Connections

a literary magazine
by DeVry & Chamberlain Students
Addison Campus
July 2012
See YOUR work in print!

We are seeking submissions for the next issue of *Connections*.

If you have any poems, short stories, essays, memoirs or other writings that you would like to see published, submit as a Word attachments to one or both of these mailboxes:

- mdufresne@devry.edu
- rlawrence@devry.edu

We also accept drawings and photographs and other artwork.

Please include your full name, telephone number, and email address with your submission.

We look forward to your *Connections* submissions!

Bob Lawrence
Michael Dufresne
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2011 D’ARTS STORY CONTEST WINNERS

1ST PLACE:
  Walking in the Silent Footsteps of
  the Heroes at Monte Cassino, by Andrew Seidler

2ND PLACE:
  Stone, by Wei Jin
  &
  Seven-Up with a Pink Straw, by Alexis Cardelli
Morning
by
Donny Ortiz

A basketball hoop
nailed loosely
on someone’s garage,

Loose gravel
on the unkempt pavement
crackling from every step,

The overstuffed garbage can
about to explode
if one more bag is stuffed in,

The squirrels effortlessly
hopping from one neighbor’s fence
to the other,

The barking dogs
that seem to hear you
from a block away—

The alley,
where one’s day begins
with a slow careful exit from the garage,

Intense focus
not to scrape the sides of the garage
while turning the wheel to exit in one try,

The pause
right before you hit the button
to close the garage door,

One deep breath and you are off
to face another day
where nothing has been written yet,

And the unknown is faced head on.

Photograph by Robbie Carter
A Day in the Life of George Krejci
by
Marianne Krejci

The sun was setting on the northwest side of Chicago when George Krejci left work. As he stepped out into the frigid night, he bundled his coat around himself. A few snow flurries landed on the already blanketed town. George turned left down the familiar road and started his walk home.

As George walked he thought about his day. Work was the usual affair—it was difficult and tiring working at the factory—but his wife, Gene, had made him a superb lunch. He was meeting his son, Leon, and his fiancée for dinner in an hour. But George was old, so there was no way of rushing, especially with the sidewalks coated in ice.

George had lived in this neighborhood all his life, and it was like it never changed. Even when he returned home from his war draft, the city looked exactly the same. Sure, there were more and taller skyscrapers in the city, but all the important aspects, at least to George, hadn’t changed. The old Austrian couple still ran the butcher shop; the pet shop still had the mural of a jungle on the side wall. The sidewalks were still full of cracks, and Mrs. Kowalski still sold the most delicious homemade perogies during Lent. The only change now was the Christmas lights that hung on everybody’s roof or around their door.

George was walking past the grocery store when he saw two elderly women, probably older than he was, walking toward him. They were bent against the harsh winds and each carried two shopping bags. He wasn’t going to pay them any mind until one of them spoke to him.

“Excuse me,” the older of the two said through her babushka. “Can you spare minute?”

They can barely even speak English, George thought. “Yes?”

“I give you dollar if you help me carry my groceries,” the woman said, holding out her hand. She had a heavy Polish accent.

George thought for a moment. He finally spoke. “I give you dollar if I don’t help you carry groceries.” And with that he turned and walked away, leaving the woman standing
bewildered, while her friend’s chuckles carried into the night.

George walked five more blocks. He didn’t even need to think about where he was going; his feet directed him in the right direction. That was what happened when you lived in the same place all your life. Before his time serving in World War II, George lived with his mother and father. When he came back and his father had passed away, he moved back in with his mother to keep her company. Even when he married Jean, he only moved a few blocks away.

George’s children were all grown. His firstborn, Camille, was already married. She married a soldier that she had met in Germany. It was a shock to the whole family. And now his son was getting married! To a girl that he worked with at the old people’s home. Actually, George was quite fond of Kathryn. She fit in nicely with the family. He had a feeling that his wife, however, did not feel the same way. *Ab, well, can you blame her?* George thought. *She doesn’t want to let her little boy go.*

George was so immersed in his thoughts that he didn’t hear the footsteps behind him.

“Give me your wallet.”

George stopped dead. So this was what it was like to be mugged? It wasn’t so bad.

“No,” George said.

The mugger stared incredulously. He walked around George so that he was facing him, and blocking his path. He couldn’t have been more than twenty-five. He wore a black knit
hat and it looked as if his face was fixed in a permanent scowl. He wore jeans and a brown leather jacket.

“Excuse me?” the mugger asked.

George waited silently. Then the mugger pulled a gun out of a holster hidden by his jacket and pointed it at George’s head.

“Do you know what this is?” he asked.

George didn’t have time for this. He had five dollars in his wallet and he was going to meet Leon and Kathryn for dinner in twenty minutes. Furthermore, George was a World War II veteran. He had fought and killed plenty of Japanese soldiers. He had even been shot through the top of the helmet once before. He had been taught not to fear death. This? This was nothing.

“If you’re gonna shoot me,” George said, “just shoot me.”

The mugger stared in disbelief. He apparently had never gotten this reaction before. George simply looked at him. The mugger took a few nervous steps backwards, and then suddenly ran away.

That’ll teach ‘em, George though, and he continued on his way home, while snow flurries fell softly around the town.
Walking in the Silent Footsteps of the Heroes at Monte Cassino

by

Andrew Seidler

How many times in life do we ever have the opportunity to walk along the same physical path that a parent may have walked along many years before? What if that walk was actually an insurmountable and fiercely bloody battle for freedom fought by soldiers who were displaced from their own homeland, but gave their hearts and lives in defense of another foreign land that was not their own. That is what my father went through as a young man, having seen so many of his fellow Polish soldiers give every ounce of their souls to fight Hitler’s Nazi troops on May of 1944, in what would become one of the most significant European battles of World War II.

Such a gripping irony in a way, for a battle that was fought at the mountaintop Monte Cassino Monastery in Italy, on the outskirts of the town of Cassino where monks would normally live a peaceful life of prayer and dedication to their faith. While visiting my wife’s family in Italy in 2006, I went to see this landmark monastery battle site, the Polish Memorial cemetery, a visit that would turn into a personal pilgrimage, and, oh yes, to see the red poppy flowers.

