A collection of works by Calhoun Community College students, faculty, staff, and alumni.
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Enlisted Man
By Jay Wilson

Entrenched by the stench of rancid dreams,
Engulfed by the flames combusting from the mirror,
Blood infected by the shrapnel of expectation,
It rides the main arteries, a toxic Kamikaze,
Collision inevitable with an atrophied heart.
Mind-turrets spin and thought-bullets whirl,
Bombshells explode at the desolate core.

The soldier collapses within himself.

Here, there are neither comrades nor shelter.
The rations are not rational.
The moral is immoral.
Horizons blacken at every angle;
Daylight, that delightful myth from children’s tales.
Relief bubbles upon the blade of a bayonet –
Finally, the enemy escapes his shadows.

The soldier knows this face.

He knows the intention.
A familiar hand plays a six-chamber lullaby.
The tiny steel drum releases a percussive final note.

The war is over, but the sheets are filthy.

Canada Geese at Wilson Morgan
By Mary Toro

They must have read it,
else how could they know?
Or, they listened, heard

neither sow, nor reap...
do not worry...
do not concern yourself...

And so they stayed,
did not tire themselves with pointless flight
(nor risk the hunter’s eye)
back and forth
over rivers and mountains
searching for food,
a safe roost at nightfall

They stayed at the pond...
waiting...
for the bountiful hand
bearing bread.
**Self Loathing**
*By Jonathan Tyler*

I hate J. Alfred Prufrock and his stupid song!
The imbecile can do nothing right and only knows wrong.
He’s an ugly little man living in a dirty, Godforsaken city.
He sets out and then turns back— like Lot’s wife, not to be pitied.
How I would love to tie him to a stake like an ancient heretic.
Then light up his pyre and watch him burn pitching his fit!
But then I make the mistake of walking by Plath’s mirror.
No words can express my horror.
No longer are myself and the opposite wall what I see—
It’s Prufrock on his stake, glaring and laughing at me.

**Writer’s Block**
*By Bridgette Pylant*

Wrenching, Tugging, Pulling,
Turning and Swirling.
I reach into my throat.
I dig around in my mind
searching for the words
that should come easily,
but . . .
they don’t.

Exasperated.
The need goes unquenched
The drive is suppressed.
The want to create grows and festers.

Excuses like poison
Fill the gap.
This or that,
Seeping into the spaces
Where words should grow.
Then . . .

A Flash! A Start!
A phrase, and a turn.
A thought.
The gate opens,
and it is not work.

It is free!
It is simile and metaphor.
It is alluring alliteration and allusions
And it is glorious.

It is peace.
It is comfort.
It is release.

The jumble unwinds.
The muscles relax.
The tension is gone.

Until next time.

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**Tree of Me**
*Stephen Stark*

2nd place winner of the SKD National Poetry Writing Contest

**A Worn Path**
*Sarah Laughmiller*
Insomnia
By Mary Toro

The dark, solitary figure roams the night,
seeking solace, a companion,
one to keep it company in the long, still hours.

Finding the elect, it will not be denied.
Insistent in desire,
using all the wiles at its command
(memories, anger, unfinished conversations, inspirations,
unspoken fears)
it seduces the victim until, bending to foreign desire,
the prey rises, abandoning hope of rest or sleep.

The beguiler must depart at dawn,
a creature of the night is not fit for sunlight,
It takes its leave, with little thought for its weary companion’s plight,
saying, “We will meet again.”

And I,
I must be fine company for it chooses me so often.

Eighteen and Falling
By Ryan Wood

Something wet and cold hits my back,
Thick, sticking my shirt to the skin.
I spin around, fast, looking for the source.
There she stands, grinning.

She holds a handful of sludge,
Standing in the middle of that vast puddle,
A pitcher on the mound, challenging, ready to
Throw another in my direction.

She cocks her arm back, lips pursed,
Lets it fly through the yards between us.
I take a hit to the face, and she stoops,
Gracefully to scoop up another.

Her taped-up converse are caked in it.
I run forward, scoop two-handed,
Toss it at her chest,
Brown juxtaposed on a thin white shirt.

She knocks me down and we wrestle,
Pinning each other over and over again, our
Bodies enveloped, every single inch, laughing.
Six summers later, I am still covered in it.
Flag Draped Coffins
By Mary Toro

Flag draped coffins in military rows embracing sons and daughters, the best and bravest, at attention just one last time, until we grant them rest from their toils, until we grant them the peace they have earned.

Flag draped coffins contain the hopes and dreams of parents who loved, taught, sacrificed for a future that is no more.

A generation blunted, and all that would have come after, now gone because of one, or two, or many who send, but do not themselves go forth into peril, death who do not themselves face the wrath of hell and the cruel fury of a foe, who sees them not as a vessel of hope and promise, but as an enemy who must be destroyed, who must return home not with a shield but on it.

Heroes we call them, and offer salutes, volleys of honor, and the flag from the bier to mothers and fathers, wives and children to embrace, when all they desire is to hold their beloved once more, to clasp and shield their soldier to keep away the bullet, bomb or IED that stopped the beating heart of the one so dear, the one they will always love and hold in their hearts. even after the grateful nation has long forgotten the color of their eyes, the softness of their hair the very special scent of a loved one, imprinted on the brains and branded on the hearts of the sorrowing left behind.

Flag draped coffins stretch through the ages in a never-ending line...

Afterglow
By Ryan Wood

The tingle slowly fades as the light dances, shadows on the wall, one hand in hers, drawing smoke from the other, while the rain pelts the windowpane. Music drifts in soft from a farther room and the hands of the clock await permission to move.

The Curse
By Mary Toro

The curse is not the flow, as some would say, but its ceasing... the drying, dying autumn leaf clinging to the branch knows she will see no spring re-birth, nor lush growth bursting forth, fresh and new. She will not redo, nor do the never-done but only fade... wither... vanish with the wind.
Where's the Fire
By Kevin Walter

The volunteer fire department’s policy of denying entry into a burning building by anyone under the age of eighteen kept me from experiencing the thrill of taking on the red beast for two years. I longed to don my gear, strap on an air pack, and fight the flames. I prepared for the day by making every training meeting. I learned to cover every inch of skin with protective clothing so the radiant heat of fire and the penetrating, suffocating steam would not burn me. I practiced over and over with the self-contained breathing apparatus, or SCBA, until I could put it on, take it off, and fix any malfunction with my eyes closed. This was critical as most of the valves and knobs are located behind the wearer, and sight is often useless inside a building where smoke rolls like black fog.

Finally, it happened. My eighteenth birthday arrived, but unlike most teenagers, I did not yearn for presents or birthday cards from grandparents holding money; I wanted a house fire, and not just any would do. I wished for a good one, fully involved, as it is called in the trade, with smoke and flames blowing from the windows and doors. A crowd gathered around would be a nice touch, especially if it included some of my high school classmates, like Pam Pastian who sat behind me in Algebra. They could witness the conflagration in its full fury, wild and unconstrained, first shocked at the destruction, then gasping as my fearless fellows and I went to work taming the beast, as calm and confident as a symphony playing an old and well-studied score.

The fire did not happen that day. Nor did it occur that week, or month. November became December and became a new year, and still no structure fire. Oh, there were calls certainly: a fall here, a car wreck there, and sick calls abounded with the cold weather, but no house fire. I even checked the old run reports going back over a decade, and we had never had an entire winter season without at least one structure fire… until this one.

As spring approached, I began to think I would never have my destiny fulfilled. Apparently all of the homes in the community were fireproof. It was like waking up on Saturday with a toothache, knowing the dentist was closed for the weekend.

I rode the bus home from school one day and arrived to find the station doors across the street raised; the engine and tanker trucks were gone. When it stopped, I charged from the bus and ran to the station, unable to contain my eagerness. I told myself there were any number of reasons for the trucks to be out. I dialed 911, and when the dispatcher answered, I asked if we had a call.

“Yes, you’re out on a structure fire on Bartee Road,” he said.

“Hot diggity, boys, here we go,” I thought.

