Between the World & Me, by Ta-Nehisi Coates” on the Decatur campus. Christian Cheer and Stephen Fincher facilitated “A Conversation on Race and Faith” on the Decatur campus on February 17. Black History Month events culminated in Calhoun’s 26th Annual Gospel Fest, hosted by BSA on February 26 on the Huntsville campus.

An Inspired Success Symposium

Over a thousand students and faculty crowded into the Kelley Gymnasium for the long awaited Fall Student Success Symposium on Wednesday, August 26. President Klauber introduced Janette Smith, a very successful empowerment coach and life tactician. Smith was a bright and energetic speaker who inspired the students at Calhoun Community College to discover themselves and find their purpose by working hard and staying on their path to success. She was very involved in her speech as well, divulging several photos and anecdotes from her personal life that told the story of how she got to where she is today by turning her dreams into reality through focus and determination. Hannah Williams, a student at Calhoun, explained that she “felt like [she] got so much information out of the Student Success Symposium. Ms. Smith brought so much to the table, and made [her] focus on wanting to really succeed in life.” After concluding her speech with applause from the audience, Smith told Sigma Kappa Delta representatives, “Calhoun Community College is at the top of [my] list for doing symposiums because [I am] inspired by the students [I have] met here. They [the students] are facing many challenges that I am sure they will overcome.”

-Victoria Cottles
Remedial education is often a roadblock to college completion. To promote the college’s mission of “success for every student,” the administration developed a plan to offer free remedial English, mathematics, and reading classes in an accelerated program called Fast Track. The goal was to accelerate the progression of at-risk students through one or more math and/or English classes. Additionally, the plan was to educate students on how to navigate through course selections and to map a plan for their academic career at our college. The final objective was to reinforce the benefits of successfully completing this program, which would save students both time and money.

In the spring, the college administration invited Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) to help with an innovative project with recent high school graduates to be piloted during the summer. Four days a week for five weeks, students attended classes provided by the Adult Education staff and specifically designed to prepare them to test into credit-bearing courses. PTK took the Fast Track program idea to the chapter officers and members for a strategic planning session. They decided Calhoun’s PTK members would serve as tutors and mentors, offering a total of four hours of service each week, consisting of two hours per campus.

Calhoun’s PTK Vice Presidents of Leadership met with Dr. Klauber, the College President, to propose a plan of action: Turbo Tutoring, which would immediately follow the students’ classes that were scheduled from morning until noon. This provided a challenge since food is not readily available on either campus and since participation in Turbo Tutoring was voluntary, not mandatory. However, PTK saw this as an opportunity to increase attendance by offering free lunch, so project leaders solicited donations from the community to help provide meals.

The most attractive incentive for attending this program depended not only on attendance but also on successful completion of the program. At PTK’s request, Dr. Calatrelo, the College Vice-President, granted a three credit hour tuition scholarship to one student for the fall semester. The scholarship required the student to attend at least one full hour of tutoring per week for the duration of the program and to test into college-level coursework.

To successfully facilitate this initiative, PTK scheduled chapter volunteers to serve as tutors. In preparation, members attended a training session held by developmental education directors and instructors. The mentors tutored students in English and in math, but their interactions with students also formed relationships that provided skills to succeed in college. Student participation in tutoring would be required as a weekly class meeting, and PTK would provide tutoring for the full 15-week fall semester. With fall’s increased demand, collaboration was necessary for success. PTK invited Sigma Kappa Delta, the English Honor Society, to join the effort. Next, members recruited faculty and staff to volunteer. Finally, the organization was granted permission to hold sessions in the mathematics and writing labs, thus ensuring that the directors of those programs and their staff would be available for assistance.

Most students in the program saw academic improvement. After summer, 49 of the 98 students who completed Fast Track advanced from remedial English to credited classes. In math, 48 progressed to credit classes. During the fall, fewer students participated; however, 22 of the 37 who completed progressed into college-level English classes and 5 into math. Additionally, several students were able to earn credit for Orientation by successfully completing this program. The results are evident: 755 total credit hours saved and $108,720, or an average of $793 per student, in tuition dollars.

At the end of the program, PTK surveyed the students to assess the project’s efforts. Of the surveys returned, 100% indicated that the project was beneficial. “This program made me feel prepared and secure about college,” observed one participant. Students exceeded their own expectations and, with this initial success, are more likely to complete their education. Volunteers and students formed new relationships, and foundations were laid for future interactions with PTK. Members were able not only to learn about motivating students who face academic obstacles, but also about developing confidence in their own leadership skills.
At the beginning of March, Calhoun Sigma Kappa Delta (SKD) members, Skye Boyd, Victoria Cottles, Annie Humburg, Ashley Sims, and Marnie Tabor attended Sigma Tau Delta’s Annual Convention in Minneapolis.