So as the saying goes, “When in Rome . . .” and that’s where we first went to visit with my wife’s family. Ah, beautiful Roma! Unfortunately, we didn’t have time to stop at Monte Cassino on our first pass, although I could see it at a distance from the highway. As time went on, there was a feeling that welled up inside of me that grew with each passing day during our visit, an inexplicable feeling of needing to be there, as if some unknown force were pulling me there. A few days later I was able to convince Enzo, my brother-in-law, to take us on a day’s outing since it was a quite a bit of a drive from Napoli where they lived. I was full of anticipation, like a child knowing he is going to the circus. I would learn so many things the following day . . . and also feel the walk of agony in my heart as I learned what sacrifices were made by so many men who were not “on vacation” in those 62 years before I even stepped
foot on what I now consider hallowed ground. The same ground my father walked on so long ago.

When we did arrive there, I truly fell in love with the quaint town of Cassino. It had a certain small town coziness to it, with well kept homes, and small shops that felt welcoming. As we passed through town you could see the monastery at the top of the mountain—a mountain that seemed foreboding, and at times even menacing, because of the sheer immenseness it had. From the base of the mountain, it took another 45 minutes of many winding roads that circumnavigated the mountain to reach the top. All along the way and sprinkled along the roadside were these unique flowers that looked like large four leaf clovers but were a vibrant red, and I marveled at how colorful they were. I would learn their significance soon enough.

As we got out of the car we could see for miles around. Such beauty surrounded us. Now the monastery stood before us: a massive building, impeccably landscaped and looking more like a Roman fortress silently holding in her treasures. I looked around for a moment and thought how incredibly challenging it would have felt to scale this mountain equipped with full military gear, and the enemy shooting at you from above. Now every step I took felt heavier as if to slow me down for some reason and force me to take the time to fully absorb the surroundings. I yielded to the inner force that was preparing me as to what to expect next.

Beyond the monastery and to the west was a long tree-lined walkway with lots of stairs as well that led to the British and Polish cemetery. There were several families with their children there speaking Polish. Now I felt the force that compelled me initially much more, and much deeper with a feeling of breathless anticipation as I approached a huge cemetery representing all the fallen liberators of that mountaintop. I stopped for a moment, frozen in time and also sorting my feelings. The force that held me let go and filled me with reverence of what was before me. As I turned to read a marker highlighting the months of battle 62 years ago, I noticed a distant cross on a far ridge. It was not accessible by foot. To the best of my knowledge from what my dad had told me, that ridge was where many of his fellow Polish soldiers in his
platoon had died. I felt tears welling up. These were the men who fought bravely to secure victory at all costs. Through my dad I had found and connected my own heritage with these men that I never knew, but I also felt that somehow I was grounded to the final footsteps they would have taken on this earth. Although the monastery was heavily damaged by American bombing runs before the Polish Army’s liberation of that mountaintop, the German forces still survived deep inside. Eventually the German soldiers surrendered to the unrelenting Polish infantry’s advance. How I wish I could have had the opportunity to meet some of these brave men who fought shoulder to shoulder alongside my dad.

Today the monastery is completely restored to its original beauty. The late afternoon sun in the west and blue sky above made it a perfect picture of serenity. As I turned to leave the cemetery, I stopped to read a plaque. I now knew the significance of the red poppy flowers, and again I was moved to tears. The red poppies signified the Polish blood that was shed on that very soil during battle. Another marker read this moving tribute (translated): "We Polish Soldiers, For Our Freedom and Yours, Have Given Our Souls to God, Our Bodies to The Soil of Italy, and Our Hearts to Poland.”

I promised myself I would bring back something special for my dad during that visit. I had a couple of empty plastic film containers which I filled with the soil of Monte Cassino, and I picked several red poppies and put them in a book to preserve them. When I came back home I made a plaque for my dad containing a photo montage of the monastery and the cemetery, along with the war memorial photos we took during our visit in London. In the middle of the montage were the red poppies and a small clear container of soil. My dad was never back there ever since that battle, and since he was 85 years old in 2006, the best way was to bring a part of Monte Cassino back to him. He was truly surprised and deeply touched.

For his service in the Polish Army serving under British command, my dad was awarded the Monte Cassino Cross, along with the Monte Cassino Medal. This was only one of the many campaigns he was in throughout the many frontline battles he fought during World War II, but it probably was one of the most memorable in his life and in history. My dad will
turn 91 years old this year in December, and the montage still hangs prominently in my parent’s living room, and a glass case with all his medals sits directly across from it on a table. Whenever I visit my parents’ home in Florida, I never fail to transfix my stare at that montage . . . It holds a deep respect from me, knowing that somehow I was able to connect with a part of history that was well before my time, but also knowing that I will be able to carry that legacy over to my children and the future generations to come. This is the only way that we as a human race, striving for peace, can assure that the memory of all of these brave men who fought and died valiantly did not die in vain . . . May they all rest in peace.

In Memoriam:
Zbigniew (“Ziggie”) Seidler

Photo by Mohammed Ifran Hussaini
Every time I started studying at a new place, I would tell myself, “Never be shy to show myself, just like Stone.” Stone was one of my classmates in my freshman year in Beijing.

Before I met him at college, I was taught and influenced by Chinese traditional culture: Be modest, and do not show off in class. I naturally thought keep silent and follow the teacher would be the best way to comply with this tradition. Because most Chinese students are taught like this, our classes were always quiet.

The first class of my college life began in a cool summer morning. September in Beijing is supposed to be oppressive, but that morning it was raining. The air was refreshed by the smell of grass and dust. I was so excited about the upcoming new life that I got up early to wait outside the classroom with my roommates. We were talking about our miserable high school life when a boy started walking towards us. He smiled at everyone with his head leaning to his right shoulder. He looked into everyone’s eyes directly. When I looked into his eyes, I saw some abnormal sparks in there. He blinked his eyes very slowly and stood straight against the wall. I strongly felt the look on his face was different, but I couldn’t tell why. A few minutes later, our instructor, Lewis, an old lady from California, came to open the door. After settling down in my seat, I began searching for that strange boy. “Oh, he is there!” I spotted his grey backpack. He was sitting in the middle of the first row, still with his head leaning to the right side.