I rode the bays, I kicked my suspenders over arms, I grabbed my coat and helmet, and raced to my car. Bartee Road was less than a mile away.

As spring approached, I began to think I would never have my destiny fulfilled. Apparently all of the homes in the community were fireproof. It was like waking up on Saturday with a toothache, knowing the dentist was closed for the weekend.

As I arrived at the scene, I saw one opening directly to the living room and the other at the hallway next to the master bedroom. Smoke was boiling out of the windows, filling the air with the stench of burnt plastic and wood.

Grabbing my coat and helmet, I jumped from my car and jogged to the fire engine. Its diesel engine was whining a loud, steady pitch as it was used to power the water pump. The single red light sat on top of the cab, slowly rotating around in lazy circles. I found Chief Harper by the control panel where he would watch the gauges and make small adjustments to the knobs, then turn and study the mobile home and the firemen surrounding it.

Chief Harper was a tall man with salt-and-pepper hair. His glasses lent him a visage of a middle management man, which he was for a local factory. His slow, steady manerisms gave him a quiet confidence and brought calm to those around him. He had been a captain in the Special Forces and fought in the highlands of Vietnam, training and fighting alongside the Montagnards. I suppose a man who led hundreds of men in combat would have no issue with riding herd over twenty firemen.

“Chief,” I said loudly, vying with the engine to be heard, “What can I do?”

“Go ahead and get an air pack on, then come back.”

I went to the rear of the truck, opened a compartment door, and removed the big black plastic box holding an air pack. As I quickly donned the pack, another firefighter,
Flip Cox, opened the compartment next to mine and began the same procedure. Flip was a year or so older than me and a bit of a roughneck. He quit school early and worked menial labor at the local junk yards and mechanic shops. He had joined the department just a few months earlier, and like me this was his first structure fire as a full firefighter. As we struggled with the heavy gear, our eyes met, and we both grew boyish grins as the silent message was sent and received: We're really going to get to go. It's for real.

With our masks in hand, we returned to Chief Harper, who had just been briefed by the two men coming out of the building. Seeing us, the chief motioned us over to him.

“Okay. The fire is knocked down, so all that's left is to mop up. This should be a good one to get your feet wet. I want you to go in, find any hotspots, and douse them. Should be a piece of cake.”

“Sure thing, Chief,” Flip and I said.

Black smoke was turning to white steam and was still thick around the fire ground as we approached the mobile home. Only the back door had been opened, so smoke and steam still filled the home and pushed their way around seals and vents. The hose lay by the outside door at the hallway, and Flip picked it up as we made ready to enter.

The floor of the trailer was waist high to the ground outside and the steps had been removed. We hauled ourselves up and crawled on hands and knees, Flip with the nozzle in hand and I behind him holding a flashlight and helping to pull the hose. I saw where the heat of the fire had scorched the paneled walls black almost to knee level. I followed Flip down the hallway, pulling the heavy hose along the floor. Stopping in the kitchen area, Flip bellied down to the floor, lying on the hose to help steady
it. He opened the nozzle and began to pour water into the trailer. The smoke was so thick that I couldn’t see where or what the high-pressured water was hitting, but I certainly could hear it, as if we were caught inside a car wash. Water showered down on us as the stream shot out, hit the ceiling and walls, and rebounded.

After what seemed to be a great while, but was surely only a few minutes, the alarm bell on Flip’s air tank began to ring; he was running out of air. Shutting off the nozzle, he raised himself onto his knees and turned to me.

“I’ve got to go. I’m out of air,” he said.

I shook my head in exaggerated consent, showing that I understood. To stay out of any heat that might be above us, he crawled over me and followed the hose-line back to the door and out of the building.

I was a novice and had not learned all of the rules I should have about safely fighting an interior attack on a house fire. I had not even considered that there might be rules. I thought it was simply a matter of putting the wet stuff on the red stuff, and did not pay any mind to the fact I was now in a hostile environment all by myself. Looking back later, I realized I was proof of the existence of God, as He had spared my life on many such occasions. Rule number one during interior attacks: never leave your partner, period.

But, in my blissful ignorance, I stayed on as my partner left for outside and safety, and did so for one simple reason... I wanted to fight fire. Crawling up to the end of the hose, I grabbed the nozzle and began to crawl forward. The weight of a full hose is great and is increased as it is pulled across the floor and around corners, so I only made it a few more feet before I decided this was far enough. Hunkering down on the hose, I grabbed the valve and began to spray.

I aimed, first this way, then that. No place was safe from the onslaught of water. I was doing it. This was the greatest feeling a man could experience, facing down a force of nature, helping save life and property.

Suddenly, as I lay belly down on the linoleum of that kitchen floor in the dark smoke-filled room, a blinding light appeared beside me. Rolling onto my side so I might see, a shadowy silhouette stood before me, hands on his hips. Framed by the setting sun behind him and surrounded by smoke issuing forth from the open and previously unseen doorway came God, in the form of Chief Harper.

God was not happy.

“Walter, what in the hell are you doing?” he asked, obviously disgruntled.

I pondered a moment, partially in awe of his sudden appearance but more so in the simplicity of his question. Was it not obvious?

“Um, I’m fighting fire?” I more asked than stated.

“The fire was in the master bedroom, behind you. There’s no fire out here,” Chief said.

“Oh,” I said. What else could I say?

As the smoke cleared and the inside of the home became visible in the fading afternoon light, it became obvious that the heat inside the home had been great. Window blinds had melted and drooped as if in a Salvador Dali painting. Scorched wall paper once brightly illustrated with repeating birds was now black turning brown turning beige as it descended from the ceiling to the floor.

What the heat and smoke had not destroyed, the water Flip and I had loosed into the home had disposed of just as readily. The sofa was like a sponge fresh from the ocean, full to the point of saturation. The television and VCR were still dripping from their cooling vents. Pictures blackened from the fire had been knocked off the walls and soaked.

It was a small, humble Kevin who helped roll the hoses and return the equipment to trucks, ready to answer the next call. My dreams of being the hero of the day had blinded me to the real reason for the job. Instead of saving, I had destroyed. But I learned lessons that day, and in the years that followed, those lessons stayed with me. Help, don’t hurt. It’s not about you and how it makes you feel, but rather the effect your efforts have on those around you. These lessons would help me become not only a better firefighter but a better person.
Fear is not simply a secluded island of emotion that exists within the individual. It is an elusive and invasive virus that spreads its toxic influence deep into the psyche of any person unfortunate enough to fall into its devastating path. As fear develops, its talons tear relentlessly at the heart while jagged roots spider through the mind beneath the monuments where peace, cooperation, and sympathy once reigned. In “Once Upon a Time,” Nadine Gordimer prompts readers to ponder the detrimental consequences of fear on the political, cultural, and individual scales.

In the arena of politics, fear is often embraced as an underhanded tool of mass control. Harnessing the characteristic hysteria and psychological volatility of a frightened population, governments can easily sway public opinion toward acceptance of policies and agendas which would otherwise elicit civil outrage. Just as Gordimer’s “fairy tale” family conformed to the increasing security measures they observed throughout their neighborhood, the United States was enveloped by a constant atmosphere of collective suspicion following the World Trade Center attacks of September 11, 2001. Nearly every citizen was rattled by the anxious perception that there was an ever-present and potentially fatal threat looming in the clouds. As a result, the American government wielded this opportunistic climate of fear to rationalize the passing of the so-called Patriot Act, which gave authorities almost unlimited access into the personal lives of citizens through the unabashed monitoring of private communication channels such as telephone calls and e-mails. Despite government insistence that the act was implemented solely to collect information on the whereabouts of potential terrorists in an attempt to divert future acts of violence, opponents were quick to emphasize the startling ethical dilemma presented by its constitutional fragility. Unfortunately, such criticisms were validated by the events that ensued. There wasn’t so much a federal inquisition against terrorists as a vulgar misappropriation of the very definition of terrorism. Ruling entities of the time suddenly targeted their newfound carte blanche espionage toward any idea or organization perceived to be even remotely subversive, and approached as if combating an imminent threat to
national security. Authorities systematically dismantled the most sacred liberties ever bestowed into the hands of Americans for use against the cold iron clutches of authoritarian oppression. The parallels between this modern phenomenon and the events of “Once Upon a Time” exemplify the timeless relevance of Gordimer’s theme. This atmosphere of collective fear is made clear in the story during a family stroll: “When the man and wife and little boy took the pet dog for its walk round the neighborhood streets they no longer paused to admire the show of roses or the perfect lawn; these were hidden behind an array of different varieties of security fences, walls and devices” (250). Much like the misguided precautions taken in America, this fictional community sought comfort from fear by clutching its own shackles.

