

PRISONER EXPRESS NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2008

WELOCOME TO another edition of Prisoner Express. This issue will feature the writing done by Prisoner Express members through a creative writing class taught by Katherine, a Prisoner Express Intern. We could only accept 40 members in this class due to cost and time considerations, but it is my hope that this writing and some of the other writing done by PE members will resonate with you the reader, and indeed cause you to consider picking up a pen and writing down some of your own thoughts.

As we enter our 7th year of providing resources to prisoners, it becomes obvious how limited we are in being able to send things in. I am always worried about censorship of materials if we err in the content. What I know we can send in is the inspiration to reflect on life and the encouragement to reflect on your experiences and to share those thoughts through the written word. We hope this issue will inspire a few more of you to send submissions into the program, and in return we can print and mail them to the few thousand of you that have joined PE.

Of course we still will send in our other units of study. I am excited to share with you some of our upcoming new programs later in this issue. If you are receiving this for the first time you will notice there is a sign up sheet with a listing of all the programs. You can either copy it or cut out the original. Fill it in and let us know what programs you would like to receive. I ask all of you to sign up for all programs that interest you, but not to just fill in for anything. Due to high demand we have raised our book mailing program to 200 packages a month. The extra expense is worth it when I realize how

many of you are waiting for your book package. The extra money has to come from somewhere and I have not yet raised much money this budget year. A generous donation helps us mail our material to you, but as we grow I need to find still more revenue. By taking only the programs you are most interested in, it cuts down our expenses and allows more of you to participate in our programs.

Again speaking to you who are new to this organization, my name is Gary and I coordinate the activities of the PE program. We began 7 years ago by mailing one box of books to Danny in Texas. His letter illuminated for me how valuable books are to prisoners. I thank him for taking the time to show me something that is now so obvious. He has through his writings inspired me to continue growing this organization. He is not alone. Many of you have shared your thoughts and stories through letters and let me know that this program is valuable to you. That knowledge inspires me to continue providing interesting and hopefully inspiring information and educational opportunities for you. I am able to do this with the help of community and

student volunteers as well as college work study students.

The PE program is sponsored by the Durland Alternatives Library. We are a small library on the Cornell University campus. Cornell is a world class university that breathes a tremendous amount of vitality into the small upstate NY city of Ithaca. We are a public library, open to everyone, and it is that status, that allows us the privilege of sending you books. Our collection focuses on alternative perspectives on current



social issues. We have a great book, DVD, CD, video and periodical collection. I am the assistant director of the library.

I appreciate the opportunity to put this newsletter out as I receive so much mail from all of you and it is difficult for me to write back to you as individuals. I just don't have the time or financial resources to do that so I use my energy to focus on creating programs and getting them mailed out to you. This newsletter gives me a chance to respond to some of your questions as well as to catch you up on the activities in my life.

Those of you who have been in the program for awhile know you will have to hear at least a bit about my gardening adventures. I get great pleasure growing vegetables and herbs. I find a variety of ways to keep the food over the winter. Over the years food prices have been rising and this year with the gas/oil price hikes prices are soaring. Combine the gas crisis with the push for corn based ethanol and you have a disaster waiting to happen. Many farmers are putting all their fields into corn for ethanol as they can sell it for more than if for food. Now there is less wheat, soy beans etc being planted as everyone wants that corn/fuel money, so bread and pasta prices are spiking. I have never seen food prices rising so quickly, as they have the past few months. Add in the cost of fuel to drive to the store to get the food, and we have the prescription for a "perfect storm". I don't know how really low wage earners can survive in today's economic world.

I retreat to my garden. I grow much of the food for putting up. I root cellar onions, potatoes, garlic, beets. I freeze lots of kale, collards, beet greens, broccoli, green beans. I also dry some vegetables. I will try pickling on a large scale this year. I hope to make cucumber pickles as well as kim chi, sauerkraut, and pickled diakons. I know those terms have a few of you scratching your head. Kim chi is a Korean dish of spicy pickled cabbage. Diakons are a foot long radish that I soak in a salty plum vinegar from Japan. I will make the pickles with a salt and garlic recipe. I love fermented foods, and they are a great way to preserve vegetables that would otherwise rot in a short time. I just put the vegetables in 5 gallon buckets, and mix up different kind of brines for each recipe. I am making it sound easy, but have little experience pickling. I will read some books soon, as the vegetables will ready to pick in the next few days. I have lots of regular vegetables as well corn, tomatoes, beans, squashes, peppers, peas. We have had lots of rain and the garden is growing quickly. I would say so far this shapes up to be the best garden volume wise as I have ever had, and this is after more than 30 years gardening.

If everyone quit consuming so much stuff and focused on producing some of their own food we would be much better off as a society. I wish I knew a way to help start prison gardens. If each of you could have a garden plot to work you'd be eating like kings. I also find that I am more tranquil inside after a productive day of gardening. It reduces stress while filling the belly. I would be happy to send how to gardening information to those of you who are interested. Years ago I had a very productive business doing indoor gardening. What is that you may wonder? We had a commercial seed sprouting business and sold the sprouts in 5 states in the Pacific northwest. We would take different seeds, alfalfa, lentil, mung bean (Chinese bean sprouts), clover, radish to name a few and in one week of sprouting the seeds would make young tasty greens. I don't believe there is any way for me to send in, or for you to receive seeds, but if you can figure it out let me know and I'll turn you on to the world of indoor gardening. It is easy, fast and very nutritious. One of the miracles of life is that if you mix water and a seed, in 7 to 10 days the seed can increase its weight 7 fold as well as gain all sorts of vitamins and nutrients.

I'm following the presidential race pretty closely. I can't see voting for grampy McCain. It is clear that old age is affecting his ability, and the president has so much responsibility. I just don't see him as up for the job. Also I think his political views are misguided. Combining all that with his known out of control temper and he gets to looking a little scary.

Obama on the other hand does not have all the experience I might wish, but when you hear him speak, his opinions appear well reasoned, and he is not looking to solve America's problems with 30 second sound bites scaring people or telling them dirt about his opponent. He seems like a smart guy, who has made it up the ranks by working hard, being quick in his thoughts, and not forgetting where he came from. He is a refreshing alternative from the usual choices we have. That is not to say he is perfect, or immune to the corrupting forces of power. It is clear that he is a far better choice than our current war mongering, near illiterate president. I don't know how often any of you have gotten to hear George Bush speak when he is not in front of a teleprompter. He has a hard time stringing words into sentences and oh my lord have you ever heard him say a bunch of meaningful connected sentences. With current media techniques of electors hearing 30 second or 1 minute sound bites, many people did not understand how foolish and incoherent Bush is. Right now he is going to begin pardoning all the people who worked for him so they can never be charged with all the crimes



they committed while he has been in charge. It is outrageous. The only positive thing you can say is that they were the best administration (at least in my lifetime, which stretches back to Eisenhower) at lying and cheating and funneling American Tax dollars to their cronies. Way to go! The only way Republican policy makes sense is if you are waiting for the rapture and in

fact are trying to create some of the nightmare scenarios they believe must happen prior to the second coming! While we still have the military might our dollar is collapsing and folks from other counties are buying up American assets as if they were on fire sale. Latest to go were the Chrysler building in NYC and Budweiser Beer (now owned by a Belgian company) America has been putting its' money in other countries for years but it is a sign of the times that the dollar is so low in value that it is now it is too expensive for most Americans to ever go to Europe. Thank you George Bush and company for running the economy into the ground while your fat cat friends continue to sell the war on terror. They took a criminal act by a handful of folks on 9/11 and have turned it into a war on terror that has plundered American resources, killed thousands unnecessarily and generally made the world less safe for us all. Even the right wing Rand Institute just issued a report and said the military response to 9/11 caused more problems than it solved, and that terrorism needs to be addressed by local police action and intelligence gathering.

Well now that I have gotten my political rant and gardening update out of the way I can get back to focusing on the Prisoner Express program and the opportunities that we have to offer you. I figure so many of you share who you are with me, that I should devote a little time in the newsletter so you know who you are dealing with on this end. I believe the role of government and taxes is to equalize the differences between rich and poor. Taxes are paid to ensure we can

take care of the least among us, so they are never so disenfranchised that they do not have a stake in preserving society. The Republicans not only want to dissolve any societal safety net for those less fortunate, they want a government that is aligned with the fat cat corporate agenda. For any of you who study history, and I know there are many of you with that interest, there is a name for a political system when the government promotes the agenda of the corporate elite, while limiting the civil rights of those who do not agree with that agenda. It is called fascism, and all the while the Republicans are claiming their policies are to defend freedom, what is really happening is that they are embracing fascism, because it is making certain individuals richer at the expense of the general society at large.

**With best wishes,
Gary**

CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP - Hello everyone. My name is Katherine, and I have been involved with the Prisoner Express program for over a year now. I'm currently spending my summer work weeks here in the Alternatives Library, helping Gary with the programs and preparing for my upcoming senior year at Cornell. I've done a bit of everything over the past year—entering your info into the database, reading theme essays and journals, responding to letters, packaging mailings—but I wanted to tell you about the special project that I've been working on over many months.

This past school year I received a generous grant from the Community Partnership Board of the Cornell Public Service Center to help fund a new program with PE. I chose to create the Creative Writing Workshop because I greatly believe in the benefits of writing. Not only is it a means of communication with others, writing is also a direct path to the self-understanding and creative self-expression that is often lost to the circumstances around us. Writing is especially powerful for people who find their normal voices silenced and ignored. With this in mind, I wanted to create a place where aspiring writers could not only learn new writing skills, but also have the opportunity to tell the story that they've always wanted to tell. I am proud to say that this newsletter features the writing of both participants in this workshop and of a group of theme writers headed by Matt, another volunteer. Their words are proof of the inner writer that exists within us all. As this newsletter will show, you don't need fancy classes or equipment or even experience to be a writer—all it takes is some paper, a pencil and the desire to create words out of the

two. I hope that this edition of Prisoner Express News will inspire you to find your own voice, creativity and sense of self, all through the simple act of writing. As some other writers have famously put it...