Unlike my former Chinese teachers who would start the class as soon as they finished self-introductions, Lewis asked volunteers to go up to the stage to do a self-introduction. I sat silently and watched around; all my classmates were doing the same. I knew this because we shared a common rule: Show respect and never be the first one to talk. The classroom was in dead silence. Suddenly, a resonant voice said, “Me!” It was that strange boy! I kept my gaze fixed upon him—he carefully put down his notebook, and slowly moved to the stage near the window. Everyone was waiting for his speech.
was as quiet as if time had stopped at that moment. The sun came out and shined through the window. He swallowed hard and started: “My name is Stone!” Each word was popped out from his mouth with full strength and full stop. “I like America, and I want to go to America three years later!” He continued, with a nod to every word he said. After a few seconds of silence, the classroom exploded with laughter.

“He must be a fool! Look at him!” the boy sat behind me laughed.

Stone stood still, looked at the whole class. He smiled, smiled with pride.

“Did he know people are laughing at him? What a strange man,” I thought in my mind.

Later in other classes, Stone was always the first one to answer the questions, even when he didn’t understand the question. He was the only one who would stop the teachers for questions, sometimes for some simple vocabulary question like “What is a rabbit?” Every time he started talking, the class would start laughing, but he would always smile back.

I doubted his strange reactions until one day I ran into him in front of the library. He stood beside his little red bike, with his eyes staring blankly on the ground.

“Hey, Stone!” I smiled at him and waved my hand before his eyes. He noticed my hand and smiled at me.

“Hi,” he replied with a tired voice.

“What happened? That does not sound like you!” I thought he always talked energetically.

“I…I…” He stopped with a sigh. “I used to think people laughed when I was speaking because they agreed with me. But recently some of them took photos of me when I was talking. They said I’m funny and my questions in class are stupid” He looked down with sorrow in his eyes.

“You know, you are braver than everyone in the class. You have the courage to express yourself. You don’t have to care about what others think, just be yourself.” I knew what I said may not help him, but I just wanted to comfort him.

“I know I am not clever. My father has been teaching me at home since I was eight and dropped out from the primary school.” He stopped and scratched his head. “I never studied English because my dad does not know English. He bought
several English books for me and I studied day and night for two months at home. He took me to visit many people and finally I could study here.” He focused on the black handle of his bike, and talked in a low voice like he was talking to himself.

We both stopped talking. I was shocked when he said he only studied English for two months! Most of us had been studying English since we were in junior high school. At that time, I believed the hearsay that he came to school by his little red bike at 5 o’clock in the morning and get back to the dorm until 12 p.m. He had worked so hard to prove himself and to realize his dream.

After that day, I never saw him in class again. All of us were curious about where he went as it was in the middle of the term. His roommate told us that he returned to the dorm late in the day I talked to him. He seemed to have an accident because his pants were tattered and his knees were rubbed. He said nothing to them, but they saw tear stains on his face.

Next days, Stone still did not show up in class. About a month later, I heard a familiar sound behind the studying lobby. I went close and found it was Stone that sitting on the bench beneath a white birch, engrossed in the book in his hand. He was reading a short story from our reading material with his typical powerful voice. At that moment, I felt I saw something magical. I saw the words he read were flowing in the wind. They flew through the campus and all the way to the blue sky. Even today, I can feel the power in his words.

At the beginning of our second year, our instructor told us Stone was expelled from the college because of his low attendance of class. Even though Stone left us, his spirit has influenced most of us. Our classes became alive and all the students were participating. We should thank him.

Finally I understood the different look on his face, the spark in his eyes. It was confidence and innocence that just belonged to him. He could persist in one thing just like Forest Gump. Maybe he would not be the smartest, but he is the bravest. I feel lucky to have known Stone. I learned so much from him: never be shy to express yourself.
Seven-Up with a Pink Straw
by
Alexis Cardelli

Of course my brother got shotgun because he was the oldest, and the rest of us were crammed in the back. Our faces were pressed against the windows as we people watched through the city, with “Lean on Me” by Bill Withers turned up as loud as possible. We were all singing along and laughing until I noticed my brother Nick starting to doze off. Nick was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes when he was only six and has dealt with it his entire life. I knew right away that something wasn’t right; I just had a bad feeling. I told my aunt that Nick needed to check his blood sugar because it was probably low.

“He’s fine, he’s just tired,” she told me.

Our car ride continued; we were finally getting close, well close enough to where we could at least see the huge Navy Pier sign. Everyone went back to having fun, except for me. I couldn’t stop worrying about Nick; his skin became really pale and he started sweating. I kept nudging his shoulder from behind, and he wasn’t responding. I started to shake him, still no response.

“Stop! We are almost there, can’t you just let him be until we get there?” my aunt asked.

I was starting to get frustrated with the fact that she wasn’t listening to me. I am with him everyday and have been by his side helping him with this diagnosis since I was three.

We began to pull into the parking garage and look for a parking space. I couldn’t handle being patient anymore.

“You need to call 911 right now and tell them we need help immediately! Nick is not okay!” I yelled.

By this point she finally listened because when she tried to wake him up, he was already unconscious. She pulled over and stopped the car right away. I jumped out and ran to his door. When I opened it I saw his kit lying on the floor by his feet. I picked it up and unzipped the pocket. I dug around until I found his glucose monitor and a clean test strip. I put the test strip in the monitor and waited for it to register. In the mean time I quickly cleaned, poked and squeezed his finger until there
was enough blood. I laid the test trip on his finger until the
blood was absorbed. As I watched the black dots go around in a
square on the screen, I prayed.

Then it beeped, and I will never forget the number I saw,
only 16. My heart stopped, I had never seen it go this low
before. I didn’t know if he was going to be okay, or if it was
already too late to help him.