Furthermore, culture itself is often disfigured to accommodate the polarized attitudes that bubble and fester within the putrid wounds of fear. It seems that societies the world over would rather swallow in pestilent preconceptions than confess to the childish follies of fright. Sacrificial effigies are created from the faces of the marginalized and misunderstood so that the majority might retain the comfort of being part of a singularly indistinguishable community, fighting frantically to find space behind the blank mask of social acceptance in order to avoid an unexpected gaze in the mirror. Prejudice arises as simple minds seek scapegoats in a futile attempt to deny the inherent chaos of reality. Skin color, clothing, creed, gender, financial status, and aesthetic preference all become fodder for the superstitious externalization of societal fears. As a South African who witnessed the effects of apartheid policy, Gordimer undoubtedly drew inspiration for “Once Upon a Time” from the tragic cultural landscape of her home country. Rather than promoting a universal cooperation of humanity, South Africa was plagued with incessant turmoil rooted entirely in the biologically perverse construct of race. Descendants of European settlers lived in a state of perpetual panic under the assumption that some unfamiliar semblance of a person hung just outside the fringes of their manicured homes with an insatiable desire to destroy their privileged livelihood. The overwhelming response was simply to recede further into isolation and increase defenses instead of considering the issue on a more inclusive platform and striving for mutual justice. As Gordimer describes in the story, “There were riots, but these were outside the city, where people of another color were quartered” (248). This subtle hint at racism makes it apparent that she was referencing personal experiences. In culture, as with politics, fear paralyzes the most fundamental components of the human condition and reduces extraordinary potential to the most primitive of malicious territorial behaviors.

Perhaps the most obvious consequence of fear is that which it imposes upon the individual. Especially during an era when people are persistently bombarded with cautions from both the media and contemporaries about the suggested dangers of merely interacting with other members of our species during routine daily activities, it is no wonder that paranoia hangs menacingly on the shoulders of anyone who dares to venture into the nightmarish wasteland projected into the cumulative world portrait. The nostalgic conception of a neighborly planet filled with friendly faces has been supplanted by the uncompromising avoidance of the stranger. In modern times, for example, the nagging voice that warns of unwavering human callousness can cause the victims of an automobile accident to die ignored on the roadside because suspicion of danger often overwhelms the impulse to assist. In “Once Upon a Time,” this is expressed by the husband’s agreement with the housemaid that it would be foolish to feed the hungry individuals roaming their neighborhood. He said, “Take heed of her advice. You only encourage them with bread and tea. They are looking for their chance” (250). Fear may be a natural human emotion, but it sometimes causes unnaturally inhumane reactions.

Gordimer invokes the classical hallmark of any great literary author in this story by provoking an insightful examination of the political, social, and personal issues surrounding the subject of fear without being overly explicit in her delivery. Although her words are static, their subjective value is timelessly relevant. As the human population grows increasingly secluded in the self-imposed isolation resulting from fear, one can’t escape the persistent consideration of whether iron bars and flesh-tearing razor wire keep perceived threats outside or the fearful trapped within.
The Old Has Been Replaced with a New Normal

By Lindsey Jackson

Tragedy, catastrophe, and natural disaster...those three words briefly describe an EF5 tornado. On April 27, 2011, the unexpected happened. A line of strong storms that brought rain, hail, thunder, lightning, and a tornado came straight toward the rural town of Phil Campbell, Alabama. To many people this town means nothing, but for me, that's where I call home. This storm cleared everything in its path, leaving us to pick up the broken pieces and having to put our small town back together. As a student of Phil Campbell High School at the time, I learned to not take one single thing for granted because everything and everybody can be taken away in an instant. Looking at my life before April 27, 2011, and the events that followed after, I have learned that nothing lasts forever, events in life may not always turn out as expected, and when in times of need the world pulls together and helps each other.

I would give anything to go back to April 26, 2011, so I can remember exactly what everything looked like before the tornado. Phil Campbell was a small rural town with three red lights, a main street made up of 1930s style buildings, and large deciduous trees covering the whole community and creating peaceful shaded areas throughout the town. Our town was like most towns with the local pharmacy, a carwash, many churches, apartment complexes, small Ma & Pa restaurants, and even a barber shop with a revolving barber pole. The town was surrounded by neighborhoods with rows of homes one after the other, and in the center was the heart of our community, our high school, Phil Campbell High. A normal school day would consist of parking in the assigned parking spot, going to meet everybody in the gym, and walking the decorated halls to our lockers and then on to our classrooms. We would have lunch, then for the athletes athletic P.E., and then straight to practice. On Fridays during football season, we would always have crazy, spirit-filled pep rallies inside our gym. During basketball season, the players played on the only wooden floor still left in our county and in the same gym that their parents and even grandparents played in. During softball and baseball season, after our softball games were finished, we would just walk to the next field to support our baseball players. Before the tornado, people within the town of Phil Campbell took life and everyone in it for granted. Life was too hectic and busy to lend a helping hand to others. Most of our country had never heard of or cared about helping out a small community in Northwest Alabama. We watched the news and saw how our world had become a world that did not care for anyone but themselves. We would say no one in the world cares about others or strangers any more. But this all changed in a matter of minutes.

After the tornado, the first thing that was noticeable was all of the deciduous trees were gone, and as far as the eyes could see there was nothing but bright blue skies. The pharmacy, the carwash, the apartments, the surrounding neighborhoods, the churches, the restaurants, and the barber shop were all gone. What were left in their place were trees lying at an angle, the foundations of all the homes and businesses, and the remnants of our beloved high school. I would never be walking the halls, attending basketball games, pep rallies, school programs, awards day, and baseball games as the previous graduating classes had done for the past fifty years. After that terrible day, everything changed in a matter of minutes for every future Phil.
Do not hallucinate.

The Old Has Been Replaced with a New Normal, continued

Campbell High School graduate. Instead of walking the halls and attending the classes that I had known so well, my senior year was spent walking wooden porches from class to class and attending classes in portable classrooms. Our new school was complete with thirty-eight portable, single-wide trailers. That was not the only change we had to get used to. Parking in a newly created park area that before the tornado was where two homes used to stand and walking open porch-like walkways that connected each trailer. We had no lockers and too few books. We had to get used to changing classes outdoors. Depending on the weather, we had a nice sunny day, froze, got rained on, or slipped on our frozen wooden walkways. Our basketball games were held at Northwest Shoals Community College-Phil Campbell campus gym because our gym was destroyed. School events, like awards day, school plays, programs, and just school wide assemblies, were also held at Northwest, and the baseball games were played at Russellville High School because the baseball field was also severely damaged. But some traditions had to still take place just in different locations. Our pep rallies were held on the football field. Everybody seemed to take the changes with a positive attitude because we were just glad to be with everybody and to know we were going to be okay. Also, the way we viewed the people of our community and around the world changed. Just minutes after the storm blew over, people from our community to people all over the United States sent us donations, needed supplies, and heartfelt letters letting us know that we were in their prayers and we were not alone. We had volunteers who cleared debris, helped search for any remnants of people’s personal belongings, helped feed the needy, and helped rebuild homes. For the first time, we knew within our hearts that we would get through this tragedy with all the loving support we had received.