"Writing is a struggle against silence."

—Carlos Fuentes

"If there's a book you really want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it."

—Toni Morrison

"Words are one of our chief means of adjusting to life."

—Bergen Evans

"When I write, I am always struck by how magical and unexpected the process turns out to be."

—Ralph Fletcher

"The act of writing is the act of discovering what you believe."

—David Hare

Great Beginnings - The opening sentence of a story is typically called a 'hook' because it needs to 'reel in' the reader. A good beginning should spark the reader's interest and curiosity right away— otherwise they will stop reading before the story gets going. Below are some examples of the different strategies writers use to create great beginnings. These beginnings succeed in part because they jump straight into the action of the story— exploring settings, characters and conflicts—without a drawn-out introduction or explanation. A beginning is an introduction to the unique 'world' of the story, so use the examples below to explore some new worlds created by participants in Prisoner Express' creative writing projects.

Short Story Excerpts

from "Convo on a Chaplain's Heart"

As he walked into the prison chapel, a sudden self-conscious bravado consumed him; like he was confronting his jury again with the assistance of hindsight, knowing that he'd be found guilty but fighting something all the same. That was Antwon Flinch's life summed up in the dead heap of an emotion. Constantly feeling like the world was measuring him for something great, but would never confirm it. Leaving him to feel a yearning responsibility that made him feel as empty as a man with nothing

The prison chapel in itself was nothing to write home about or lose any sleep over. It had a table in the corner with some pamphlets on it professing to hold the key to building a relationship with God. Antwon would always watch how the other inmates would come in and gather around the table, going through the pamphlets like they were afraid to show great interest, like God

came second to whatever reputation they had mustered up.

-A. Robinson

from "Peasant Monk"

In a village northwest of the Song Shan Mountains, young Po watched as the mantis fought the larger, quicker tarantula. Both were looking to make a meal of each other. The spider spewed a web, narrowly missing the mantis, then launched an attack, its forelegs raised baring fangs that could kill the mantis in one bite. The tarantula also carried a poison that would turn the mantis' insides into a soupy cocktail for the spider to drink.

Po watched enthralled, as the mantis took up a defensive position standing up on its hind legs with its forelegs raised. Po could see the mantis was far stronger than it appeared. As the spider rushed in to attack the mantis, the mantis' forearms came down, catching the spider in a death grip. The spider struggled, but the struggle was futile as the mantis began to devour the spider head-first while it was still alive.

The scene seemed extraordinarily cruel for five year old Po's eyes to witness, yet Po knew it was the way of nature. The mantis didn't kill for pleasure—it killed to survive.

-Kevin Betts

from "Hammurabi Code"

Julia had never gotten any type of prank phone calls or hang-up calls while her now ex-husband Jimmy was there. She now had received two in the last week. The phone rang. She paused, staring at the phone as if it were going to tell her who it was. She said, "Hello!" There was no one to answer her as she heard the phone click and the dial tone rang in her ear. She hung up the phone a little hard, making it rock in its cradle.

Today was going to be a day that she would be glad to get over with. The judge had finally heard all that both parties had to say. He was going to make his decision today, surely to grant the divorce on the grounds that Julia Barns had committed adultery, making for irreconcilable differences between her and the soon-to-be ex-husband Jimmy.

-Ronald (Rocky) Hacker

from "Space Gypsy"

It was already mid-afternoon as I finally made my way out the doors of the Dura World's main branch of the Galactic Bank. I had spent over five hours in there trying to correct the stupid error some teller had made on my account, and now the day was shot. But at least the problem was fixed. My account was correct, in the black, and I had credits in my pocket. And I had finally been able to pay off the port fees so they could quit

threatening to impound Star Gypsy, thank you very much!

-Barry Wion

from "A Family Secret"

It had been raining pretty hard all day. Leah Cambridge had been looking out the window for most of the afternoon, lost in thought. The day seemed to mirror her spirit. It was dark and gloomy, downcast and downright ugly. Leah kept thinking about what the doctor had diagnosed her with. All her life she had been in perfect health, working out regularly and running give miles a day. She didn't even feel sick. She had just gone in for one of her regular check-ups and out of the blue she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

-Amancio Flores III

from "The Chase"

Aloysius Du Bois, a trapper for the Hudson Bay Company, searching for new land for the company to trap the exotic beaver hides that people in France desired with such lust that the trappers couldn't keep up with it. The dew had settled upon the grass as fine crystal upon a banquet table with the sun peaking over the ridge, causing the buckskin-clad trapper to look eerie with the early morning glow of the sun reflecting off of him. All that Aloysious could remember was the three-day chase that brought him under the bluff of Beaverhead rock.

-Kerry Roland

from "The Frog and the Hen"

"Why do you watch those things running around over there all day, my friend?" asked a familiar voice as its owner climbed out of the water. "You don't even seem to enjoy swimming anymore...not just what necessity demands of us either, Fure!"

Jumping far away without warning, a small splash was brought up when he landed in the water, staying submerged for only a few seconds before climbing back onto the lily pad. Now staring at his friend while gathering all his thoughts. "Fage, I am going to get a closer look at those white things," said Fure, turning his whole body to watch the scene across the pond again.

"Y-you're going back over there for real? Surprise filled the large black and gold eyes then. "What for, Fure? Don't you thin—"

"Will you come with me, my friend?" asked Fure, cutting off the other frog's train of thought as they faced each other again.

Slowly turning himself away from his longtime friend, he watched the weird white things. "Go over there with you...?" A rumble in his stomach found Fage hungrily imagining eating a big meal.

-by Luther Brite

from "Caught Fast in a Web"

It was five o'clock at Colombia Recording Studios when Joey D came in and started pouring Tommy Bahama rum and cokes and said "Dude, the Misfits are playing at C. B. G. B's in the East Village, we gotta go!" His lead guitar player in the band and closest friend Nick Camperalli said, "It's five o'clock traffic on Friday, we'll

be there by midnight if we leave now."

"No problem! I'm gonna call a friend of mine who has a helicopter." And so they all piled into his candy apple red Maserati Granturismo and raced over to his friend's house where the helicopter was waiting.

In the distance they could hear sirens from N.Y.P.D patrol cars in hot pursuit because the helicopter was hovering in the air above the guy's driveway. The helicopter landed and everybody

climbed in. They took off skimming over buildings and traffic in the Lower East side of Manhattan. They got to CBGB's in twenty minutes time and walked inside. Immediately, everybody knew Joey D and the Hooligans.

-David Lusik

from "Going Hunting"

It is the third week that school was out and there was really nothing to do. As we sat on the back porch basking in the mid-summer breeze, I thought that it would be another day like the rest of them.

Richard and I sat on our back ledge that would one day be a porch when my Uncle Horse finally got around to finishing it. We were bored as usual. Looking back, I never found summer vacation to be so boring as it was then. Richard laid back on the porch with a blade of grass in his mouth, as if he was in one on those Huckleberry Finn episodes. His eyes were glazed over as if he didn't have a care in the world and said "Harry,

what do you want to do?" He was twiddling his feet, letting his bare feet dangle in the air. I was the oldest of two boys. We were basically abandoned by our mother who had chosen to run the streets and party. I looked Richard in the eyes and I could see that he looked up to me. The look he had on his face was the same like I used to give my mother when I was younger and didn't really know what the situation was. With his mouth gaped open, as if he was hanging on my every word; he anxiously waited on a response. I usually had one. Yet this time I hoped that he didn't read the blank expression on my face...

-Harry C. Goodall
from "Don't Come Around Here No More"

Eight year old Donald Fuego tiptoed from his room at the crack of dawn to find out if he was getting the Tyco electric race track he'd asked for. He found his present amongst the 4 under the tree. One for him and each of his sisters. As he picked up the rectangular box, his face tightened into a mask of concentration and his eyes squinted. The package was lighter than it should have been.

"What are you doing?" a soft sleepy voice asked out of the darkness. "Christmas isn't until next week."

"Mom, I asked for a race track. This is just some stupid clothes," Donald sulkily said, dropping the box and walking into the kitchen.

Sherry felt her eyes well up with tears. Why couldn't he understand he needed pants, and that was all she could afford? She walked back to her empty bedroom and threw herself onto the bed, burying her face in the pillow. Now the tears could come...

-Michael Hendersen

from "Love and Hate"

Tomorrow is our anniversary. And like every year, I pick out everything. But this year is going to be special, since it will be our last time together. I have fallen in love with someone else, and to this day, she's unaware of it. The thing that makes this trip so special is that we're going to the Falls, when we really can't afford it. But hey, how else would a person try to end a relationship of 6 years on good terms than by fulfilling that person's fantasy? This is all I'm thinking about, while my soon to be ex-wife is in a cheery mood. Hell, after 3 times last night, she should be. As we both leave the house and go our separate ways for the day, I kiss my wife on the cheek and watch her get into her car, as I get into mine. Seeing her happiness when I kiss her, I start to feel a lil guilty about the times that I had messed over her, and what's about to come. But on my way to work, I call Baby girl, and tell her, "Tomorrow is the day and I'll be over there that night."

-Tim Hampton

from "Untitled"

"I don't thee it." The whisper came out of the darkness on my left. Jobe was affecting a lisp so that the hissing 'esss' sound didn't carry. I only nodded my head in the general direction of our target.

"Over there." I didn't want any large movement to give away my position.

Then something bumped into my knee. The sense in my head let me know that it was only Bastar, my tame ridgecat. The beginnings of a plan began to form in my head. My thoughts his only guide, Bastar slunk closer to the guard post and let out his hunting shriek. The guards froze. It was time to move. Jobe followed me out of the alley.

-John Wilson

from "The Blue Birds"

The Blue Bird appears in the distance, flying towards us without delay. Upon arrival he opens his white breast and we clamber in, finding a seat, looking out where possible, catching the breeze only when in motion. We start out at a careful pace, gradually gaining speed until in full flight.