I knew I was going to have to take control and give him
his emergency shot of glucagon. I grabbed the red glucagon
shot out of his kit as quickly as possible. There I was kneeling
on the parking garage floor with my brother’s life literally in my
hands. I stared down at the shot and thought about all of the
times my parents showed me how to prepare it. I did exactly as
I remembered. I opened the glucagon shot container and held
the syringe in one hand and the vial of glucagon in the other. I
plunged the water in the syringe into the vial, and mixed it
thoroughly until the liquid was clear and the vial contents were
absorbed. I then drew 1ml back into the syringe. I pinched his
thigh, held the needle straight up and down, and gave him the
shot.

After a few minutes, I saw two paramedics with their crisp
navy blue uniforms on, just coming out of the doors into the
parking garage. They ran toward us, one pushing a wheelchair,
and the other holding a huge first aid kit. When they arrived
they dragged Nick out of the car and placed him in the
wheelchair. We moved quickly back through the garage into
Navy Pier. I was running alongside of the paramedics, holding
my brother’s hand. Looking back, I saw my aunt and three
cousins running behind. We were going down this extremely
long hallway with beautiful mosaic artwork on both sides. I
remember looking down at Nick and seeing him with his eyes
partially open looking at the artwork as he was pushed through
the hallway. Once I saw him open his eyes I knew he was going
to be okay. I don’t think I have ever been more thankful for
something in my life.

We finally came across the door the paramedics were
looking for. It was a rather large door on the right side. When
we entered I looked around and it looked like any ordinary
hospital room: white walls on all sides with more paramedics
and nurses waiting for us to arrive.
They instantly gave him a Seven-Up with a pink straw to help increase his blood sugar. He wasn’t responding enough yet to where he could hold the can on his own, so there I was, holding it for him. After about five minutes he was snapping out of it, and began to sit up straight. He grabbed the can on his own, stopped drinking for few a seconds, and looked up.

“Lex, thanks for saving my life,” he said.

I don’t even know how to explain how I felt, I was so happy. I will never forget this day; my heart will be touched forever. I knew from this moment that I want to help others for the rest of my life, no matter what it takes.
The Music Shop
by
Barb Eichler

Where do the horns, the violins, the mandolins, and the whistles reside?
Where are the strings, the harmonicas, the harps, and the drums kept safe?
The little old shop, cowered by high rises,
Glitzy knick knacks, and rushing yellow cabs,
Stows its instruments, rhythms for
The special ear of only a few passers-by…
Directed by the invisible harmonics
Of a treasure-guarding bespeckled care-taker.

A March Day
by
Barb Eichler

The snow gently graces a March Chicago scene
Framing the city in an impressionistic still life.
Strolling people are caught in photo-shutter stillness.
The mists attenuate the sharp city edges.
All seems deep-dimensional, surreal.

The end of March in Chicago is January, December, or February??
Lost in time is this photo-shoot….
The grace endures.
The beauty remains real.
The snow stays perched, never falling…
Remains; still out of time;
    Remaining, remaining, remaining.
Wonder

by

Barb Eichler

Huggggggggggggggggggggggggg
Kissssssssssssssssssssssssssss
Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooo
Who said the poetry of love had to be in words.

A Song of Words

by

Barb Eichler

I have always loved words
But little did I know how much they mean.
I have always loved sounds
But I didn’t know how to unwrap their mystery.
I have always loved songs,
But I didn’t understand the cadences within.
Now I know a little of the mystery.
It comes from the pulse of ideas waiting to be written.
It comes from the music of the spirit of souls.
It comes from sibilance and richness of sound.
The meaning lies in the finding of it all.

[Professor Barb Eichler is the founder of the DeVry Addison campus D’Arts Council, which runs various literary and artistic activities, and supports Connections.]

“Simplicity”
Photograph by Dufresne
As I look down at the scars on my chest, I recall the worst week of my life. It seemed to be a normal Thursday morning in May of 2005 when I prepared for my trip to Ohio. I was a truck driver, and this day I was hauling a load of paper from Green Bay, Wisconsin, to Youngstown, Ohio. Little did I know that this trip would begin with a series of events that would change my life forever. I would have a heart attack while on this trip, six hundred miles from home, alone at a small truck stop in Ashland, Ohio.

My day started in my hometown of Peshtigo, Wisconsin. I was twenty minutes behind schedule, which didn’t matter because when I arrived in Green Bay forty-five minutes later, the load of paper was still in production. I tried to take a nap but was unable to, so I waited. Finally, after waiting for eight hour, my load was ready and I could start my trip. It was five o’clock in the afternoon, and I had to be in Ohio in the morning; it would be a long night. Perhaps I could grab an hour or two of sleep somewhere along the way.

I entered Illinois and shortly after began driving through Chicago. Big surprise: traffic was backed up for miles. As I entered Indiana, the traffic cleared and I was back to a normal pace. Indiana flew by and I entered Ohio. With only two hundred miles more to go, I realized it was two o’clock in the morning. Sleepiness began to set in, and after Columbus I had to pull over. As I tried to sleep, tornado sirens began to sound. I said a small prayer to God and covered my head with the pillow. The alarm clock went off. Had it been two hours already? With two hours of sleep and no time to spare, I continued on my way to Youngstown. I made it just in time and everyone was happy, but I was exhausted. I called my dispatcher and was assigned a rush pickup near Ashland, Ohio. After arriving in Ashland, I drove over to a truck stop where I was able to grab a sandwich and some sleep.

I had little trouble falling asleep even though the storm was still around and the winds were rocking the truck from side
to side. I woke up with this excruciating pain in my chest that traveled down my arm and into my hand. My family had some history of heart problems, and I had a pretty good feeling this must be what a heart attack felt like. Alone in my truck, hundreds of miles from home, I found myself on my knees, holding my chest in agony. I began to pray, asking God to forgive me of everything and telling Him that I’d see Him soon. As I waited to die, I felt my pulse racing and my heart pounding: boom, boom, boom.

As I sat there waiting, the thought came to me that my family and friends needed me. Uncertain of what to do, I called my mother, who had suffered a heart attack. She answered, fear-stricken by the sound of my voice. She confirmed that the pain I was having was most likely a heart attack. Just then the cell phone signal died. Knowing that I didn’t have much time, I called 911. The signal died again. Fearfully I dialed again. “Help, I’m having a heart attack.”