On April 27, 2011, there were twenty-seven total deaths in our small town, one a beloved second grade teacher, who was actually my sixth grade teacher, and two little boys in the elementary school. We took the scenery of our town for granted, and when it was gone, it was gone forever. When things in life do not go as planned, all that is left is faith that everything is in God’s hands and everything will be okay in the end. We also found out that there are people in the world who do care and are willing to help people in need. After a year and a half, the old has gone from our memory, and the new Phil Campbell has grown to be the new normal. In the end, Phil Campbell’s Bobcat pride will stand strong and can handle anything blown its way.
Bound by Obligation  
By Jessica Baker

In James Joyce’s short story “Eveline,” the protagonist, Eveline Hill is a woman who is faced with a dilemma. She is forced to choose between her life of obligation and a new life in a foreign land with her lover. Eveline is a character bound by a lack of options. She is unhappy, indecisive, and scared.

Eveline is unhappy with the role she feels obligated to fill. Her daily life consists of the same repetitive routine. Eveline is tired of being treated like a child at both home and work. She wishes to be treated with respect. Eveline states, “It was hard work – a hard life” (410). Eveline tries to escape the grasp of her past and present by agreeing to marry Frank and embark on a new life as his wife. The sound of a street organ reminds Eveline of “her promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could” (411). For Eveline, this promise is enough to hinder her decision to run away with her lover.

Eveline is so unsure of what she wants out of life that she is unable to take the risks necessary to make changes. It is this indecisiveness that will not allow her to go with Frank to Buenos Aires. As Eveline questions her decision to leave with Frank, “She prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty” (412). As she reflects on her life, Eveline remembers how uneventful and sad her mother’s life had been, and she cannot wait to escape the same fate. It is the perfect escape from her dreadful job and her abusive father. Eveline hopes, “Frank would save her” (412). Although Eveline views her day to day existence as unbearable, she is still unable to let go of her obligations and leave with Frank.

Eveline is an extremely frightened woman. Not only is she fearful of her father’s abusive threats towards her, but she is also afraid of what she cannot predict. When faced with the choice to stay in a life of misery or to sail away to a mysterious land with her lover, Eveline is forced to analyze her past and choose the path that will define her future. Eveline appears to be terrified to break free from the reliance of familiarity to embark on a new life with Frank. Eveline thinks to herself, “Could she still draw back after everything he had done for her?” (412). As Eveline continues to reminisce on the past, she seems to coach herself into staying by thinking of the times her father had been nice to her. Eveline remembers, “Sometimes he could be very nice” (411). The fear of giving up a life of familiarity, in spite of the emotional toll it takes on her, is not enough to mask the fear that Eveline feels about starting a new life that is completely unknown to her.

Although Eveline is torn between the life she has always known and the mysterious life that Frank has offered her, she cannot let go of what she knows. Though she is unhappy with her life, she cannot decide whether or not it is worth the risk to leave everything she has ever known behind to run away to an unfamiliar place. Eveline’s fear is paralyzing. As her mother wished, Eveline would continue to hold the family together.

Works Cited

3rd place winner of the SKD National Literary Analysis Writing Contest

Remembering
Jo Peterson

Gypsy Soul
Lindsay Blankenship
As a young boy growing up in the 1970s, I was drawn to television shows which would change history. MASH highlighted the insanity of war while showing the love for humanity one must have to save the sick and injured. Quincy M.E. used mystery and murder to illustrate how physical science and modern technology could stop injustice. My favorite show, Emergency, brought action and adventure to a boy’s imagination. John and Roy, two Los Angeles County paramedics, rode Rescue 51 to save the day, always ready to brave any danger and "give two amps of sodium bicarb and transport stat."

As influential as these shows were to me, it was real life that moved me to become an emergency services worker. The Bible tells us God hears even the smallest sparrow. This was a day when He would weep. Spring was fresh and new that morning, holding a memory of winter just past as the sun rose over the mountain. I made my way out of bed and found my grandmother and older brother already seated at the small table in the kitchen. Keith and I spent our weekends with Grandmama; ostensibly this allowed her to see to our spiritual upbringing. I always felt we went to her house in the country to give our parents a well-deserved rest from dealing with two young boys.

After breakfast, my brother and I spent the morning in the back yard and in the woods across the road shooting his new BB gun. The months spent practicing had turned the Walter boys into crack shots, and not a pine cone or beer can was safe. Around noon, Grandmama loaded us up in her Barracuda and took us to Miss Mary Dean’s Store at the foot of the mountain. Miss Mary Dean was a short woman with frizzy hair, a shrill voice, and an appearance of age that made one wonder if she had served pie and coffee to Robert E. Lee as he and his men passed through town.

My brother and I stayed outside the store. As we waited for Grandmama to finish her shopping and visiting, an argument began over who was the better shot. I fired and hit a soda can lying in the ditch some twenty yards away; he shot the stop sign at the end of the road. To best him, I aimed at the small green street sign and was elated when the projectile smacked it with a metallic rap. Beaming with pride at such a fantastic feat, I turned to Keith to see a look of jealousy and determination. Grabbing the Daisy from me, he quickly worked the lever action and turned to find a target. Perched atop a power line was a robin, and seeing it, my brother threw the gun to his shoulder, drew a bead, and fired. A puff of feathers, a wing thrown out as if its last thought was flight, the bird fell.

Miss Mary Dean gave Grandmama a shoebox for us to put the small, pitiful corpse in so that we might take it home, and under my grandmother’s wrathful eye, Keith dug the grave and buried the cardboard casket. As the clods of clay landed upon it sounding as a hollow drum, I thought of how the robin would never sing again, or see dawn break through the trees, or experience the thrill of flight, or...anything. Its life was over, no take-backs, no do-overs. It was my first lesson in death and its irreversible condition and helped give to me a love for life which brought me to my chosen profession.
Beyond Time  
By Peggy Payne

I poked through the jumble of birthday cards, forgotten music awards, and crumbling chocolate Easter bunnies. There, beneath a one-armed doll and a lock of hair labeled “July 1996” lay the folder marked “Tooth Fairy Letters.” These were the small scraps of paper, bearing the miniscule writing of an imaginary fairy, which I eagerly awaited after each lost tooth. I loved to read the adventures of the fantastical animals—the purple whale, the two-tailed skunks—that lived in a magical Fairyland, which formed the foundation of my imagination. I reminisced about the miniature loaves of brown bread I baked for my fairy and her tiny notes of thanks left beneath my pillow.

Somehow, my father managed to keep it all a secret from me, and he eventually deposited these things, along with the other detritus of my childhood, in what he calls my memorabilia box. I never really understood his reason for keeping these things, but I do know that his selection criteria, and sense of humor, are thoroughly eclectic. How else can I explain the transparent film container holding a bead of mercury? That little flash is all that remains of the glass thermometer I broke in a cup of hot tea, a ruse to feign a fever and avoid a piano lesson. Or the delicate, yellow antennae—antlers, I called them—from the butterfly costume I wore in my first dance recital. I remember the flood of lights, the sheer joy of the dance, and the audience’s ovation which that four-year-old girl imagined was all for her. He even saved the program from my freshman piano recital—the one in which I forgot a whole phrase, and which, ever since, I have tried to forget.

I had set aside an afternoon to clean my closet, but it is dusk and my room is still in disarray. I contemplate the cobble of objects now littering the floor—chewed-up pacifiers, a bag of beach sand. I find a tiny bottle of desiccated sunscreen lotion—and I relive the insouciance of the sunny days in our old backyard. These fragments of my childhood are windows into the life of a little girl who no longer exists. I can recall her hopes; some have been met, some dashed, and others hang in the balance. But that little girl is now only a phantom, and her world, forever lost.

Before I close the lid, I notice—curiously, for the first time—that it is only half full. Late that night, as I lie in bed, I realize the true purpose of the over-sized box. My father collected these artifacts of my childhood so I would not forget my past. But more importantly, he left room for my future, for decisions yet to be made. He left room, so that one day—far in the future—I would be able to spend an afternoon, just like this one, reminiscing on not just my childhood, but my life.