-A.J. Crate Jr.

from "Unidentified Immigrant Living On A Prayer"

It starts with the miserable impoverished condition of their home countries. It isn't the middle passage this time and Africans forcibly being dragged from their motherland in chains headed for the new world and slavery. It is Africans voluntarily risking their lives to cross treacherous seas in flimsy boats (cayuco) to reach Europe in search of work and a better life.

-Timothy Gaines

from "Mondrae The Coming"

I could feel the comforting, dark embrace of unconsciousness letting loose its hold upon me, and I again became aware of the numbing pain that was taking away my life. To my relief, the excruciating pain in my arms and legs had subsided. I could no longer feel my extremities at all, and I could taste the hollowed smell of death on my breath.

-Kevin Roby

from "When Two People Meet"

Every now and then I like to take a stroll through Central Park. I was born and raised in New York, and I have paid many visits to this park. You would think one would tired after so many visits to this vast piece of land, yet for some reason Central Park is the one place I seem never to grow tired of. It's almost as if you are walking into a whole different world.

-Paul Salseda

from "The Great Stump Effect"

...So one day I sat down and put my elbow on my knee, my fist under my chin and began to dig up the roots to the stump I had. But I'll tell you this; it wasn't an easy road, no sir. The biggest problem I had wasn't that I'm a Christian yet believe in the Big Bang. No that wasn't it. My problem was that I'm not a professional astrophysicist, but instead I'm just an amateur astronomer like so many others who love this big, massive universe we live in.

-by Robert A. Hupp

from "The Tunnel"

After opening the trap door and finding a tunnel, no one at the entrance, I said a little prayer of thanks that we did not get blown to bits.

-Jerry Autrey

from "Died of a Broken Heart"

It was well into the afternoon, too nice of a day for so much bloodshed.

-Brian Roberts

Theme Essay Excerpts

from "Wait-up TV" ("Up All Night" theme)

Life is comical. Instead of the parent having to wait, staying up for the child to return home, I, as a child, waited for my Mom.

Now Mom didn't go out much. She worked as a waitress and when she got home or had days off, all she cared to do was rest. Of course, all work and no play is downright unfair. Her girlfriends and sisters would take her out to go dancing. This always involved some shopping, fixing their hair and taking hours to dress. Finally, they all lined up to kiss me goodnight and walk out the door, clicking in their heels. My babysitter, who was also my older cousin, she doesn't even try to argue with me. As a son, I feel obligated to stay up for my Mom and cousin. I would always end up waking her up when Mom and the girls come home.

-Cristobel Garcia

from "First Love"

First love. I can still remember how my heart felt when I fell in love. How it felt like I couldn't breathe, didn't want to be away from her for any amount of time, staying up late at night whispering on the phone.

-John Wise

from "Memories"

Memories are a double-edged sword. I have some truly beautiful memories of a wonderful childhood with loving parents and friends. I also have memories of a horrific childhood with tormentors around me. Both of these types of memories are true.

-Ralph Patrick Fuller

from "Color"

The kaleidoscope of life, with its myriad of colors exploding with the vivid hues of purple, red, green, yellow, brown, black, blue and white. I guess it's like one singing a rainbow as we look upon one another...

-Keith Somerville

from "The Color of Hurt"

I had felt the color of hurt in purplish welted legs. A father's heavy hand across a child's face leaving black, blue and yellowish skin. Leading to a broken spirit of despair and darkness. An abyss of cruel violent anger. Pulsing with the fire of rage, waiting to blow in your face. The light of life bleed red with blue bleak cold steel bars of punishment. All the while walking as a blind man crazed blank mind. Waiting.

-by Robert A

from "First Love"

Night crawlers, fishing hooks,
bright-light stars and blackberry bushes.

My personal fishing hole!

At night when the moon is bright,
the big catfish come out to bite.

When you come in the eve of the day, you will see
the sun set over the ridge.

-Casey Cicero

from "Secrets"

The world has become nothing more than rain and darkness. All that my eyes can see, all that my ears can hear. My concentration is held strong by this as I ponder the situation. Am I going to be able to keep this secret to myself; tell no one, not even my closest confidant? Silvery strands of hair are now plastered to my face by the rain. This secret, known only to me, must be kept at all cost. To have anyone else know could well cost me my life, yet my conscience begs me to unburden myself.

-Raymond W. Sullivan

from "First Love"

"You boys hurry up and pack, it's a long drive to Grandpa's and we need to get started." What would ordinarily prove to be sound advice held far less stringent directives for a seven and five year old headed for Grandpa and Grandma's farm for the next two weeks. My brother grabbed coloring books and colors, I strapped on my Lone Ranger gun belt, gathered three arrows and a bow for the as-yet undisclosed Tonto and off we were to the car. Needless to say, this version of packing met with the same amount of success as the time I went fishing with my Uncle Tom and decided I would keep my catch in the bathtub.

-Charles Strickland

from "First Love"

In my second year of college in San Angelo, Texas, I met Jan, a fascinating young lady who, though totally blind, possessed a valid, current pilot's license, made an A in her drafting class, directed stage plays (quite well) and had compiled a long list of similarly 'different' accomplishments. She approached me during a rehearsal for a play in which I, very badly, played a character called Biondello, to ask if I would handle the lighting for a play she was directing. After that introduction we walked to her house near the campus, where she told me she had attended

Sonora Elementary School shortly after I had moved away. The revelation sent my mind time traveling back through the many intervening years.

Claire.

-Harvey Wendt

from "Color"

Ahh...color--the brilliance of so many hues by light reflected in so many beautiful ways. What would spring be without the green? What would the sky be without the reflection of the oceans? What would twilight be without the purple? What would a woman be without that beautifully tender pink? All the varieties of flowers that dot the hillsides give glory to God's 'green earth.'

-Gary Gregory

from "Memories"

The room had the feeling of a doctor's office, full of nervous energy and anxiety. Even though there were only 2 people in the room and it was a warmly furnished apartment, the atmosphere seemed crowded.

Two glasses intoxicated with untouched wine stared at each other on top of the coffee table that ran the length of a couch, one unaccustomed to having two people sitting, facing one another, as if in deep discussion; usually being reserved for thoughtful reflection, worrying and some crying.

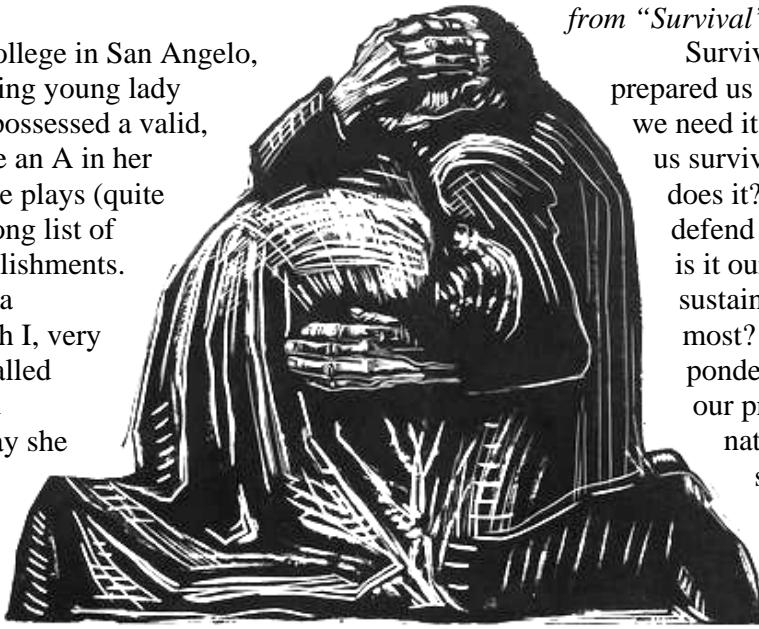
"How are we going to do this?"

-James Powers

from "Self Respect"

How many people can look in the mirror and like what they see? Self-respect is something quickly admitted to, but rarely truly owned.

-Jason Allen McCurry



from "Survival"

Survival is an instinct that God prepared us all with and at times when we need it the most it kicks in to help us survive, strive, and stay alive, or does it? Can a human being really defend or protect his or her self or is it our God that protects us and sustains us when we need it the most? We need to seriously ponder that and ask ourselves can our preparation, skills, second nature, and survival instincts save us when the angel of death comes?

-David L. Shaw Sr.
from "Believe it or Not"

It's rare for prisoners to accept the bad news that is their sentence. The worse it is the more they will deny it. Talk of appeals, parole, and changes in the law become life preservers of hope. For many these are only fantasies, delusions to lean on when reality is too harsh to bear. Chances are I'll do every day of my 35-year sentence and be 66 when Texas lets me go to face charges in two other states. There's no guarantee any man will live to see his 66th birthday. Still, my peers are upset when I state the obvious: "I'm doing it all and I'll probably die in prison." Why does my acceptance of my reality bother others so much? It seems my refusal to join in their delusions squashes hope for them. They accuse me of giving up. That couldn't be farther from the truth. I may have given up on life, but I'll never give up life.

-Daniel H. Harris

Great Endings - Great endings don't just happen--they are carefully created by the writer to tie up the loose ends up the story while still leaving the reader wanting more. Great endings must therefore provide a satisfying conclusion while being open-ended enough to be meaningful and thought-provoking long after the story has been read. In short pieces like those below, the writer typically uses the ending to demonstrate that characters/situations or 'things' in general are changing, providing a sense of progression from the story's beginning while still leaving possibilities open for the future.

Short Story Excerpts

from "The Wolf"

Knowing what the storm was about, what it wanted, Cyell trembled in utter fear. She had never before lost

her composure, not even when the Jhints staked her naked in the blistering sun for five days. The entire realm, she thought. She would fight the entire realm of the savages at once to rid herself of this cursed storm!

She had to finish her task for her Great Master, a task that would forever fork prophecy in favor of the Dark Lord. Finish her task and she could quickly flee this dreadful land she had been sent to.

For a long moment, Cyell stared into the sword's shiny abyss, her eyes seething with renewed passion. She sniffed the lightening-scorched air like a hound. As she steadied herself beside the table, the babes fitfully fought the unseen, intensifying her ire. Dark eyes unsympathetically beheld the helpless babes.