They asked, “Where are you?”

I replied, “I’m at a TA truck stop in Ashland, Ohio.” The signal died again. I called the fourth time straining to speak because of the pain and muttered, “Help.”

Mercifully, this time the phone kept its signal, and I was reassured that help was on its way.

The fire department ambulance arrived within a few minutes. Thank God! A few men helped me out of my truck and into the ambulance, where they gave me nitroglycerin pills. They informed me that the nitroglycerin pills would drop my blood pressure, and in just a few moments the pain became more bearable. In no time at all, I was at the hospital emergency room. By this time, the pain was minimal. The doctor ran a number of tests on me, and as I awaited the results, I saw that my mother had called a number of times. I called her to reassure her that I was okay and that I could call later.

The doctor returned in thirty minutes or so, only to say that he couldn’t find anything wrong, but wanted to keep me overnight for observation. Fearing this doctor may be incompetent, I replied, “I’m leaving.”

He tried to persuade me, but it was futile. After signing a release, I prepared to leave. The doctor gave me some nitroglycerin pills and told me to go to an emergency room if
the pain returned. A taxi returned me to my truck, and I began my trip home. Thankfully, the load I had picked up was going to my hometown.

I drove a few hours and almost made it to Chicago; needing some sleep, I pulled over. In fear of dying in my sleep, I prayed for God’s help, the nitroglycerin pills within reach. When I woke up, it was morning already, and with the nitroglycerin pills nearby, I continued home. Remnants of the pain from the day before remained as the day went by. In the back of my mind the thought of dying lingered. Finally, I made it home Saturday night. Being there helped relieve my fear, but I knew it was not over yet.

My family and friends all urged me to go to the hospital. Despite their urging, I waited until Monday morning to contact my doctor. He insisted that I go directly to the emergency room. The emergency room’s doctor’s diagnosis was stress, and as a preventive measure he advised I see a cardiologist. The next morning, still suffering from chest pain even when doing nothing other than just sitting or lying down, I went to the cardiologist. After running a few tests, he too told me that it was just stress and to come back the next morning for a stress test where I would run on a treadmill. I told him that I believed that would kill me, but he insisted.

The next morning I returned to the cardiologist and began the stress test. The running seemed not to bother me at all. Remarkably, I finished the entire test; exhausted from the workout, I sat down to rest. Following a few minutes of rest, the chest pain resumed. The doctor assured me that I was fine. Instead the pain intensified until it became totally unbearable. After seeing the level of pain I was in, the doctor decided to check me out further. The EKG results must have been serious because he immediately told the nurse to call an ambulance. Once again, I was administered nitroglycerin pills.

The ambulance took me to Green Bay, a forty-five minute ride, where other doctors were waiting for me. They instantly inserted a heart catheter in my chest so they could see what was going on. The result was that I needed open heart surgery. They put me on standby for the life-saving surgery I so desperately needed. The next morning, five days after the first heart attack, they performed the surgery that finally relieved the
pain. Following a very challenging twelve weeks of recovery, I am back to an almost normal life with only a few exceptions.

Daily I see the scars that remain, which conjure up thoughts and fears: “Will I wake up tomorrow?” “Will I grow old to be there for my family?” “Will I see my son grow up?” My prayers today are to see my son grow to be a healthy adult. I’ve learned through this trial not to trust doctors fully and perhaps not to be so stubborn. The nitroglycerin pills, unused for years, are still nearby.
Tree House

by

Paul Bartek

Having a tree house
is the same feeling
as a teenager getting
his first car.

Crumpled up drawings,
ants swarming on the floor,
parents nowhere in sight,
no rules—a 5x6 fort
of freedom and imagination,
the walls a canvas
of our thoughts and bad graffiti.

We are in a skyscraper looking
out into the world.

“Whose tree?”
Photograph by Dufresne
Night Music

Dark nights come and go,
as the moon lights
shining between stars hiding
in the clouds
watching over as
nights go by.

I am the black moon in early winter.
The wolf’s howl echoes in the frosty air
White air from the wolf’s mouth
rises against the deep blue night.
Owoooo.
A deer is frozen on the black pavement,
white headlights shine,
the deer takes a breath in the frosty air
as the wolf howls
Owoooo.
The deer is caught in the white headlights.
Winter is unforgiving.

I am the black and blue eye of a woman
behind a veil of fine mesh.
I am the shining moon up in the
sky in the dark summer night.

I am an imploding star.
Whenever I think of candles
I think of tears and cry in
the shadows that whisper,
survive . . .

I am dying smoke
I am fine black dust
blank winter
hold on
survive

I am a blank page, drip, drip, writing
in a park until too late too blue.

Impossible. Just one word,
or might be two. Break
it down in parts
and you spell I’m possible!
Everything is possible
Nothing is impossible.
Impossible. Just a word.
A word with great meaning.

I am the stone that is a blank
screen, a projection that sits in
the blue ocean which rests silently
awaiting to be picked up
and taken away from its watery companion.

Photograph by Hiral Torres
Night Music was compiled by Professor Bob Lawrence from poems written by students in HUMN-303F during the 2011 Spring B Session. The poems were written during a workshop conducted by visiting poets Tom Roby and Janene Ravesloot.

Photograph by Hiral Torres
Waiting
by
Sandy Boffa

I waited 19 years to find you Don, and you waited 36 years to meet me, I’m glad we waited for each other. Neither of us knew each others’ ages, by the time we realized that he was 36, and I was 19, it was too late, we were already hopelessly in love. We didn’t wait, we got married after knowing each other less than a year, in fact, after our first date, I went home and told my mother that I thought I had found the man I was going to marry, she wanted me to wait, I didn’t listen.

We had to wait 2 months after our first son was born to hold him because he was so tiny and fragile at only 2 pounds. The Doctors gave him no chances to make it, but we waited. We had to wait another month, which felt like a lifetime, before he could come home, but come home he did, all 4 pounds of him, it’s good that we waited, Dan, he’s my man.