Memories  
Rebekah Comeaux

Morning Pathways  
Stephenie Hancock
My Name Is Written There
By Preston Pylant

When I was a boy, I thought my mother hated me, or at least, she was the most boring person alive. Every spring, while all the rest of the families on our street packed their cars for trips to the beach or Disneyland, my mother would tell everyone how we were going to see the cherry blossoms in D.C. We would inevitably end up at a memorial or a museum and then the same park every time.

The trips were great at first. Well, okay, the first trips I really remember. My favorite trip was going to the Washington Monument. I ran up to the monument and stood with my back to it. I looked up, and it looked like it went on forever.

My least favorite was going to the Jefferson Memorial. I was 6, and I really wanted to go with my friends from kindergarten to the beach. She made up for the boring memorial by letting me play around in the Smithsonian underneath the planes and rockets.

By the time I was 13, I had had enough. I argued and yelled at her until I finally screamed, “I hate going there. Everyone you want me to see there is dead!” She was crying and sat there quietly in the driver’s seat. She didn’t speak the entire trip. I counted cars by color to pass the time.

Once we arrived at this year’s chosen monument, I had warmed up a little. I knew I had hurt her feelings, so I wanted to make it up to her. I told her everything my teachers had told me about President Lincoln. She smiled. I sat on Lincoln’s toe to let her snap a Polaroid.

It was different that afternoon. We didn’t go to the park. Instead we went to another memorial. It was a new memorial, or at least, I had not seen it before. We walked together with a guide. When the guard stopped, we stopped. Mama started to cry, and it was then I noticed something.

It is the lies we tell ourselves to help us sleep at night that are the hardest to overcome. All my life, mom had said that dad had gone away. I spent my entire childhood thinking it was like when every other kid on the street’s dad “went away.” Susie’s dad drove a big rig. He would rumble down the street, and the boys would all stop and watch him. Johnny’s dad was a salesman. He was always going on sales trips and bringing Johnny all kinds of neat souvenirs. I always imagined my dad pulling up in the driveway in his rig on my birthday and taking me for a ride. We would watch the Cubs play that afternoon and then play catch in the yard until dark. It would be a perfect day. But dad never came, and the only big rig to ever pull in our driveway was a moving truck.

Through the years, I gave up on Dad. I had come to hate him. I watched the other dads coaching our ball teams, grilling with their sons, and doing the yard work down our street.

But now those birthdays and Christmases without him were becoming a blur. “That is my name, mama. Why is my name on that wall?” I turned to see her sobbing behind me, and I knew. My dad had gone away. He had gone away to war, and I knew enough to know that if his name was on this wall, he did not come home. I wrapped my arms around my mom’s waist. She wrapped her arms around me and said, “Son, this is your dad.”

We walked slowly back to the car, and in the waning hours of the day, we drove to a huge cemetery that had a sign that said Arlington. Things were becoming so clear now. As we approached the stone that bore my name, I saw that today was his birthday. All these years, the trip had been to visit his stone, but my mother knew I was not ready. She had played me out at the memorials and the park until I took a nap in the car thinking we were heading home. In reality, she would wait for me to fall fast asleep and then come here to talk to him. I learned to love my dad that day. I hated myself for ever doubting him.

My mother was never the same after that day. All those quiet meditative nights in our apartment were filled with stories of their love, and how it had lasted from the day they met in Jr. High until the chaplain handed her the letter. She still loved him.

Mom and I were closer than we had ever been. From that day forward, I could not wait to go to D.C. I would take my report cards and school pictures and leave them for him. His name may be one of thousands on that wall, but it was our special place because he’s my dad.
I pulled into the parking lot and turned off the ignition. “I shouldn’t be here. We shouldn’t be here.” I whispered to myself as I looked wearily at the stark whiteness of the chapel exterior. I pulled the keys from the ignition and dropped them noisily into the side pocket of the suit jacket I borrowed from my dad. I took a deep breath and a moment to still my nerves before I exited the car and walked up the brick walkway toward the giant oak doors.

We were buckled into the backseat of your parent’s Chevette, on our way to the first of what would become many Lackey-Somerton beach trips. My family, the Lackeys, had moved in to the house next door to yours the summer before and our parents became great friends, so had we. My parents had not thought twice about letting me accompany your family to their condo on Memorial Day weekend. I was quiet and shy. You were outgoing and fun. You brought out the adventure in me.

You were building a sand castle. I was chasing crabs. We had our first fight today. You accused me of cheating at Battleship and kicked me. I pulled your hair. I looked over at the sun shining on your hair, setting it aglow around your pink sun-kissed cheeks. I bought you an ice cream cone as a peace offering. You held my hand all the way back to the condo. I never cheated at Battleship again.

I pulled open the giant oak door and immediately the heavy perfume of freshly cut flowers assaulted my nose. The loud grumble of many people whispering and talking as they waited filled my ears. I looked up and saw several faces watching me, each giving me their own most sympathetic look. I quickly looked back down and decided that from then on I would look up as little as possible. Avoiding all eye contact was the only way I was going to make it through this with my emotions intact. I joined the end of the line, careful to keep enough space in front of me not to invite conversation. I kept my back to the crowd behind me. Maybe they will be too uncomfortable to come and talk to me. I tried to shut them out, but I still heard them talking. They talked about you. They talked about the accident. “It’s such a shame,” one woman said. One man asked, “Did you see the article in the newspaper? The car was nearly cut in half.” “She was supposed to graduate that day,” another said. I kept my head down and tried to keep the voices out.

The sun had just set over the water, and the sky was a beautiful shade of magenta. My palms were sweaty. I kept stealing sidelong glances at your face, wondering if you felt the same way about me as I did you. I reached up to tuck a stray
strand of hair behind your ear. You looked at me. Your green eyes shone brightly while a smile played on your lips. I leaned in closer. You met me half way. We shared our first kiss.

Just a few more feet and I would have to look at your mom. My stomach heaved. It was all I could do not to throw up on the worn brown leather of my shoes. Deep Breaths, Joey. Deep Breaths…

It was our last night at the beach before heading home. You had cheer camp the next week. We had spent all summer falling in love with music and falling more in love with each other. We had stayed out all night dreaming about our future. This was our senior year. It was going to be amazing. Next summer we would spend the entire summer at the beach together before heading off to college.

I looked up, and your mom was standing right in front of me. I hugged her, but she stared off over my shoulder. I was not sure she knew it was me. I shook your dad’s hand, but he was worried about keeping your mother from collapsing. No one was paying any attention to you.

I stared at your picture and the beautiful smile that made my heart thump in my chest. I looked down, and next to the photo was a brushed steel urn on a polished oak base. I ran my fingers over the engraved nameplate. It read “Elizabeth Allison Somerton April 28, 1980-May 25, 1998.” It would look lovely on the mantle above the fireplace. I could not take you back. There was really only one thing to do now.

I drove all night. I was standing on the hood of my car when the sun came up. There was a smile on my face and tears in my eyes as I scattered your ashes on our beach. You would have wanted it that way.

I drove home, slowly. When I got home, I told my parents what I had done. They had already guessed as much. They called your parents over. In minutes, we were all silently standing around the living room. There was not really much to say. I handed them the empty urn. It would still look pretty on the mantle.

Your dad clenched his teeth and kept his hands in his pockets. Your mom sighed when she hugged me.

They left soon after they had arrived, knowing the deed could not be undone. I went to my room and put on the CD you had given me just a few days before. It was a carefully ordered compilation of every band we had seen over the years, and it would have been our soundtrack as we drove to the beach. It is our life broken into little three and a half minute memories. I closed my eyes. I swear in that moment, I could hear the sea and see your hair blowing in the breeze as the sun came up.
Mommy Dearest
Tammy Tanner

Bouy 2
Jo Peterson

Bells Across New Mexico
Jo Peterson

Hindi Petals
Sarah Abney
Debunking the Community College Myth: An Interview with President Beck

By Sarah Abney

Community colleges are often perceived as lesser schools, and are frequently the butt of jokes. However, sentiments of inferiority towards community colleges should not be felt towards Calhoun Community College. Dr. Beck graciously allows the MUSE co-editors to interview her annually. At the end of this year’s interview, Dr. Beck asked that her feelings towards the student body be included. She conveyed how proud she is of the student body and the active approach that student groups and honor societies such as PTK, SKD, and SGA have taken. She is also pleased to share that 90 of Calhoun’s new entering students scored twenty-seven or higher on their ACT. Refuting the community college stigma, Calhoun’s quality of students is surpassing conventional expectations.