Glistening steel rose high about Cyell's head. "For the Master!" And as the last sound escaped her throat, a bolt of lightening pierced the castle wall and spiked her skull, reducing the wolf to a pile of smoldering ash.

The longsword fell harmlessly to the floor and broke in two, releasing its dark magic back to the world of the dead.

And on and on the babes cried, orchestrating the storm that sought and destroyed the lurking evil that wanted to kill the twin babes born to fulfill the Delfian Prophecy.

-Floyd M. Chandler

from "Revolving Door"

Jimmy was the first atop the fence, barbed wire biting into his hand as he swung his feet and legs up and over, landing on his feet momentarily until the momentum carried him over, knocking him to his butt.

There was a clashing chorus from the rest of the wards of laughing and chanting, "Go! Go! Go!", while Kwame was yelling "STOP!"

Before Jimmy could get to his feet, Robby came crashing down beside him. "Which way?" asked Jimmy as he rose.

Robby jumped up and dashed across the street yelling "This way!"

Both kids sprinted full speed down the street. After a couple of blocks, their lungs started to burn with the cool, fresh night air. Neither of them minded; it was a small price for a clean get-away. After a few blocks they ducked into an alley to catch their breath, they looked at one another and couldn't help but to break out in laughter.

Once you have tasted the loss of it, freedom becomes an exhilarating full-body experience when you regain it.

Their feet barely touched the ground as they walked out of the alley. "Man we're finally out of that dump!" he shouted, not realizing this stolen freedom wasn't only

temporary, it was one of the first revolutions of the revolving door, of a lifetime of incarceration.

-by Brian Bartosh

from "A Shadow of Faith"

As the grave digger worked on his final task, Shawn silently spoke some final words: "Thanks for the money Uncle Charlie. But I'm not going to lie. It would have been nice if you had left it all to me. Your faith just couldn't abide that, huh? Had to give the lion's share to the church instead of a non-believer. Well, that's okay. I believe in me, and I'm going to find a way to make some real money out of that chump change you left me. His jaw muscles flexed. His fists clenched and unclenched at his sides. My faith's in me, Uncle Charlie."

"Shawn, it's really starting to come down." Kirk tugged at his sleeve. "Shawn?"

"What?"

"Let's get out of this rain, man," Joe urged.

"Yeah, okay," Shawn said to them over his shoulder.

He turned his head for a last look at the finished grave and a final thought: "You misplaced your faith, Uncle Charlie. But I don't need to tell you that now, do I? Where is your god? Is his light warming that cold body in that dark place? I'm sure it's not. No more than it lights or warms this cold world of death, suffering and neglect. My life has been full of loss and pain. I see it all around me, in other people's lives as well as mine. It won't ever happen, but, if I were to take on your beliefs, my faith would have to be in your Devil. Because by the looks of it, he's everywhere."

The sun was setting behind the dark mask of clouds. In the distance, thunder grumbled, shaking the ground. Shawn turned and began walking down the hill through electrically charged air that pulled at the fine hairs on his neck and arms. As he descended the hill, shadows deepened with each step.

Once at the bottom, Shawn waded into the darkness emanating from the black parking lot. The darkness was so complete; it drew the light, the energy from his body, leaving him feeling cold and alone.

It was the darkness of the grave.

Through chattering teeth and trembling lips, Shawn asked, "Where is your god, Uncle Charlie?"

-Michael Gaston

from "Untitled"

"History's something else. It only takes form in the mind of the audience. When properly delivered it can come alive and manifest itself."

"What the hell are you saying Jimmy?"

At that moment, Jimmy moved with lightening-fast movement and slammed the blade point at Jubal's lower throat.

-Matthew Gonzales

from "Untitled"

She looked down on the barely conscious warrior, sheltering his body from the cold, and offering her own power to bring him back from the brink. The semi-conscious warrior said only one word, over and over.

"Vengeance."

-Joseph Fritz

from "Visions of a Child"

One would be able unable to count the times Allen's mother would come to his rescue, for he would have the strange dreams and visions for years to come. Some would be more in-depth, and actually evolve into circumstances of his life. But many he would ponder their meaning, for their presence would forever be imbedded in his mind. Allen was never able to share all his visions intact with his mother, but it has become possible that he might relate some to you...

-Gus Hooks

from "Untitled"

...I got on my bike and started it up and rode off without a plan or destination. It was over. I let go of what I could never have.

That was my story. Symbolically told, but I will never fully heal. There will be no end to the heartache, cause I still love her...

-Johnathan Hooper



Rudy Brown

from "Untitled"

We all agreed later that the hundred dollar pool belonged to Tennessee. He had more than earned it, and for months afterwards he and that tattooed varmint

reveled in their newfound celebrity status. The captain would even stop by once in a while, accompanied by the occasional visiting dignitary eager to view the now widely celebrated and legendary creature. As the visitor would grip the bar and stare with incredulous disbelief etched upon their face, the captain would remove his cap, scratch his head and the biggest smile would light up his face. "Now don't that beat all son" he'd say. "Now don't that beat all."

-Robert Morales

from "Vengeance Never Knocks"

An hour later I was feeling pleased with a job well done as I let myself into my apartment. I'd taken the dope to a big dealer on the other side of town, one who shared my views on drugs and kids. That was an additional \$30,000 in my pocket, and I knew a good children's organization that could use a substantial donation like that, so I'd be shipping it to them in the morning. Plus, the guns I'd collected were mine to keep, forever. All in all, a great night. I hung my flight jacket up in the closet and put the guns on the coffee table, to be cleaned and sorted later.

"Is that you, Ian?" my fiancée called from the kitchen, where I could smell and hear bacon frying. She sounded concerned.

"Yeah, just me," I reassured her as I walked into the kitchen with the gym bag full of cash. I barely had time to drop it before she flew into my arms. We stood like that for a minute, locked in a warm embrace. Then she leaned back a little and slapped my left cheek, leaving my stunned.

"Don't you ever cuff me that hard again!" my fiancée "Vanessa" demanded angrily, before I made it up to her with kisses.

-Jason A. Wilcox

Theme Essay Excerpts

from "Self Respect"

Memory, oh memories! Thank you God of gods for the godly mind that gives the lonely a place to live. A place where guards have no control. Emotions, temptations, the knowledge of wrongs and rights all rolled up in one joint that never loses its high, for it has been created through the roads we live, and the never ending memories of one's life.

-from "Memories" theme essay by John Sanchez

Without respect for one's self, he/she will forever seek acceptance in the eyes of others. Thus, let one live not simply for the respect of others, but develop genuine respect for one's self.

-La Concha McShon

from "Color"

So, as you can see, colors have a language and can teach us about ourselves and guarantee our significance, no matter what our diversity.

Colors are human history without a voice.

-James Duncan

from "Between A Rock and A Hard Place"

Some say we're helpless
Never chancing
Always being worthless
Never enhancing

The life that we live
In our own little space
Always
Between a rock and the
Hard places we make.

-Jeff T

from "Secrets"

Anyways I spat a couple of times, took a deep breath to regain my senses and opened my mouth to holler at the house. Nothing! Not a single word came out. I was in the process of opening my mouth again, when a shoe zoomed past my head. Now, I am a fighter you understand me. But a good fighter also has to know when to retreat, and this woman was beginning to turn downright violent! So with as much dignity as I could muster under the circumstances I retreated. Well, now you all know why I hate secrets.

-Sergio Guerrero

from "Shame"

So the regret I speak of is for all I have missed, and will miss. Special events—marriages, birthdays, births, graduations—that would make a father proud, I have had to witness from afar. I like to believe that what I did ensured that my family would be safe from harm. And because of that, I can live with this regret. I even embrace it, because, as said by Dostoevski: “There is only one thing I dread...not to be worthy of my sufferings.”

But shame? No. Never.

-Gilbert M. Davila

from "Secrets"

The secrets that we hold sometimes do us more damage than we realize. I once heard a phrase that made a lot of sense to me: Secrets are to be shared. It took those middle-school students of the Youth Assistance Program for me to really appreciate those words.

-Michael Santana

from "Survival"

I wonder sometimes about a lot of my homeboys being dead. Does that mean I survived and they didn't,

or is my hell only a minute away? Did I really survive because I get another shot at life when I walk out these doors, and they lay in the grave?

I think that I only survive when I help someone make the right choice or teach someone about the road they shouldn't take, because it all leads to the same place. These bars are my difficult condition, but they also taught me how to survive!

-Antonio Shelvine

from "Survival"

This being said I bow deeply to the spirit of all those suffering individuals, men and women both, who are imprisoned in the lethal iron clutches of isolation and secure housing units. It is to you I write. You, who struggle daily to resist and overcome the brutal dehumanization process. You, who in the face of such overwhelming adversity and opposition still somehow find the courage and grace to express your humanity and compassion. I assure you that when the final pages of mankind's history are written, our story will be epic and will ultimately weave itself in the common narrative of humanity's eventual triumph over empires legacy of cruelty, tyranny, and injustice. May you all find the peace you so richly deserve and once found, find the courage to pass it on.

-Roberto Salvador Morales

Besides Beginnings and Endings, we have reprinted a few short stories and essays submitted to the Creative Writing Program. Many of the stories were excellent, but too long to reprint in this newsletter. Here are a few complete selections we could share with all of you:

Breaking Bryan

Sitting here at my kitchen table with my head in my hands, no one knows of the desperate battle I am in. My stomach is in knots and I am sweating. Instead of getting ready for church, I am sitting here suffering from withdrawal from meth.

My youngest son, Joey, who is five years old and has light brown hair, comes into the kitchen and asks me why we always have to go to church. I hold my right hand up in the air with fingers splayed and count down the fingers, saying “You, me, Chris and Mommy are the fingers.” I fold the fingers down into my palm with the thumb sticking straight out. “God is the thumb,” I say as I am closing the thumb over the fingers, making a fist. “Together, we are strong.”

Joey holds his fist up to his face, staring at it. I know he will be doing that all day now. I tell him he'd better get ready and as I watch him run off down the

hall, I think of how gorgeous a child he is. He looks like his mother.