We waited long and many months hoping for another baby to join our family, and when our Danny was about 18 months old, we were able to say “ciao bellissimo Angela” to Leah Marie, our first daughter. She was the apple of Don’s eye, and she quickly wrapped both of us around her tiny baby finger. Don used to sing “Sugar, oh Honey Honey, that adorable line from the popular 1960’s song by the Archies. To this day she is still my “Cinnamon Girl” we were so relieved we were done waiting for her!

I waited long hours for Don to come home in those early years, because he often worked 2 jobs so I could stay home with our children as much as possible. When he got home he was so tired, but then he’d sleep 5 hours and turn around to start the next day. He never took sick days, he never shirked his responsibility to his family, ever. That was one of the many things that made me quite happy to wait for him. We celebrated almost every holiday, birthday and special family event on a
different day than what the calendar said they were because, young Chefs have to work those holidays. We waited to celebrate with him, and occasionally, even brought the party to him!

We waited and worked, and finally we got a very special gift, our third child, another miracle, Katherine Faith. Right from the start she understood waiting, after all, she was born after two high maintenance children. She was an amazingly calm child coming from such type A parents like Don and I. I think she knew I was waiting for a baby like her! She’s one of the few people I love most on the planet next to Don. She was the most delightful baby a mom could ever ask for, she is our Sunshine, our only sunshine I wish I didn’t have to wait so long to meet her; she was and is smart, funny, talented, definitely worth the wait!

And then, after waiting several more years, Don and I got our first restaurant. We prepared the menus and the inventory, opened the doors of the Santa Fe Grille and waited for the customers to come. We didn’t wait long, because Don had a talent for food like Picasso had talent with paint and canvas. There was nothing he cooked that didn’t taste wonderful, from his Pasta gravy to his famous slow cooked beef briskets, and home-made Danishes, love was the ingredient that always flavored his recipes and had them lining up outside the doors for more.

During this time our precious baby boy Philip arrived on the scene. We didn’t know we were waiting for him, but this welcome surprise showed up anyway, he waited to be born while his daddy and I, cooked and cleaned and waited tables. When he was born Don and I agreed, we had waited long enough, our family was now complete. We waited to watch them at all their various sports, and scouting and school activities. It was the thing in life Don always waited for, to see his kids shine. The kids waited at the kitchen table while Don cooked each one of them their own custom breakfast orders. They would still be waiting now if they thought I was going to do that for them when Don wasn’t there.
Don and I waited, and were blessed in knowing all of our kids walked across the stage to get their high school diplomas. All the insanity of having multiple teenagers in our home at the same time was worth the wait to see them make a successful start to their lives. He was so proud, he would try to hide it, but he cried with joy with so many of those happy milestones our kids achieved. I was there, I saw it, yep, he cried like a baby!

When he told me he had to see the Doctor, I waited for the results. We waited many hours for news from the Doctors that was only increasingly difficult to hear. I waited 8 hours for him to come out of that first surgery in Nov. 2007, the Don I knew and loved was never coming back. I waited to find out how I could help get him through his difficulties after things went wrong. I waited for test results, for answers to why he had so many problems, the doctors tried, but in truth, no really good answers ever came, only the doctors advise to make him as comfortable as I could. So I waited for him to get well enough, and I brought him home. I knew our time was going to be short, the doctors warned me, but I was not willing to wait that time out without him as close as possible to me. This man brought me coffee in bed almost every day of our married life for 23 years, then I guess it was my turn. He loved me and gave me the absolute best he had to give, it wasn’t too much to ask for me to help him now that he needed me, in fact, it was my honor, I felt fortunate that I had the ability to take care of him, I even started nursing school so I could learn how to do the best job possible to help him. So I waited until the doctors said I could, and I brought him home. He stayed with me for three years, waiting every week day for me to come home from nursing school just to see me, I waited with him while we watched all his favorite movies, listen to all his favorite music, read his favorite book, the Bible.
I had certainly hoped I would have to wait much longer than this to deliver this eulogy. My wait was cut far shorter than I wanted it to be. But my heart told me that Don had waited long enough. His pain and difficulties were wearing him out and he couldn’t wait any more. We waited together for 27 years. We waited through good and not-so-good times, but we waited together. In the end I think it’s a beautiful thing to be able to have the privilege to wait with someone like him. I am blessed to have known him and had that much time together. He was handsome, and kind, and as generous of a man as you would ever meet. He never waited or hesitated to help me, his kids or anyone else that needed it, he was a man of action; he made me look pretty lazy. He wasn’t a perfect man, I have only heard of one man that was, He’s not here either, at least in the bodily form, his name is Jesus. That’s the man Don was waiting for, the one he tried to imitate, the one he loved, more than me, and I was glad of it. Don’s with Him now havin’ a little talk, no longer waiting for all those answers to the questions we ask in this life. Don is standin’ tall and proud and dancing for joy, probably to some James Brown and starting the preparations for the great banquet, heaven’s lucky to have such a great chef to help them with all the cooking!

I’ll miss him, our amazing children Dan, Leah, Katie, and Phil will miss him. He’s gone from us far too soon, and we’ll

Photograph by Monica Sumara
miss waiting for him to do all those things that Dad’s get to do for their grown children. We’ll miss him being able to be a grandpa someday. I’ll miss him laughing at me because I talk too much, we’ll miss his unbelievably delicious cooking. We’ll all miss so many things. But we’ll never miss loving him, he made sure we’d always have that, so we’ll all be here waiting to see you again someday my sweet husband, we love you and while we’re waiting, I promise we will do our best to be the spiritual, humorous, loving, generous, hard working and honest people you were waiting for us all to be, I hope we make you proud. Tell Jesus and His Daddy that me & the kids all say hi!! Can you ask him to send a few extra angels to watch over all of us and keep us company? Our home won’t ever be the same without you, but our hearts are so much better because of you. I love you Don, thank you for waiting through you all too short life with me, it was an honor and privilege!