The College is growing and moving in more ways than one. Although the locations of the campuses are the same, Dr. Beck confirmed that Calhoun has indeed been annexed within the Decatur city limits, and has moved out of Limestone County’s jurisdiction. The annexation will provide for better security, fire, and emergency medical services. Because Decatur City Police department is closer, “The response time will be cut by more than half for emergencies.”

In addition, Calhoun is updating their security to include the Virtual Alabama security system. The program works like Google Earth in that a room or space can be reviewed at any time through a camera system that will be installed. These will help isolate an incident (fight, fire, or medical emergency) to its specific area and make emergency response more timely. This, combined with Calhoun’s access to Decatur police coverage, is part of the effort to make Calhoun a safer place. Huntsville campus’ security actually includes some members of the Huntsville P.D. “We have to be aware; we have to be prepared,” said Dr. Beck.

The Huntsville Campus is also experiencing changing borders by way of the Sci-quest move. The plans, although not fully developed, are to tear down the former Sci-quest building and start anew. Dr. Beck said that they are still working on the design for the newly acquired space. The current building that houses classes currently will be partially renovated, which will hopefully include an additional or different entry point to the campus. According to Dr. Beck, “It’s a rather complex project, so it’s taken us a little longer to design than we had hoped it would.” If all goes well, the designs will be completed and construction on the Huntsville campus expansion will start by the end of this year. Dr. Beck noted, “It is moving forward now – there’s no doubt about that. It’s our opportunity to get it right, so we’re not rushing.”

On the arts front of Calhoun, Phase II of the Alabama Center for the Arts will be moving the Theatre and Music programs with Athens State University. This alliance will mirror the relationship of the two schools within the visual arts (Phase I). The new facility will house a black box theatre and adjoining lobby, practice rooms, rooms for individual instruction, classrooms for music and theatre, as well as storage and workshops for the theatre. Dr. Beck revealed that they will also include a courtyard area that can accommodate theatre productions and music practices and performances. All of these fabulous features will amount to a $10 million facility. Calhoun hopes to have a full Theatre and Music Arts program, and Athens State has intentions of acquiring a Music degree, increasing the importance of an improved facility. In the future of the theatre, Dr. Beck hopes to be able to host travelling productions. She even mentioned the possibility of teaching dance at the Center. Although the
designs are still in the works, the new Music and Theatre building, located in downtown Decatur, will be similar in style to the other Alabama Center for the Arts building next door. Construction should begin in approximately six to eight months, by fall this year, once the designs are finalized.

Since the visual arts moved last summer, there has been plenty of space left in the Fine Arts building to accommodate ACT testing during the Business Center’s construction. The Business Center, which has been undergoing renovation over the past few months, will continue to host college testing. The changes being made will accommodate everything the Center houses, only better.

Also among the improvements was the College’s switch to Banner software last summer – a change that has been quite distressing in some cases. “Changes in administrative software systems always take longer than you think, and it is always more complex than you think. It did cause a bit of angst amongst students and staff,” shared Dr. Beck. The original goal was to implement Banner within a year; however, the process normally takes three years. Although the process has been difficult and at times exasperating, “spring was much easier than fall.” Dr. Beck reassured us that even though the kinks are still being ironed out, the services Banner provides will be worth it once it is fully implemented. She hopes that by next spring students’ e-mail, Blackboard, and MyCalhoun will be integrated into Banner so that students can log into everything at once with a single sign-in. These changes will make the information more readily available and give the student more access to personal information.

For any college that wishes to adopt Banner into their system, Beck says, “It’s going to take longer than you think; just accept that it’s going to take longer to get through the entire process…Put on your coat of armor and be more patient than you’ve ever been in your whole life.” Technology is constantly changing, which complicates an already arduous process, as Dr. Beck pointed out:

What if you had to type in (the old way) all the data that we have into a new system? You don’t have to do that anymore, but it never all will transition over…If you can imagine how much data this college has (financial, students, and employees) and try to transition that all over without errors - something is going to be missed. You have to go through and get out the errors; you may not find one until you run payroll and someone says, ‘my social security wasn’t on my check this month.’

In this difficult economic time the College has been able to still thrive and grow. This is thanks partially to the clean energy practices that have saved Calhoun $750,000 since last year. Also, Mr. and Mrs. William Propst gave a rare undesignated $1 million gift for the College to use however they please at the Huntsville campus. Dr. Beck says that they have put the gift aside to save it for the right expenditure. In addition to the much appreciated gift and integrating clean energy, refinancing Calhoun’s bond in July 2012 saved the college an additional $1.5 million.

Calhoun has grown in its programs, facilities, enrollment, and standards. Despite the difficulties and challenges the past year has dealt, we have thrived. The coming years show signs of hope and imply more strides in the college and the community’s journey.
Volunteering for the Alabama Center for the Arts Gala was an honor and a privilege. To be a part of the assemblage of this rare and exciting event was a treat, but then again, I am an art student. Ninety-eight percent of the volunteers, however, had no association with the art department. Art student or not, many tasks had to be completed to prepare for the event. First, tables for the donated art work had to be set up and arranged. The works of art and wares to auction off at the gala were donated by artists as well as a few local businesses. Both the display tables and the dinner tables were clothed in black and iridescent cloths. These were to be crowned later with beautifully vibrant flower arrangements, which were being created on the third floor by the florist company and more volunteers. Dozens of paper lanterns, ranging from twelve inches to approximately five feet in diameter, had been hung earlier that day, but strands of lights had to be hung above the tables to illuminate the artwork. Moving the artwork was the most cardiovascular of the jobs. A caravan of paintings, sculptures, drawings, jewelry, ceramics, and mixed media formed as volunteers traversed from storage in the main building, out the front door, down the sidewalk, to the back of the parking lot, and under the tent outside.

During a break, some of the Phi Theta Kappa volunteers reflected upon their experience up to that point. “It’s pretty cool. It’s good exercise,” said Don Trammel, a Robotics student instrumental in the heavy lifting. “It’s interesting. I just like seeing the different types of art. Ever since I took an art class, I look a lot more intently – with a lot more discretion,” shared Charles Smith. Don jokingly pointed to a bright abstract painting, “Still, you can’t figure that one out.” “No,” agreed Charles, “I can’t figure that one out.”

The work focused on arranging the pieces as the day began to wind down. But before the day could end, all the art had to go back into the building. With fewer bodies left to help, Don and Charles, along with fellow PTK students Elizabeth Becerra, Scott Hammond, Joe Diegan, and their SKD friend Andrew Jordan, returned all the art work back to the Center’s building. At almost six o’clock, they were the faithful few left standing. Yet even as the last of these volunteers left to escape the Decatur High homecoming parade, our fearless leader Ms. Hilderbrand and even our president Dr. Beck and their associates continued to press on to prepare for the next day.

Not many students attended the Gala, but the event could not be described more enthusiastically than by Ms. Kathryn Vaughn, one of the primary art instructors at Calhoun:

“The reception was more like an open house kind of thing. You could just enjoy the work in the exhibition. You could walk to certain rooms. They had people stationed in these rooms, and they would basically inform the visitors what kind of classroom they were in and what the students might be doing in there. I think they also got to go out to the courtyard. The flowers were gorgeous. The art work, of course, was fabulous. It was wonderful to see people transformed. I don’t normally attend formal events. It was so worth it – people were beautiful.

The gala was wonderfully successful in its fundraising, meriting an, “Oh yes! Oh my goodness! Way beyond anyone’s imagination,” from Ms. Vaughn. The donated work (the same pieces that travelled across the park-
Phi Theta Kappa is an honor society that rewards scholars and builds service leaders at two-year colleges. Students are invited to join when they have reached two important milestones: one, they have completed at least twelve credit hours towards a degree; and two, they have achieved at least a 3.5 GPA. Members uphold the standards and integrity of our four hallmarks that make up the honor code in Phi Theta Kappa: scholarship, leadership, fellowship, and service.