I head that way myself because I have to use the restroom. It is a side-effect caused by the methamphetamines. Every time I have the joneses or the jitters from the withdrawals, I have to have a bowel movement. Sometimes, several times a day. It is hard to believe that it has been over six years since my last fix. It feels like it was last night.

In fact, what happened was that my brother came last night and he was high as hell. When I saw the huge dilated pupils and the grinding jaws, it reminded me of the first time I ever got high. I was fifteen and went looking for my brother over at some lady's trailer. When I got inside, I found that I was right in the middle of a dope house or a shooting gallery, as they called it. Three days later, when I left that trailer, I was forever addicted to meth.

I have been to prison twice since then and I know that if I ever touch it again, I'll go back. I just cannot function on it. I have to beat this, but I feel helpless and trapped. I was up all night last night pouring over my Bible, trying to find some verse or phrase that would remove this intense desire. It was around 3:00 AM when my wife asked me to come to bed. I laid there staring at the blackness, pretending to sleep until the alarm finally went off.

Now, while I'm sitting here on the toilet, my seven-year-old son comes into the bathroom. He climbs onto the chair in front of the sink and flexes his muscles in the mirror. Chris says, "Dad, will I be as big and strong as you?" I tell him he will be bigger and stronger, and better looking too. "Mommy doesn't think so; she always says you're handsome." I tell him that is because Mommy looks at my heart, not my face. Chris bursts out laughing and jumps from the chair to run out of the bathroom. He slips and his shoulder hits the doorjamb and he crashes into the hallway floor. He looks up at me, but I pretend I do not see him as he decides if he is either going to laugh or cry. I know if he knows I saw him fall, he will cry. Instead, he gets back up, laughs, and runs down the hall to my bedroom to tell Mommy what I said. Every step he takes causes a vibration that flows from the floor to my heart. It reminds me how fast he is growing.

Heading off to our little country church, I feel better and a bit more composed. For a moment, a feeling of peace overcomes me and I think I am going to be okay. Then it goes away and the beast is back in control. It has taken over all rational thought, and I know what nobody else on earth knows: I am in trouble.

Sitting through the service, I am fidgeting and can not understand a thing the pastor is saying. I am patiently waiting for the altar call because that is the place I know I am closest to God. I rehearse my prayers to myself. "God, please remove this from me. I'll do anything. I'll double my mission work, I'll be a better man, I'll give more, do more, say more. Please Father, don't let me mess our lives up. My family deserves better, Lord. Please. Please take this from me, God. I need your strength to overcome this."

After church, the kids are in the back of the sanctuary, playing. All the adults are circled up laughing and talking loudly. My wife comes up to me and asks me what is wrong. She knows, she always knows. I am staring out into the parking lot and I am wondering why my truck and my wife's car are both here. We always come as a family together in her car. I wonder what lie I told her for a reason to come alone in my truck.

I know then that God did not hear my cries. Either that, or he could not get through the fog in my mind. I wish that everything in my head would just slow down enough for me to think. I am confused, disoriented, and I know that the addiction has completely taken over. I feel like I am outside of my head and am seeing all this through someone else's eyes. It is a horrible and scary feeling.

Just last night, I was showing my sons how to build a model, helping with homework, and planning on making love to my wife. Now, I know that is all over. I will wake up in a prison cell somewhere and this will be my last sane memory. I don't know why I can't stop it. I cannot explain it, but I know that if (or should I now say, when) I use again; this life that I love so dearly will be forever changed.

I walk my family to our car. Kissing my wife through the window, I tell her that I have to stop by my brother's house to pick up some tools I loaned him. "Go ahead and put the charcoal in the grill and I'll start the barbecue when I get home in about an hour," I say. I know that is a date that I am not going to be able to keep. I think she knows it too.

-Bryan Page

Strangers

The sun will reach the end of its visible trek in three hours. I boarded the bus this morning before that trek began. Now with eighteen stops, 300 meandering miles, and twelve hours behind it, the bus has finally stopped at a place that means something to me.

I'm greeted by a cloud of diesel exhaust and dust sent aswirl on the dry whistle of air-brake release as I step down into my hometown.

Here. I. Am.

After a twenty-year absence that's all I'm sure of. I'm sure of the "Here" simply because I recognize the town. I'm sure of the "I"—even more so than when I left—because I was forced to get to know myself better. And, I'm pretty sure of the "AM" for I believe I'm still alive.

While living—I mean, staying at the place where I spent the last twenty years, I was allowed one visit per week. I could also receive mail. By car, the trip from here to there, minus layovers at all of the out of the way stops, can be reduced to a little over three hours and just under 200 miles. Even though my family and friends all owned cars, I was lucky to get two visits a year. And while the U.S. Postal Service is slow, it wasn't responsible for me having to wait two or three months for replies to most of my letters. When those visits and replies finally did come, I was always assured that I hadn't been forgotten. I was told it was a busy world out here. I believed them because it seemed they were pretty much busy all the time.

I scan the parking lot figuring that since my bus was late my ride might be on time. Everyone I see is a stranger. I don't recognize any of the cars. Of course, if I did, it would make it an instant classic; an antique. I

guess the arrival of my ride has been delayed. Probably just busy.

I walk over to a crowded bench that has a man sitting on it. I continue to the corner of the building and sit with my back against the wall, the paper grocery bag that holds all my belongings pulled in close next to me.

After thirty minutes, the bus stop is deserted. I would be happy to sit on the bench now but decide to walk home instead. Well, not really home. It's where my parents lived until they died. I grew up there. It still belongs to the family. So, it's close to home.

As I get closer to the house, I hear the sound of people gathered, and I smell the long-missed aroma of meat cooking on a grill. The closer I get the more people I hear. Just as my appetite spikes and I think I can't get any hungrier, I see a rainbow of color in the backyard and my desire to eat is lost.

I walk up to the fence unnoticed. I'm blinded by bright summer dresses, flowery shirts, and day-glow shorts. I'm so used to dull whites and dull grays that I feel assaulted by the onslaught of colors.

I step inside the gate. The clang of the latch alerts someone to my presence. I hear my name, and the twenty or so people start moving in my direction to welcome me home. I press back against the gate and am

left with no escape. Thankfully, the mob pulls up a few feet short. My brother has worked his way to the front, and I relax a little when I see him. It's only then that I realize the grocery bag is on the ground next to my feet, and I'm standing in a defensive posture with my hands up in front of me. He gives me an odd look and asks why I didn't call from the bus station. I tell him I didn't think about it, which is true since I haven't used a phone in twenty years. And besides, I don't know this number.

He smiles, I drop my hands, and he gives me a hug. Looking over his shoulder, I watch the others form a line behind him. When he releases me and steps away, another person steps up. It only takes a moment before I cease to feel like a guest of honor at a welcome party and start feeling like I'm being consoled at a funeral: the death of the last twenty years of my life. With that, I understand the party is more for them than it is for me. It's meant to put their guilt to rest. Before I left for prison, I loved these people. And I believe they loved me. My love was tested by twenty years. Theirs was tested by 200 miles and their willingness to send mail without an "e" in front of it.

Now, as these people walk up to me, not really meeting my eyes, and mumble rehearsed words that fall flat, I sense the depth of their discomfort. I



realize that even though I'm no longer incarcerated it will be easier for them if I continue to be a stranger in their busy lives.

-Michael Gaston

Memories: Hold 'em, Hug 'em, Horde 'em

I keep my memories in a locked box, deep inside my soul. I only bring them out late at night, after my cellie is asleep. I pull them out and scatter them about. I pour them gleefully through my fingers, like a miserable miser playing with his ill-gotten gold.

I pick up this one, then that one, holding it up to the light, watching it gleam, sparkle and shine in the ever-present darkness of my windowless concrete cell. Then, when I have had my fill for the nonce, I lock them away again, so no one can find them.

This place has stolen my youth, my family, my friends, my life...but I'll never let them steal my memories. They are too precious.

- Jason A. Wilcox

First Love

I saw her the very first time twirling on the monkey bars at my school. It was the beginning of the year when all the kids are wearing new clothes, new haircuts and smiling too much in the awkwardness of a new environment. I saw her from across the playground and fell in love. A young man's heart will sometimes experience these feelings at recess.

She was real skinny and had long, dancing hair and small feet. I knew all these things were fashionable and a sign of high class in a girl; I had learned this much from television and was pleased with myself for such refined taste. I did a lot of staring that day and the weeks that followed. That's how it is in the game of love.

Several days later, at the drinking fountain, I saw her standing in line and decided to get a drink myself. I was real close to her then, only eight feet away; and when she turned to leave I admired the side of her neck and the left ear. We were officially dating now and definitely a couple!

On day I spotted her talking to one of the big kids, a fifth grader. She looked like she was enjoying herself and I got jealous and decided never to talk to her again. We hadn't actually spoken before, but that was no excuse for her to cheat on me, so I got pretty aggressive with a tether ball that day to quell my broken heart.

I was quickly over my pain and started loving her again. A woman's mysterious ways will do that to a man and rebuild his courage to carry on.

On the last day of school, as I waited on the sidewalk for my bus, I saw her on her bus and our eyes met. We smiled at each other and my heart nearly

separated from my body! I never saw her again. I wonder what her name is?

-James Duncan

First Love

The quintessential dingy, blue-eyed blonde is what she was. My very own Christina Applegate was Kelly in the late 80's sitcom *Married... With Children*, complete with great looks, great body and as much snap as a soggy cracker.

Yet, even after 23 years and two wonderful children, I'm as in love with her today as I was the day I first laid eyes on her. Amazingly enough, she's still in love with me. Which is rather ironic considering we've been divorced for the last 13 years—and she's been remarried for the last 4!

I was sentenced to 8 years my first time in prison. It was aggravated time so we both knew I'd be gone for a minimum of four years. With that in mind, I couldn't expect her to put her life on hold. Letting go was painful, but we both knew it was for the best. Besides, I'd put her through enough pain and misery as it was. There was no reason to add to the already mounting pressures she was faced with in raising two children on her own.