Photograph by Benjamin Lugo
My younger brother, who looked like a shorter version of me only with a slightly rounder face, and I fought often when we were younger. Usually it was over small things that would seem insignificant now. Such was the case this time. We had just gotten back from the store with a new toy that our mom bought for us. It was a shiny plastic sword with a golden lion’s head for the pommel, which is the bottom of a sword’s hilt, or handle. I took it and ran up the stairs.

“Hey, come back with that, it’s mine,” my brother yelled after me. “I picked it out.”

I shouted back, “Never! I’m the one who got Mom to buy it for us. You should have been faster and grabbed it before me.”

I ran into the upstairs bathroom, which was in the process of being painted, and locked the door. I could hear my brother’s feet pounding as he ran down the hall. Within minutes he was at the bathroom door. He began pounding on it as hard as he could.

“Open up,” he demanded.

“Why should I?”

“You better open up, or else…” Tauntingly I questioned, “Or else, what? You gonna get Mom?”

“Yeah,” he said meekly.

“You always have to be a crybaby, don’t you?”

That must have struck a nerve with him. He let out a loud scream and hit the door twice more.

“You can’t break down the door, you know. You’re way too weak.”

“Then I’ll just bust the lock”

“How? It’s stronger than the door.”

“I’ll use this penny.”

I began to ask him what he expected to do with a penny but I stopped when I remembered something about the lock. There was a slot on the outside that if you put something like a coin into and turned, the lock would open. I quickly realized I
had nowhere I could go. I was trapped in the bathroom. So I
did the next best thing and hid in the bathroom closet. I took
the sword out of its packaging and prepared to attack him with
it. The lock clicked and the door creaked as it opened. He
went directly to the closet.
“I know you’re in there,” he said.
“Not anymore,” I cried as I flung the door open.
I hit him twice with the sword as I ran past him. I think
he was too shocked to know what to do. I took advantage of
the time I had gained and hid the sword under my bed so that
he couldn’t get it. When he had recovered from his shock, he
charged out after me.
With a scowl he asked, “Where is it?”
“Where is what?” I questioned.
“The sword,” he said bluntly.
“I have no clue what you are talking about. I’ve never had
this sword you speak of. Are you sure you didn’t imagine it?”

Then something very surprising happened. My brother
tackled me. I was unprepared when he hit me and we began to
head towards the ground. The fall to the floor seemed like it
was in slow motion. The combination of impacting the ground
and being crushed as my brother fell on top of me sent a wave
of pain through my body. My adrenaline surged and I became
very angry as I began to defend myself. Then arms and legs
flailed violently as kicks were attempted and punches were
thrown. A few of my punches connected with his head and I
was able to knee him a few times in the side. I took a few left
hooks and elbows from him, though. After all this commotion,
my mother came up to investigate. She was not happy with the
situation she found. She looked like a giant from our position
on the floor and her hair, which covered her eyes and had been
dyed a nearly black shade of brown, only served to make her
look more menacing. The scowl she wore caused deep creases
to form in her forehead as her brows drew closer together.
At the top of her lungs she screamed, “Cut it out!”
We stopped instantly.
“Where is the sword? I want it this instant. Neither of
you will be allowed to play with it after this little incident. Why
can’t you two just behave and play nicely?”
I went and got the sword out for her. She ripped it from my hands and marched off down the stairs.

“Come with me, Steven. I’m keeping you two separate until you can calm down.”

I hung my head and followed her down the stairs. I spent the rest of that night, or at least until it was bedtime, downstairs on the couch watching TV with my father.

A couple days later the sword was on the dining room table. Next to it was another sword just like it. I helped my brother open it and we ran outside to fight. This time it was all play, though. In the end, all of our conflicts made us a little closer after we worked through them.
The Adventure to Nowhere

by

Charles Birdsong

It was late in the evening, after my father had gone to sleep. I was lying on the couch relaxed, but with nothing to do. I tried to think of anything that could give me a little thrill, to spike the already dull evening. I paced around the living room for around five minutes just glaring at the empty space in front of me, when, suddenly it hit me. I will go the one place that was forbidden and that I had always wanted a slight glance at—the Attic. So I immediately headed out towards the garage.

Once I started to peak the door open, this high pitched squeak noise sounded off, which immediately made me worried; a door that should have otherwise taken five seconds to open felt like it took an hour. Finally, with sweat dripping off my stressed head I was in the garage and one step closer to the prize. As I walked down the two steps that came directly after the door I noticed that there was yet another problem, opening the attic door; the door was placed on the ceiling ten feet above my five foot figure, and had a rope that let down a set of stairs. So I slowly looked around for any object that could sustain me, and help me reach the un-extended rope. Finally I found a ladder hidden behind a cluster of storage boxes and other miscellaneous items. Silently I placed the ladder in reaching distance of the rope and proceeded to clasp my little hands on it. As I courageously pulled and tugged on the rope, it did not seem to budge an inch. After many failed attempts the rope was free and I was one step closer to seeing the mysterious layout of the attic.

I moved the ladder that I used to gain access to the rope back to the exact location I found it, and silently, walked over to the rope to let down the series of stairs opening the sight of the attic. As I climbed up each step of the attic’s stairs my heart raced faster, and faster, and faster, until I found myself not even worrying about the attic but my father sleeping in the other room. Once I was at the top all I could see was the dark and awful smell seeping from the opening of the attic. I felt around everywhere for any sign of a light switch, but it seemed that all I could feel was wood, and the dust laying on every
surface. Finally, I found the hanging switch to the light, and with a slight pause… turned on the light.

As I gazed around the room, starting from right to left, I saw absolutely nothing. It blew my mind that all these years my father had forbidden me to even look at the attic, when, THERE WAS NOTHING THERE! So I raced to get down and put the stairs away, when, guess who is standing at the bottom of the stairs, MY FATHER! The only words he muttered were, “Was it enjoyable?”