This year marked SKD’s twentieth birthday, and students from SKD chapters nationwide attended an SKD birthday party. Students were assigned to tables according to the month of their birth and instructed to eat and be merry! Students and sponsors alike enjoyed a wonderful, fun-filled evening with great food and great friends.

Convention attendees also had free time to be tourists in the city. This year, students explored places such as the city’s famous skyways, the Mall of America, art galleries, and historic churches and buildings. Students reached beyond their culinary comfort zones by eating at many different ethnic restaurants, including a Yemeni restaurant featuring goat and a historic Irish pub.

Convention Honors and Awards

Skye Boyd’s paper “Slumber On, Oh Ancient Ones” was selected among four-year junior and senior submissions for presentation at the convention. The paper addresses the functions of sleep in the stories of Odysseus, Jonah, and Jesus.

Victoria Cottles was selected to serve on a panel including SKD members from colleges in Arkansas and New York City. She presented her paper on the theme of finding home in Tania Aebi’s memoir Maiden Voyage, the story of her solo circumnavigation at eighteen years of age aboard her sailboat Varuna.

Tori also won first place in the SKD National Literary Analysis Contest for her essay “Scapegoats, Allusions, and Tradition: Comparing ‘The Lottery’ and ‘The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas.’”

Marnie Tabor won SKD’s Dr. Sheila H. Byrd Service Scholarship for her dedication and hard work in the community, at the college, and for Calhoun’s SKD chapter. Dr. Byrd was delighted to award the scholarship to such a worthy Calhoun student.

For the second year in a row, Muse, Calhoun’s literary and art journal, won SKD’s National Literary Journal Award. Many thanks to last year’s student editors Bethany Boydstun and Stephen Sheffield, to the writers whose texts were selected for publication, to the artists whose works make the pages sing, to the instructors who encourage their students to submit their writing and artwork, and most importantly to Taylor Burton for the beautiful design.

Julie Sneed was also recognized for her five years of dedication as an SKD sponsor. Each year, she tackles the difficult task of arranging the convention travel plans for the students and accompanying them on their adventure.
Encompassing Home with Literature and Writing: Wherever She May Roam

Calhoun’s Sigma Kappa Delta Muse co-editor, Victoria Cottles, was selected as one of four students from across the nation to present at SKD’s 2016 National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her paper, which follows, is both insightful and heartfelt.

The book that I have chosen to present is Tania Aebi’s Maiden Voyage. Aebi was the youngest person, at age eighteen, and the first American woman to solo circumnavigate the world back in 1985. The journey took her two and a half years to complete, and Maiden Voyage is a retelling of her incredible tale. Her father, as daring as he was in his youth, effectively threw her into her twenty-six-foot sailing vessel Varuna in an attempt to help her become more adventurous instead of keeping to her path of having no plan at all. Aebi experienced all walks of life, sailing conditions, and exotic cultures, and wrote about these adventures to fund her trip. This book expands on the idea that home is not traditional brick and mortar.

Aebi’s journey was constantly challenging her definition of home. She was perfectly content at home in New York, in her comfortable, controlled environment when her father offered her the deal of a lifetime that would spirit her away from her comfort zone into a world of unfamiliarity. So then began not only Aebi’s physical journey from land to water, but also her movement from a home of stability to a dynamic, fluid concept of home; a home which challenged her every day and helped her grow. At sea, Aebi was never in control, for the oceans and seas of the world are fickle, and she was left to the mercy of the winds and water to see her through the trip.

We also experience external conflicts in our homes every day. Sometimes we sail through our days under perfect conditions, while other times no wind billows through our sails to move us forward, and occasionally we must brace ourselves for the imminent storm sure to sink our homes if we falter. However, just like Aebi pressed on after each disaster, we pick ourselves up, repair the damage, and continue onward. All the challenges we face in our lives help us grow from the outside inward.

Despite all her hardships at sea, Aebi felt in control onboard Varuna and began to form a bond with her that could not be broken even during Aebi’s lowest moments. Of course, there were times when she missed her family and friends at home in New York, but once out in the open water Aebi found home on Varuna by creating a cocoon of memories, emotions, and shared experiences within the bounds of her sailing vessel, an undefinable bond that can only be understood by those who prefer to constantly travel. Home does not have to be the place where one lays her head. Home can be found in religion or another person, or even a piece of literature; it doesn’t matter. What does matter is that instant connection people feel that can be untethered to physical structures.

There is a saying that all people are a culmination of all the experiences they have ever had, and that is how we evolve into who we are today. I believe that also applies to our concept of home. It is not the physical fortress we take comfort in, but the powerful feelings, emotions, and memories associated with it. Home is where we learn to feel love, loss, and learn how to mature and grow. Home is not in one place because home is always where the heart resides.