Phi Theta Kappa began in 1910 at an all-women’s college in Missouri with only six members under the name of Kappa Phi Omicron. This society has come a long way since then. By 1988, Phi Theta Kappa had reached all fifty states and was working hard toward obtaining scholarships for its members. Among these scholarships are the Hites Transfer Scholarship, the Frank Lanza Memorial Scholarship, the Guistwhite Scholarships, the Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholarship, and the All-USA Community College Academic Team Scholarship, just to name a few! Members have access to more than $37 million in scholarships, a benefit unmatched by any other honor society.

Calhoun has one chapter, Sigma Lambda, which holds weekly meetings on both the Decatur and Huntsville campuses. Members are encouraged to attend chapter meetings and talk about the needs in our college and community. Active participation is important in this student-led organization since we like to represent our college in the best possible way.

Active members gain leadership skills that are necessary in the work force. They also gain valuable research skills needed in universities and the job market today. Members learn all of this while serving and enjoying the fellowship of others with a common goal: to succeed.

This year has been filled with opportunities to serve and gain these valuable leadership skills. In March, Calhoun Community College was selected as the venue for the Alabama Regional Convention. Phi Theta Kappa members from all over Alabama came together to celebrate the year’s work at this Regional Convention. To pull this off, the Sigma Lambda chapter enlisted the help of local clubs and organizations at Calhoun. Nine clubs and organizations answered the call, making the Regional Convention a success!

Every year, our chapter participates in Relay for Life. This year our chapter raised $2,542.62 by taking donations for baked goods and Relay for Life merchandise. Members also held their own personal fundraisers. LaJoy Johns, a chapter officer, had a creative way of fundraising. She decided to wear the same T-shirt every day until she had raised $500 for this worthy cause:

“This thing called cancer, really separates the mice from the men (or women)... each day I put on my T-shirt I feel as if I’m putting on cancer...It (not me) is dirty, and the longer I have to wear it, the more ISOLATED I feel. When I first shared my upcoming experience, people wanted to support me from AFAR, which is a natural reaction, I’m sure, to unpleasant things...My love goes out to CAREGIVERS who get right down in the trenches with their loved ones and to the ones who can’t take cancer off each evening because...CANCER DOESN’T TAKE A HOLIDAY.”

It took her eighteen days to reach her goal!

Another exciting event was held in June, when members attended the annual Honors Institute in Denver, Colorado. Twenty members and advisors from the Alabama Region attended this event. We were inspired by amazing speakers like Laura Ling, who discussed her journey of hope, A Story about the Culture of Competition and Cooperation. Among other speakers, we had the honor of having King Peggy present to us her journey, From Secretary to King: Transforming a Culture of Competition and Cooperation. For 2013, this event will be held in Philadelphia, and we hope to have even more members represent the state of Alabama.

In September, we attended the Regional Honors in Action Leadership Conference at the 4-H Center in Columbiana, Alabama. This event was open to all Phi Theta Kappa members, officers, and advisors. The purpose of Phi Theta Kappa is to “recognize and encourage scholarship among two-year college students. To achieve this, Phi Theta Kappa shall provide...

Calhoun’s Phi Theta Kappa students participate in Spring Fest on the Huntsville campus.
opportunity for the development of leadership and service.” The Alabama Region encouraged all to participate in this event where we benefited from teambuilding and leadership skills, as well as fellowship with other scholars.

Phi Theta Kappa had much to offer in 2012, but the best is yet to come. In April, we will be heading to San Jose, California, for the annual International Convention! At this convention, chapters from all over submit hallmarks and compete for international recognition in different categories ranging from college projects to most distinguished chapter member. The Sigma Lambda chapter hopes to make Calhoun proud and bring home a handful of those awards.

In 2008, Calhoun president Dr. Beck wanted to realign the academic divisions, which at that time only had department chairs. She wanted to combine humanities and social sciences and create a position for a dean. A faculty member since 1997, Kenneth Anderson was serving as the Chair of Humanities and Social Sciences at the time. He applied for the position for dean that Dr. Beck had created. After the evaluation of applications, Anderson became Dean, possessing all the qualities needed for the job.

Prior to his career at Calhoun, he was a mental healthcare professional. When the door of opportunity opened, Dean Anderson made a career change into the educational field. “I had an opportunity to teach and I enjoyed it, and then I had an opportunity to do other things,” Anderson said. As the dean, he has helped Calhoun Community College flourish not only in Humanities and Social Sciences but also in other areas across the campus. Dean Anderson says, “If you’re a teacher, an administrator, or a staff member here or secretary or grounds person, everyone has a chance to impact the success of people.”

The best part of being a dean, according to Anderson, is helping others succeed in their life goals. “I think, in life that the more we give, the more we get, so we never run out. I empty myself to refill myself, to empty myself again,” said Anderson. He explained that there are daily opportunities to learn more about the world. His willingness to learn has grown while at the College. When it comes to being a dean, “You get to meet some really cool people in this job, some amazing students. They are eager to learn, committed to learning, and perform at levels that are extremely acceptable in terms of the ability to progress in life.”

In 2012, Dean Anderson announced he had accepted a position with the City of Huntsville. He looks forward to new opportunities that await him in his new endeavor as Officer of Multi-Cultural Affairs for Huntsville, Alabama. He sees this new occupation as a new challenge: “That’s the key for me, it’s just an exciting opportunity… I wasn’t planning on leaving Calhoun, but
sometimes in life a door opens, and as it opens wider and wider you ask questions. That was the case for me."

Calhoun is thrilled about his new opportunity to touch the lives of others. His goal is to “create opportunities for people to come together on common ground and once you get to know people and build relationships - that is how you can build bridges.” In the city of Huntsville alone, there are 135 different cultures. Anderson says that Huntsville has “had lots of successes. We have been number one, two, and three in a lot of places, and that’s a lot to be proud of. But it’s the people behind the numbers that make the difference.” His goal is to bring the people of Huntsville together to make relationships regardless of their cultural differences.

Coming into a new position can sometimes be challenging when the predecessor was so successful. Dean Anderson hopes that the next dean is an energetic person who gets along with others and has a vision for success.

Thank you for the opportunity I’ve had to work at Calhoun Community College. It’s one of the best places to work. I’ve learned so much here. I’ve grown so much here. I think I’ve contributed a lot here, and it’s not easy to walk away from a great situation, but I walk away knowing that I tried my best to do what I could. Even though there have been success and failures, I know I can walk away from that with the satisfaction that I didn’t short change any side of the process.

– Dean Anderson

Almost, Maine, is a fictional town and the namesake of John Cariani’s play. Last fall, the Calhoun Black Box Theatre proudly presented Almost, Maine, featuring Angela and Patrick Green and Calhoun alumni Kim and Phil Parker. The setting is a borderless town towards the northernmost part of Maine. We peek into eight scenes, all occurring simultaneously at 9 o’clock on a Friday evening and exhibiting couples in unsettled stages of their relationships. Each couple’s struggle is unique, allowing a diverse audience to identify and empathize with the characters.

The audience is never reassured of the outcome of the couples. In some instances, we can assume the ending, either happy or devastating, but in others, we are left perplexed and uncertain. Each scene uses a physical illustration as a metaphor to foreshadow the ambivalent ending. Although it is easy to become confused in the movement and timing of the play, the Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis) close each of the eight plights and align the situations.