Photograph by Dufresne
friend
in an easily shattered cage
locked up by your own inhibitions
but no actions subdued
when you pour
and drink
and smoke
and untame yourself
your soul cries,
who put me here?
who put me here?
why, you.

friend
in a snowglobe
your world is so frail from out here
yet so strong when within
i still do not know why you
march
march
march
through the fallacy of a snowfall
through the closed winter world
you trap yourself
by building walls which are see through
yet still, in circles, you
march
march
march

friend
in a crystal ball
paranoid
scared
guarded
artillery
masked attacks
bombs fallout napalm explosions
rockets o'er the land of the free
so...
are you free?
all they did was
breathe.
nurture.
assist.
familiarize.
love.
so that they may understand you
so that
you
may understand you

friend
in a clear box
it is not bulletproof nor is it plastic
you know this
but no one seems to touch you
... sorry.

bom
bom
bom
go the wardrums
i made excuses for you.
left
right
left
i marched with you.
pop
ping
bang
i used my shield to protect you.
click
crack
BOOM
you did not let the tear fall
for this casualty in YOUR battles
boom
boom
BOOM!
there is a world beyond this globe,
and i have found it.

but at what cost?

i threw a few rocks
and your house collapsed around you.

friend
in a glass house
i did not mean to shatter it
i did not mean to leave you
broken
as you
quietly
superglued the pieces of your crystal fortress
as you
quietly
slipped away without a word
as you
quietly
believed that you left me

dear friend
i have found you again
seemingly changed
seemingly happy
but as i gaze upon you
i still see
millions of you
through the cracked and glued glass
and the artillery
masked attacks
bombs fallout napalm explosions
rockets o'er the land of the free
so that i may fall
so that i may pay

but today
i have not a single pebble in my palm
nor an intention
nor a desire

as you scheme
within your globe
reality sees a distortion
a million you’s from the outside
but there is only
one

as i walk away
from the million man circle march
from the battlefields
from the forlorn, barren halls
of your personal iwo jima
i whisper

don't forget to dream

Photograph by Zach Agnew
Three Poems

by

David Endres

Different Walks of Life

Through black and white I go
in knee deep slush and snow
without my boots I trod
in the morning and evening nod

They see me with eyes deep
my locket they want to keep
but with it I may barter
to keep me with my father

With troubles at my back
to be weary of their attack
the pocket in which its hid
a locket my father did

My father with whom I stay
now helps me with my day
to their places of work I go
my father holds me above
the snow

Unfulfilling Drink

With time I trek and go
to the marching beats I flow
into the carting train
oh please just let it rain

My thirst now at its peak
the outlook is now bleak
to breath, how it drains
oh please just let it rain

For days it never goes
this train ride standing holds
my legs now under strain
oh please just let it rain

Out of the car I streak
the air here how it reeks
the showers will ease the pain
oh please just let it rain
Escape

The boots they trod
my worries grow
they strike with resound
inside this ghetto

Is it my turn
will it be me
with this death
I will be free

Death comes for some
it comes and goes
like the striking clock
or the falling snows

My blood it pours
like rivers flow
my freedom won
by the pistol’s blows

Photograph by Andrea Samayoa
The Last Hug

by

Erika Medina

Warm and sweet,
As if it was the end.
Last hug my father
Would ever give me again.

Seemed he knew what was coming
Even though he never shared.
As his face showed his sobbing,
We also knew what was coming.

The man who was always so strong
Was now giving his daughter the last hug.
As sad as it made me feel,
I knew nothing could heal.

That was the last day
My father and I would play.
Warm and sweet was the hug
That in my memory will stay.

The poems by David Endres and Erika Medina were written during a study of the Holocaust in Professor Schumacher’s ENGL-135 class.

Photograph by Hiral Torres
The Terrible Fate of Adam Keene

by

Ernest Lundgren

It was two years ago that the sky turned red. The portals that opened sparsely at first had of late populated our kingdom like sores on a leper.

Within these gates came denizens of some unknown world. No matter the creature, be it the buffalo sized hounds with greasy black skin and rows of sharp teeth lining their hammer-shaped heads, to the enormous slithering eyeballs that make their way upon tenuous barbed tentacles; all of these monstrous invaders, some more alike to pieces of abstract art than creations of the gods, were covered in open wounds oozing with a pestilence that quickly ravaged home and countryside.

Knights and guards could do no better than to die alongside their lords and families as the seemingly endless supply of abominations poured in from this strange world. It was Adam Keene who decided it was time to face the coming apocalypse. Suited in blessed vestments from the town priest and equipped with his father’s jeweled sword, he approached a portal that had sat relatively inactive for weeks now.

Watching Adam enter, I felt both admiration for his bravery and pity of the desperation in a gambit sure to cost his life. What few survivors that existed frequented the portal nightly in wait for our hero to emerge, but it was a month later that I realized he already had.

In the burning pile of detestation from this week’s monster corpses I saw him. His body bloated and teeth jutting in a twisted snarl. Adam Keene had seen horrors of other worldly design, and unable to face them, became that which he sought to destroy.
Another year come and gone. 
Another 365 days past. 
Another 8,760 hours elapsed. 
Another 525,600 seconds spent.

Spent. 
Enjoyed. 
LIVED.

Time is no longer wasted. 
Time is no longer taken for granted.

The second hand is moving smoothly. 
The look at the clock no longer constant.

The absence of dread. 
The lack of self-pity. 
The complete depletion of negativity.

2008 was a year of change. 
A year of finding myself. 
A year of learning to love myself. 
A year of focusing on my strengths and forgetting and forgiving my flaws.

2008 was the year in which my fight paid off. 
This past year I realized my potential. 
The impact I can have on another person.

This past year I took what the world gave me...and flipped it. 
Took the cards I was dealt and played the best hand I possibly could.

I dried all the tears that once flowed down my face drowning me and decided I was not going to cry anymore.
No longer am I cowering and choosing to be a victim.

I am a survivor.
And I will repeat it over and over until I am blue in the face.
The way I wrote it over and over in that notebook sitting there
until my hand ached.

Survivor.
Survivor.
Survivor.

Because that's what I am.
And nobody can tell me different.

2008.
The first year I appreciated every breath I took.

2008.
The year in which my life truly began.

Here's to those who doubted me.
Here's to those "Hard days that made me."
Here's to those "Hard nights that shaped me."
Here's to the new year.
Here's to living every day from here on out to the fullest.
Here is to life.
Happy New Year.

Photograph by Angelina Todorva