The convention was amazing! It was a lot of fun to meet people from around the country and go exploring in Minneapolis. It was an experience I will always cherish!” --Victoria Cottles

“This was definitely a trip of a lifetime! I had an amazing time and made many new friends! The speakers were awesome, the food was incredible, and the city was beautiful!” --Ashley Sims
Spring Theatre Review: Diana Son’s *Stop Kiss*

*By: Ashley Sims*

On a balmy night in September, I made a trek to Calhoun’s Black Box Theatre to watch a performance of Diana Son’s *Stop Kiss*. I had not read a synopsis of the play—I only knew it was rated R.

Once I took my seat, I began to read through the program. I learned that *Stop Kiss* is a short, sweet, and touching love story about two women and their unexpected new lives. The play is set in New York. Callie has been a New York resident for some time, while Sara has only recently moved to the Big Apple. The play shifts back and forth in time. Callie’s apartment, where the play starts, houses mostly bright scenes, notes Calhoun student Rusty Mullins in his review. Any troubles, according to Mullins, seem minor compared to the scenes that occur on the bare floor that serves as a hospital, sidewalk, and police interrogation room. To Mullins, the apartment reflects the past while the bare floor is the future.

Throughout the play, the audience learns that Callie has difficulty choosing what she wants in life, and is especially concerned with how others judge her. According to Mullins, this shows in her not wanting to get a better job, inability to choose what she wants to eat, and even in her hesitation to admit her developing feelings towards Sara. At a critical point in their blossoming relationship, the duo have a fight about this issue, and Sara tells Callie that she is always “swerving” from the issues at hand and taking the easy way out. At this point, neither of them have admitted aloud how they feel, but the audience knows that they love one another. After not speaking for some time, Sara comes to mend their broken friendship. During this scene, the two nearly kiss. After a few days, they are on their way home from having drinks. As they are walking through the park in what has been dubbed the “gay” part of town, it finally happens—Callie kisses Sara.

A male bystander witnesses their kiss and yells unwanted advances, so Sara tells him that he can pretty much stick it where the sun doesn’t shine. At this point, he beats both of the girls. Sara is beaten into a coma, and she is fighting for her life. While Callie has some injuries, hers are not nearly as critical as Sara’s.

By the time Sara wakes from her coma, her family and ex-fiancé have flown to New York. Their ultimate goal is to take Sara back home with them. When Callie learns of this, she is lost. She desperately wants Sara to stay in New York with her. In the end of the play, Callie finally verbally admits what she wants: she wants to be in a committed relationship with Sara, and she wants Sara to stay in New York with her. She promises to take care of Sara while her injuries heal, and ultimately to be there for her through the hard times. As Mullins notes, Callie is finally able to grow past her own obstacles to accept herself and is able to choose what she wants—Sara.

I was in total awe watching this play. It was spectacularly performed. Everything about it flowed perfectly. After talking with my co-editor Victoria, we thought it was an
especially bold move for Calhoun to put on such a liberal play in such a conservative area. We wondered if the recent gay-rights movements had any impact on the decision to perform this play, so we decided to talk to Mr. Bill Provin about why he chose it.

After a brief interview, we learned that Mr. Provin had no ulterior motives behind his decision to put on a performance of *Stop Kiss*. He simply likes the play and told us that there was “absolutely no hesitation” in his decision to produce it. Of course, our interests were piqued in other areas, too.

We wanted to know if Mr. Provin encountered any backlash or opposition. He told us that on a management level, there was none. He also told us that some students openly told him that they would not be attending the play because it was a “gay play.”

*Stop Kiss* is written like a movie script with no breaks between scenes, and of course, we wanted to know how he pulled that off, too. Mr. Provin used music to fill time between scenes so that sets could be changed. He chose mainly acoustic versions of songs with very fitting lyrics. He used these to illuminate the breath of the music—so people would actually hear the words and would be able to understand how they fit (perfectly) with the scene before. Even in the program, Mr. Provin writes, “In this way, a scene can be extended or started early, depending on which is needed, and in doing so make the scene changes themselves part of the story and prevent breaks in the narrative of the play.”

Finally, we had to know what it was like to work with the lead actresses Erin Barrow (Calie) and Kelsey Parsons (Sara). “They were FABULOUS!” He told us that the girls were changing their clothes between scenes in thirty seconds or less. Impressive. With no intermission, *Stop Kiss* runs just over an hour and a half. With the help of everyone on and off set, Calhoun’s theatre program was producing this in eighty-five minutes. However, even though they shaved off a little time, everything went well. This was truly an experience. Definitely a play to remember!
Disobedience
By: Lance Brazelton