Angela and Patrick Green and Kim and Phil Parker gave superb performances in their acting and directing. Their professionalism was evident in the quality of the show and their ability to switch from character to character throughout the play. They made their characters life-like and endearing. Ms. Kelsey Parsons, a seasoned actress of Calhoun Theatre, blended in flawlessly with the professionals when she stepped on stage. Ms. Parsons, along with the camaraderie of Isabella “Izzy” Walters, created delightfully comedic scene-transitions in their performances as the Parka People. The Calhoun production staff created a wonderful and believable environment that not only immersed the actors in their characters, but immersed the audience in the story of Almost, Maine. Student Megan Ezell reflected on her play experience:

The town was real. The people were real, yet there was a hint of magic running through every scene. The characters never acknowledge this feeling; this is their town, this is their normal, but there is something very special about Almost, Maine. The whole of the presentation, from the theatre’s intimate setting to the actors’ enthusiasm to the sweet innocence of the characters and all the other aspects blended seamlessly for a thoroughly enjoyable experience.
What does it mean to be a member of Sigma Kappa Delta? For me, being a member of SKD or any school organization is about stepping outside of my comfort zone and trying to become a stronger, more confident student. As president of Sigma Kappa Delta’s Theta Beta chapter, I am learning to be a leader and a productive member of society. SKD has provided me with the opportunity to make a difference. By attending the monthly meetings and volunteering for school and community events, I have not only been given the chance to better my community, but I have also been given the opportunity to build friendships with my fellow chapter members.

I believe that being a member of Sigma Kappa Delta provides students with social and leadership skills they will need to be successful in their future endeavors. Being a member of an honor society or student organization helps to make Calhoun Community College feel like more than just a “starter” school and gives students a place to feel like they belong. My membership in Sigma Kappa Delta has fully enriched my college experience while simultaneously providing me with incredible experience and credentials for the future.
When Rebecca Skloot began her investigation into the life of Henrietta Lacks, a thirty-one year old who died of cervical cancer in 1951, she was merely curious. It intrigued her that while much was known about the HeLa cells (as they came to be known), almost nothing was known about the woman from whom they had been harvested. What Skloot discovered, and has written, is a story to rival those of Robin Cook (Coma, Outbreak) and Michael Crichton (The Andromeda Strain, Jurassic Park); the difference, as she writes at the very beginning of The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, is that “[t]his is a work of nonfiction” (Skloot iv).

The fact that the story is true is what makes it so shocking and anger inducing. Skloot skillfully weaves together the tale of Henrietta, her children (especially Deborah, her only surviving daughter) and the extended Lacks family, the HeLa cells, and the world of medical research. The reader is forced to confront the ugly realities of modern science where the individual is not regarded as highly as the quest for knowledge, and ethical considerations bow to expediency in pursuit of the next breakthrough.

The great strength of Skloot’s work is that it is not merely a recounting of research methods and data; she brings the subjects to life. The reader comes to know them as individuals, to understand their pain, and to care about what happens to them. Skloot does a masterful job of presenting the lives of under- and uneducated blacks living in poverty in rural Virginia beginning with Henrietta’s birth in 1920 in Roanoke. She details the daily lives and relationships of the Lacks family with straightforward honesty. She records their actual words because as one of Henrietta’s relatives said, “If you pretty up how people spoke and change the things they said, that’s dishonest. It’s taking away their lives, their experiences, and their selves” (Skloot iv). As the reader soon discovers, the Lacks family has had more than enough “taking away.”

Not only does the family lose Henrietta, it also loses its privacy and dignity. There are researchers who allow family members to believe that requests for their blood are to benefit them, when they are actually doing more research on the HeLa cells. There are stories published about Henrietta and the family, along with family pictures, without consent from any of them. When questioned about an article he had written without consent, writer Michael Gold said, “I think I wrote some letters and made some calls, […] And to be honest, the family wasn’t really my focus…I just thought they might make some interesting color for the scientific story” (Skloot 211). Private medical records were made available to writers without waivers being signed, and in some cases in spite of the family’s objections.

The story of the researchers, their motives, and methods is fascinating. They are not all villains. George Gey, the researcher who first was able to duplicate the HeLa cells, was a dedicated man. Because funding for research was scarce, he used his considerable scavenging and building abilities to fabricate the equipment he needed. His commitment to research was admirable, and the results he obtained were amazing. The fact remains, however, that neither Henrietta, nor her husband or family, consented to the use of her cells.

Skloot handles the multiple story lines in the book with skill and clarity. She is able to explain the great progress being made in the field of medical research without losing sight of the devastating effects of Henrietta’s loss on the family. Perhaps her greatest accomplishment was in gaining the trust of a family that had become distrustful of strangers. She formed friendships with members of the Lacks family, especially the very suspicious Deborah, who eventually learned to trust Skloot and, “came to [Skloot’s] B&B room each morning, sat on the bed, and unloaded her mind” (Skloot 238). As a result of this mutual trust and openness, Skloot was able to tell the complete story of the Lacks family with compassion and dignity.

The questions that remain when the story ends are many: Would things have evolved differently had Henrietta Lacks been a middle-class, or even poor, white woman? Would more care have been taken to obtain consents and protect family privacy had the Lacks family not been who they were? How can the rights of individuals be protected while seeking the good of the many? Who owns the rights to cells or organs once they are removed? What are the considerations of the next breakthrough?

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**Works Cited**

The 2012 Presidential Election may be over, but the issues debated on the campaign trail remain topics of discussion. Last November, President Barak Obama handily won his re-election bid with 332 Electoral College votes to Republican Challenger Mitt Romney’s 206.

Both differed on various issues ranging from the economy to military spending. Some of those issues play will out in the Congressional arena as Obama tries to push his proposals in his second and last term in office.

Here’s a look at some of the issues that set these two candidates apart:

**On the economy**

Obama campaigned to let Bush tax cuts expire for the nation’s top earners. He discussed keeping those tax cuts for those households making less than $250,000. Romney campaigned to keep a permanent extension of the Bush tax cuts for everyone. In addition, Romney discussed cutting taxes and regulations to encourage business growth.

**On healthcare**

Obama supported his 2010 Healthcare law, which calls for patient protection against insurance and pre-existing conditions and also requires individuals to buy health insurance. Romney threatened to repeal that legislation if elected. He advocated reforms to help individuals buy insurance and reduce health care costs.

**On immigration**

While both debated efforts to reform immigration, Obama proposed a policy to make it easier for illegal immigrants to gain legal status. Romney promoted legal immigration.

**On Afghanistan**

Obama promised to bring troops home over the next two years. Romney also discussed bringing troops home, but according to the orders of U.S. Generals.

**On gay rights**

On the campaign trail, Obama supported same-sex marriage. Romney stated that he opposed it.

**On abortion**

Obama stated he supports the Roe v. Wade decision allowing abortions. Romney stated he opposed Roe v. Wade and supported policies allowing states to regulate abortions within their borders.

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**11th Annual Writers’ Conference Held**

Tom Kimmel was the featured artist for the 2012 Writers’ Conference that was held on April 26, 2012, in the Aerospace Training Center on the Decatur campus. Kimmel's music, poetry, and stories invite his listeners toward a sweet introspection, making for a curious depth of feeling that often surprises them.

He is one of those unique singer-songwriters whose heartfelt artistry with words and music is both genre-crossing and timeless. Many of his compositions have been covered by a host of major artists including Linda Ronstadt, Johnny Cash, Joe Cocker, Shawn Colvin, Waylon Jennings, the Stray Cats, Randy Travis, and the Spinners.

A graduate of the University of Alabama, Tom was born in Memphis and raised in rural south Alabama.

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**You Decide**

*By Emily Peck*

You Decide is a weekly column written by the writer’s club. This week’s column was written by Emily Peck. Emily is a member of the writer’s club and is a junior majoring in journalism.

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Tom Kimmel with Calhoun student Kianna Cox, who presented him with her painting that was inspired by his song “Never Saw Blue Like That”.

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Sound of Glory
Jonathan Bosse

Dreadlocks
Rebekah Comeaux

No Name
Kelly Parker

I See You
Amberly Reese
Hello Kitty
Tammy Tanner

June at Canyon Lake Park
Charles Smith

Kiss Me
Tamara Junjulas

Tonto
Brooke Alexander

ninoz de azul
Matthew Gasca
Hard Times
Sarah Laughmiller

Lover Of The Night
Lindsay Blankenship

Seeing like a camera
Tabatha Thomas

Hugo Monochromatic
Hugo Ocampo