It wasn't until May of 2002 (a little over 7 years) that I saw her again. I had just been released and after a lengthy phone conversation, she agreed to meet me under the bridge, a somewhat secluded area by a ship channel. She and I spent many intimate moments there as kids, and even after we were married...with children. It was just a nice quiet place to relax and stare out into the bay where water was stretched for miles and miles. Meeting her that day was both one of the best and most painful days of my life.

She was in a relationship at the time. And, as I held her while she cried uncontrollably on my shoulder, we both knew that we'd never be together again. Not as a couple, anyway. Too much time had passed, too much water under the bridge. She had another little girl then, and she had to think about her, too. I understood.

I found myself back in jail five short months later, charged with a capital offense. My prior sentence paled in comparison to the punishment of life (in prison) or death (by lethal injection) that was now lingering over my head like the darkest of clouds.

Kelly could have abandoned me then. I certainly couldn't have blamed her had she elected to do so. Thankfully, she didn't. In spite of the howling of her significant other, she became my most devoted supporter, next to my mother, that is. She took my children to visit me regularly, and for the duration of my

7-day trial, she sat at my mother's side each and every day. What more could I have asked for?

She got married a year after I was convicted and sentenced to life.

The young, beautiful, dopey blonde that once wanted to call a Ford dealership to arrange for our daughter's Barbie Corvette to be repaired (true story!) has long since been transformed into a strong, confident (and still slightly dingy) woman. I thank her every chance I get for unwavering support and love, and especially for keeping my children in my life. A life that would be meaningless without them.

-Gilbert Davila

Color

Color was a large part of my life on the street. Color is something I long to have around me. There are no colors but dull hues in prison. The lack of color is depressing.

The officers wear green and tan. The inmates wear light blue and dark blue. The walls are the color of drab cement. There is no paint on the walls. The metal doors are a dark blue. Our sheet, blankets, and towels are a rusty wine color. We are only allowed white sneakers and grey or white thermals and sweat suits. The electrical appliances we are allowed to purchase can only be made from clear see-through plastic. Our boots are brown. Our jumpsuits are orange.

How I long to have color in my life. I would dye my hair a bright red, paint my fingernails and toenails bright, eye-catching colors. I would wear loud colors. I would paint the walls in various color combination. I want beautiful drapes with many layers of different textures.

If I were allowed to have colors in my life, I would feel as if I am living life.

-Ralph Patrick Fuller

Believe it or Not

Believe it or not, prison pervades my psyche so much that I can't even dream without some aspect of prison life popping up. However, minute, no matter how small, prison life is slowly invading even my sleeping thoughts. My unconscious mind.

About a month back I had had a dream about me being out. It was a warm, sunny, autumn afternoon. I was walking down a sidewalk looking into the various storefronts that I passed by. There was clothing stores filled with the latest fashion. A barbershop with laughing men and even a small boy receiving a haircut seated upon a stool placed upon the barter's chair in order to elevate him.

This dream was so clear to me that I could even hear the music blaring out of the bodega's (grocery-

store's) speakers as I strolled. "Juanito Alemanic" by Hector Lavoc. It was like it was the there music to my own private screening of this particular dream.

I was enjoying walking in a crowd of people. People walking at their own respective paces. Dressed in a myriad of hues fabric unlike those who walk with me in here. All dressing alike and in double file like toy soldiers.

When I got to the corner I realized that I had come up to a locked gate. And at the other side of this gate stood a C.O. with the key. He would have to open the gate in order to allow me to cross the street.

I awake at that point staring up at my cell bars. Gone were the children's laughter, the women's smiling faces.

After 14 years of incarceration the dynamics of prison has seeped into my very subconscious.

I have since wondered how far has this progressed? How bad am I altered from that 20 year old young man who once entered these confines. And more importantly to me, how much damage has been done and how much of that damage will I take with me when I'm finally released?

This environment plays a bigger part in my life than is normally appreciated or noticed upon first meeting me or anyone else that has been in prison for any length of time. But damage has been done. So things go unnoticed. Other are quite obvious to the discerning observer. But nonetheless, scares of this experience I shall carry with me. Some visible and some not so apparent. Believe it or not...

- Michael Santana

The Creative Writing program was a special feature we were glad to create, yet it showed us all that it takes a lot of effort to give individuals special attention. It is really easy to see how friends and family of incarcerated individuals get so caught up in their lives on the outside that they let the relationships of those out of sight drift away. I can imagine they feel bad for it, but I can see how difficult it is for them to take care of what seems like the pressing affairs of their lives on the outside, while to you inside it seems like an easy task for them to sit and write a letter or visit. We constantly struggle at PE with how much individual attention we can give any of you and still maintain the programs that benefit the many. It is easy to understand how your loved ones on the outside get constrained by the pressures of time, and I encourage all of you to be forgiving to them when it appears they are not giving you all that you need. Listed below are the programs that we have created for all members of Prisoner Express to join. I hope some of

them are exciting to you, and that they provide you with information that is valuable and stimulating.

BOOK MAILING - Every month our aim is too send out 200 packages of books. Through your letters to us, you let us know what types of books you are most interested in receiving and we try to match your interests with the many donated books we receive.

I constantly hustle books from where ever I can find them. We organize them by subject and then we read your letter and do the best match we can. It helps if you give us as various topics to chose from as some types of books are hard for us get as many as are requested. High demand books that are hard to keep in stock are dictionaries, westerns, sci-fi, Native American, and African American studies. Currently we have about a 4 month wait on books. When you send in a request you are put at the back of the list and you wait until your letter reaches the top of the pile. We keep all records on the computer so you can write as often as you like if you change your mind about the type of books you want and we can update your request by stapling all your requests together. We try not to send any 1 individual more than 2 packages a year. We'd like to be able to send more, but as it is, we have many people still waiting still for their first package.

POETRY PROJECT - Toby, a student intern, has been leading this venture. A few months ago he sent out our 2nd Poetry anthology. I wonder how many of you received it. Some of the poems were quite raw in their emotion. I have not received much feedback from those of you who received the poetry anthology and I start to worry that it was not delivered. I am going to print the names of all the folks who we mailed out the anthology to. Check and see if your name is on the list and let me know if you did not receive the packet.

Adams, Wakee; Alcantar, Julio; Alvarez, Anthony; Anderson, Charles V.; Anderson, Antonio; Avila, Robert; Barnett, John Christopher; Battles, Theresa; Bauhaus, James; Bederson, Eric; Belle, Michael; Belot, J. Victorious; Benavidez, Robert; Benson, Ivan; Betts, Kevin; Birdo Jr., Burnice; Blast, Synthia China; Bobo, J.C; Bonilla, Ross; Boyle, Theodore; Bradshaw, Donald; Brannon, Christopher J.; Brantley, Rick; Brown, Justin; Calihan, Kenny R.; Camberos, Ruben; Cameron, Charles; Cano, Joseph Angel; Carrera, Angel; Carson, Stanley; Chaplar, William; Chiaia, Zachariah; Chiu, Jonathan; Christ, John E.; Clark, George E.; Clemens, Justin; Clemons, Darell D.; Coleman, Jimmy Don; Conger, Jason; Contreras,

Benito; Contreras, Carlos; Corley, Derrick; Crate, A.J.; Crawford, Dana; Cummings, Michael; Curtis, John; Davila, Gilbert M.; Davis, Carl; Davis, Gregory; Davis, Tamieko; Davis, William; Dean, Danny; Dedrick, Corey; Deistchle, Charles; Demps, Keith; Diaz, Fernando; Diles, Delvin; Dixon, Brandon Jamal Sr.; Dossey , Brent; Doyle, David; Duran, Santiago; Elder, David; Embree , James ; Everett, Cecil; Flores, Juan Gabriel; Floyd, Leroy; Fournier, David M.; French, Kenneth J.; Fuller, Ralph Patrick; Gable, Vernell; Gadsdon , Edward F.; Gamez, Jesus; Garcia, Antonia Herrera; Garcia, Joseph; Gardner, Kenneth; Garvin, Brandon; Garza, Richard L.; Glass, Robert; Glass, Timothy; Glover, Troy; Golden, Richard; Gonzales, Valentine; Gordon; David; Govea, Jesse M.; Gregory, Gary; Gurganus, R.; Gutierrez, Jesus; Hacker, Ronald; Hamilton, George; Hampton , Tim; Hampton, Darrell; Harris, Charles; Harris, Kevin; Hernandez, Fernando; Hook, Gus A; Hooper, Jonathan; Houston, Shawn; Ivy, Joseph; Jacobs, Kenny R.; James, Deanna; James, Kyndall; Jaramillo, Guillermo; Jaso, Eddie; Javier , Jesus; Jenkins, Willie; Jennings, Connal Lee; Jimenez, Gary; Johnson, Johntrwell; Jonathan, Thompson; Jones, Chester; Jones, Frederick; Jones, Reginald; Jordan, Charles; Joshua, Egnacio D.; Keeling, Donald J.; Kightlinger, Terry; Knight, Jerry; Laislette, Michael; Lamblette, Michael; Lathrop, Tim; Leslie, Theodore; Lira, Jorge; Little, Lamarr; Lopez, Aaron; Lopez, Francisco J.; Lopez, Luis; Lusik, D.; Lyle, George Randall; Mallard, Reggie; Manthei, Christopher; McAfee, Craig; McCollister, Jackey R.; McElreath, James; McGinn, Paul; McKinney, Michael; Meier, James; Melendez, Osvaldo; Melvin-Troy, Williams; Mendiola, George; Menendez, Erik; Michael, Thompson; Miller, Michael; Mollett , James; Montogomery, Shawn; Moore, Kevin; Moreno, Jason; Mosby, C; Mosby, C; Muller, Kirk Brandon; Murdoch, Charles; Neal, Sean; Nieto, Ricardo ; Nkosithani VII, Allah-ade E; Nowell, Clifford; Nye, Larry; Ochoa, Juan; Otting, Chris; Ovalle, David; Page, Bryan; Pearson, Rickey; Peña, Juan; Pierce, C.P.; Ponce, Pablo; Powers, Shane; Price, Chantell; Quintana, Sergio J.; Quintanilla, Tony; Ramirez, Francisco; Ramirez, John; Ramirez, Rudie; Ramos, Chief J.; Ramos, Jesus; Ramsey, Labobby; Raul G., Tamez; Reeves, Freddie; Reyes, Ray; Rhodes, William; Rivera, Daniel; Roberts, Brian; Robinson, Kortni; Robinson, Tyrone Demtrius; Rodriguez, Andres; Rodriguez, Daniel ; Rodriguez, Josue A.; Rodriguez, Kristopher G.; Rogers, Donald; Rogers, R.W; Rosales, Jesus J.; Samuel, Davis; Sanchez, John H.; Sanchez, Ray; Sandoval, Jaime; Santoya, Joe Evans; Savell, Brandon; Scuderi, Salvatore J.; Seugo , Ampelio; Sewell, Randy; Shave, Adam; Shaw, David; Shedd,

Marcus; Shelley, Peter J.; Shifflett, Dale; Siemer, Curtis; Sims, William; Sinclair, Robert; Slaymaker, J.S.; Smith, Lacy Mack; Snyder, David; Solis, Eddie; Solis, Armando; Sollars, Jackey R.; Spicer, Russel; Steele, Tommy Ray; Street, Eric; Sutton, Sheldon L.; Tapia, Anwar; Teehee, Travis Wayne; Thomas, Earl Eugene; Thompson, Johnathan; Thompson, Michael; Underwood, Donald; Valero, Juan; Vance, Geri; Vasquez, Roger; Vega, Johnny E.; Wake, Brian; Walck, Chris; Warwick, Kenneth; Webb, Christopher; West, Reginald; Williams, DeAndre; Williams, Rowland; Wilson, Ricki; Wilson, Ruben; Woodard, Kenneth; Young, Larry

We are in the process of gathering poems for our 3rd anthology, and I want to know if they are being delivered to you before we publish the 3rd volume. If you send in a poem you are automatically put on the mailing list to receive the 3rd anthology, which should be published sometime late fall 2008. You can send in as many poems for consideration as you'd like. If we chose your poem we will write to you and ask you to submit a short biography about yourself that we will include in the publication. We will both print it and put it on our website www.prisonerexpress.org. In that way many folks will have a chance to read the selected poems. Remember we can only choose a limited amount of poetry to be included in the publication, and we invite you all to submit entries.

Poetry Workshop – *The first assignments from the Poetry Tutoring Workshop are now rolling in, and I couldn't be more pleased (or proud) with the results. Although most of the poets have previously written only in free verse, or have only written about their own personal experiences, I can see them branching out into more “classical” forms, as well as diversifying their poetic subjects.*

Over the next week or so, I'll be putting together a packet on editing and fine-tune it to the specific needs of the poets as more poems come in.

If I've been slow (slower than normal, that is) responding to anyone's letters/poems, it's because I moved at the beginning of July and immediately left for three weeks in Wisconsin for a Wilderness First Responder (medical) training. As I work on the next packet, I'll be going through my papers and catching up on correspondence and feedback... all apologies for the delay!

*In solidarity,
Toby*

The poems on the next few pages are from the first Poetry Workshop assignments:

Ballades
Livin' Is Hell...
Dana Crawford

There's a basin in my mind
Where thoughts float untouched and unbound.
Why has cancer chosen her, for its shrine!
Pilferin' from her life, leavin' her unwound.
Chemo regresses, only to again be founded.
Still, spirit runs threw her like ah river threw a dale.
Loss of pound, she fights back pound for pound.
Would you agree... Livin' is Hell?!

Far and between, the second behind—
Minute and hour, and for she fear countin' them down.
Her demise unknown, though she's slowly dyin',
So I touch thought and bring it inbound.
Uneffected by sight or sound, nice and surely profound.
Oftimes unwell, hopin' to be heard, if only a spell,
She fights not to be taken outbound.
Would you agree... Livin' is Hell?!

Through her quest, I pray for triumph,
With every shot missed, she strives for rebounds...
Severely in pain, sometimes still she climbs,
Refusin' to be moved without holdin' her ground.
Better than most, worse than some, he life's confound.
I tell no tale, she's dyin' to get well,
Through smile and frown, quite astound.
Would you agree... Livin' is Hell?!



Life lost only to be refound,
Thoughts swell, as thoughts hail.
But still, she stands upon her mound.
Would you agree... Livin' is Hell?!

Tilted World
Gary Gilbert

Talking heads delight in convolution
Into chains your brains they wish to remand.
Every fourth year they have the solution—
The other three their heads are in the sand.
Despite the sinking ship, on played the band.
Celluloid realities we are shown,
Mass-produced fantasy makes life less bland.
A Crazy, Tilted world we have known.

Spoken words of change and revolution,
A house asunder surely can't ever stand.

Evolving into de-evolution—
Beyond absurd, we must seek to fly,
Past despair and vice gotten out of hand.
We must partake in the seeds we have sown,
Fighting to feed rapacious demand.
A Crazy, Tilted world we have known.

Discontent rampant, joy, confusion,
When lives of your neighbors appear so grand.
Behind their own eyes this is an illusion—
Also trying their best to understand
If it is possible to counterdemand,
The opportunities hastily blown.
Wasted in desire and contraband.
A Crazy, Tilted world we have known.

Prince, you are selling but there's no demand.
Like birds on the wing your chances flown—
Each a means to a end, our tactics underhand.
A Crazy, Tilted world we have known.

Villanelles

The Green Dweller
Uri Small, Sr.

Attention Folks, there goes the Green
Luxor dweller in desert room
With Head Almighty and Legs that's Mean

Armani suits signify he's clean
And represented by loud chips tone
Attention Folks, there goes the Green

Bently and Benz, he was seen
Walked by valet to full Rib-eye's Bone
With Head Almighty and Legs that's Mean

All year long you'll see him feign
Not one used credit, never markers long
Attention Folks, there goes the Green

For hobby, and just because he loves to reign
In the Blond's applause while Losers moan
With Head Almighty and Legs that's Mean

Learn't profit skill since age sixteen
Watched Wayne and Wayne, somehow became Clone
Attention Folks, there goes the Green
With Head Almighty and Legs that's Mean

O Where is Yesteryear?
Bobby Biffel

No more governments shall we fear
Love and hope and peace, what we need
O come the days of yesteryear

A sword slays one, and not much more
No tanks, no bombs, no guns should be
No more governments shall we fear

When work and play were equal chores,
Pure fields of clover, romps of glee
O come the days of yesteryear

Tourneys and jousting just for score
No nations at war, no refugees
No more governments shall we fear

Sprites and myths across forest floor
Naked witches, mead, and free orgies
O come the days of yesteryear

Magic and music, feats galore
To Scheol with your technology
No more governments shall we fear
O come the days of yesteryear.

Sestina - If We Could Go Chasing Heaven
Doc

Oh the things we consider when one man dreams
Choosing then what ways in which to believe
Consummating reason and intuition to make allowance
for an end

All things that would or could
Create within themselves a Hell or Heaven
That we could not travel so far to reach or move so far
beyond

For if we falter wondering here or find our way beyond
Convinced the path, no matter how broken is paved with
stones to heaven
Straight into the opening of the parable of our dreams
Then the virtues of the trials faced. We can ultimately
believe
If we triumphed over what we never should,
undoubtedly we could
Stand face to face with fate with grace upon our end

Something so magnificent should ever end
But life was made on a stage beyond
And I'm sure we'd understand it if we could
Yet that mirror only shows its reflections in dreams
Which makes it hard sometimes to believe
But my time spent pondering has become my heaven

From this world of confusion I understand heaven
It is a place where war and pestilence end
Where there's truth in peace and every stranger can
believe
Where no intrinsic meaning is placed beyond
The ability of the soul, and its undaunted dreams
Oh, this is the place I would reach if I could

And come what may those things that could
Hinder me from my lot in Heaven
Vile thoughts and ambitions that infest my dreams
They are merely instant means to an instant end
Those chains I have long left laid beyond
In the wake of the strength I have now to believe

And it is this strength, I do believe
That created life so that it could
Hold will enough to push beyond
The barriers that sometimes blockade heaven
When every attempt just seems to end
In the sweat of broken dreams

But who knows if heaven would be the end,
If we could go chasing dreams?
There could be someplace far beyond, and this I
must believe!

Free Flow - Music

Bobby Biffel

My preference of music is metal; loud, deep, low,
Fast or slow; it doesn't matter.
When the rifts of that bass guitar permeates your body,
Moves your soul;
And the wail of the drums races against them both.
They all join with the lyrics to send you to a
transcendent Consciousness
Created and directed by the words.
Inspires into you a wide range of emotion,
That alleviates your cares for the next three minutes

Haikai of Haiku - “Sweltering heat draws”

Gary Gilbert

Sweltering heat draws
My face towards the sweet breeze
June bugs soar nimble

Over the green fields
Climbing high upon the blue
Gold sun emblazens

Brazen wings declare
The arrival of solstice
Dance into heaven

Assonance - Along My Merry Way

Doc

The endless drone of my favorite song
And unused hanky when my team plays the Yankees
A crisp dollar bill for a coffee refill
That I found by my toes in a public commode
Extras at the Fast Food place that day by day keep me on
my merry way

Brand-new books of cops and crooks
A pretty girl dressed in Sunday's best
A long distance phone from mom back home
A hat and shirt for my terrier Squirt
A day that ends in the company of friends
Is a great way to stay along my merry way.

When it's helter-skelter I find my shelter
In a hot Jacuzzi with a scary movie
For years the suspense has been at the expense
But now it's all aimed at the 2008 Olympian Games
So on towards forwards I'm sure my rewards
Will join me as they may along my merry way

ART SHOW – I am glad to let you know that once again PE will sponsor an art show of your works on the Cornell Campus. We will award prizes and hopefully sell some of your art to pay for this venture. Please share your art work with us for this event which helps familiarize students on the campus with the PE program. We can use this show to recruit new volunteers for our various projects.

The submissions have already started coming in. We have received some very good portraits these past weeks, as well as some very highly skilled paper folding art. **We will collect your art (any medium is acceptable) through October 15. We will invite in a panel of student and faculty artists to judge the art work.** Last year we offered prizes of \$100, \$75 and \$50 for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners. We also had 12 \$20 scholarships for promising artists to buy art supplies. I plan on a similar prize structure again for this contest. Some of the art will then go on display on the Cornell Campus for a month long show. Last years show was popular, and quite a few pieces sold on opening night. Last year we sold enough to cover the prize money. My hope would be that one day we would sell enough to fund some of PE's programming. A number of you recently received the How to Draw pamphlet. Perhaps you can use that to help you with your art piece. While the 1 thru 3rd prizes go to artists with already developed skills, the scholarships for art supplies are picked using a variety of measures including potential, so it is possible for anyone who enters to win one of those prizes.

We will re-offer the drawing packet again in this newsletter. It was very popular and some of you have requested it since it was last mailed out. We need to get up to 200 requests before we can take advantage of bulk mailing rates. We can't send it out easily to individuals as the costs are too prohibitive. When we can mail it out by bulk mail we are much more able to afford the cost. If you have not received it already and want to improve your drawing skills please signup for this informative and stimulating packet.

HISTORY PROJECT - For those of you already involved, we hope to build on the information we have presented in the past 3 units where we traced the rise and fall of first Greek and Roman Culture. Our last unit focused on the Barbarian colonization of the old Roman Empire. This next unit will focus on the Rise and Spread of Islam. This will not be approached from a religious perspective, but rather a historical study of the movement of people and ideas. We will probably study the period of time from the Prophet Mohammed to the late 14 hundreds when the

Moors were driven out of Spain. A time period of around 700 years. It should be interesting and provide you with a better background to understand some of the current tensions in the world. There will be some discussion questions included in the mailing. If you answer them you will receive a compilation document of some of the most interesting answers we receive from all the participants.

Just as in the Barbarian invasions unit just mailed, this unit will again focus on how migrating cultures effected changes in the world.

ANATOMY PROJECT - Many of you like to work out and develop your body. I thought a class focused on some of the different muscles and how they work could be interesting. We will also present information on cells and how they work, how groups of cells create organs and how they work, and then how groups of organs can create systems (circulation, digestion, etc.) and how they all work as well. This may have to be a multipart unit as there is so much material to cover. The unit will also feature the opportunity to draw some anatomical shapes. It will be an excellent chance for those who received the drawing packet to practice their developing illustration skills. For many the Bible, Koran or Torah is the word of god. For me it is the body. Studying anatomy is the closest way I know to stand in awe of the creative spirit behind life. Reading words in a book ascribed to God always got the skeptic in me questioning who really wrote this and why. The human body, life and how it works, is very different from that. This truly reflects creation and a power beyond words. I hope many of you are interested in joining this study group. You all own a copy of our textbook, your body, and now here is a chance to get to know yourself a little better.

CHESS PROJECT - A few months ago Ettie came to the library and offered to volunteer with the PE program. In learning more about her interests I found out that she is a chess master. I asked her to write a chess column for PE and below is her first report. It will probably interest all the students of the game. I will ask Ettie to create a few more articles about Chess and strategy. Rather than include them in the future PE Newsletter, I will mail them out in a chess strategy pamphlet. If you are a player and want to receive this pamphlet of information please sign up for this project Ettie's words will be italicized.

Ten years ago, I learned how to play chess.

"Learned" is too pleasant a word. Ten years ago, my stereotypically ambitious, foreign father first began drilling me with chess lessons for a miserable two hours a night. First-generation, Bulgarian mentality dictates that it's never too early to start résumé boosting, and competitive chess looks great on college applications.

I've spent 9 1/2 out of the last ten years hating everything to do with chess. Every social problem, every bad grade, and every fight with my parents I attributed directly to the board game that dominated my life. On my eighteenth birthday, while my fellow newly-turned-18 year olds smoked their first cigarettes or got tattoos, I defiantly told my father that I was never going to play chess again. Six months later, I found myself in Turkey representing America in the Youth World Chess Championship. What happened???

As much as I hate to admit it, chess has a mysterious force over me, a force that extends far beyond family pressure. For the longest time, I was very confused to discover myself willingly scheduling chess tournaments. After considerable thought, however, I think I've finally pinpointed at least some of the appeal.

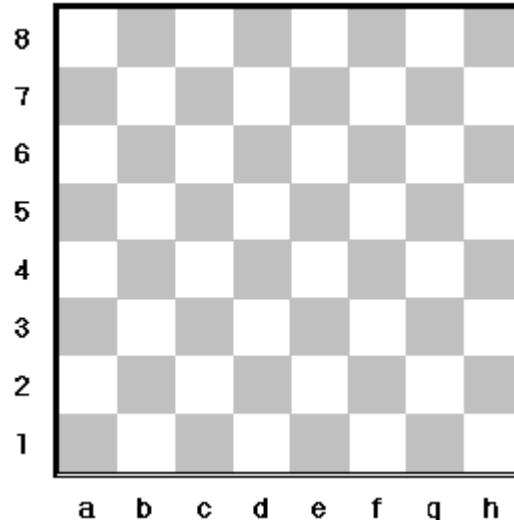
I am a dweller. After years of introspection and personal growth, hours upon hours of Oprah episodes telling me to live in the "now," and victory over adolescent insecurity, I still dwell on past events- past mistakes- and wish more than anything that I could redo my life- start over. Playing chess is the only time in my life where even the most embarrassing or disappointing outcome is temporary. Every new game is a new start, a new chance to prove my worth to the world.

It's not that simple though. As much as I would like to have a spotless record in chess, it's precisely the stupid mistakes of previous games that make me a better player. The most important thing that playing chess has taught me is that there is no such thing as starting over, both in chess and in life. Although the offer of a clean slate is tantalizing, if I were given the chance to redo my life, I would make all of the same mistakes all over again. As much as some of my past actions make me cringe, they keep me from making similar cringe-worthy choices. So instead of dwelling and hopelessly wishing to change the past, I'm trying to tackle the world armed with lessons from both the good and bad memories I've accumulated.

Because chess has played such a pivotal role in my life, I'd like to put together a chess packet for anyone

out there that is interested. Although the exact details haven't been hammered out yet, the chess packet will include a combination of basic strategic advice, games played by chess icons, and diagrams to sharpen chess tactics (such as a position that has a forced checkmate in a certain number of moves). If that sounds like something you'd be interested in, let us know. ☺

All the best,
Ettie



Just so you know what you're getting yourself into, I'll give you a taste of some of the things that will be featured. Here's a game between the American chess legend Bobby Fischer and one of my all-time favorite chess players, Mikhail Tal. The game was played in 1959, and it is one of four losses that Fischer suffered at the hands of Tal. The analysis comes from Fischer's book, My 60 Most Memorable Games, and the chess base Fritz.

A chess board is set up like a grid, with the letters A-H on the bottom and the numbers 1-8 on the side. The square d5, for example, is the square that is both in the column d and the row 5.

Chess Shorthand:

Q= queen, B= bishop, K= King, N= knight, R= rook, nothing= pawn (ex. e4 means that the pawn moves to the square e4)

x= captures (ex. Bxe4 means that the bishop captures the piece on the square e4)

0-0= castles on the kingside (the move where the king and rook exchange places)

0-0-0= castles on the queenside

!= good move

?= bad move

+ = check

Each turn is numbered, followed by two moves; the first is white's and the second is black's. (ex. "1. e4 c5" means that on the 1st turn, white moved a pawn to e4 and black moved a pawn to c5)

Game Setup:

The white pieces are set up on rows one and two the black pieces are set up on rows 7 and 8. There are 8 white pawns on row 2 and 8 black pawns on row 7.

Columns A-H are labeled with A on the left side of the white player through H on the right side of the white player. For the player with the black pieces, A is on the right and H is on the left.

White pieces (from left to right):

Ra1, Nb1, Bc1, Qd1, Ke1, Bf1, Ng1, Rh1, 8 pawns on row 2

Black pieces (from the white's left to right):

Rh8, Ng8, Bf8, Ke8, Qd8, Bc8, Nb8, Ra8, 8 pawns on row seven

- 1. e4 c5**
- 2. Nf3 d6**
- 3. d4 cxd4**
- 4. Nxd4 Nf6**
- 5. Nc3 a6**
- 6. Bc4 e6**
- 7. Bb3 b5**
- 8. f4 b4**
- 9. Na4 Nxe4**
- 10. O-O g6**
- 11. f5 gxf5**

(Fischer put an ! on 11. f5.

Here, Black can't play 11... exf5 because 12. Bd5, Ra7 13. Nxf5!, gxf5 14. Qd4))

12. Nxf5! Rg8

13. Bd5 Ra7

(If Black moves 13... exf5 14. Bxa8, Qa5 15. Qh5, d5 16. Qxh7, Rg4 17. b3, Qd8 18. Qh3 with an advantage for white)

14. Bxe4 exf5

(Fischer gives 14. Bxe4 a ?, offering the alternative 14. Be3, Nc5 15. Qh5, Rg6 16. Rae1 as much better for white); however, Fritz says that after 16. Rae1, Rc7 17. Nb6, Ncd7 18. Nxc8, Rxc8 19. Nh4, Nf6 20. Qf3, Rg4 21. Bd4 White has an advantage but is not totally winning.)

15. Bxf5 Re7

(Fischer says that it is probably better to avoid exchanges with 15. Bd5 or Bf3 instead of 15. Bxf5. Most likely Fischer was right; after 15. Bf3, Nd7 16. Be3, Rc7 17. Kh1, Bb7 18. Bxb7, Fritz gives White a clear advantage)

16. Bxc8 Qxc8

(Fritz suggests 16. c3, Bb7 17. Bh3, Rg6 18. cxb4, Bg7 19. Bf4, Kf8 20. Qd2 with a much better position for White)

17. Bf4 Qc6

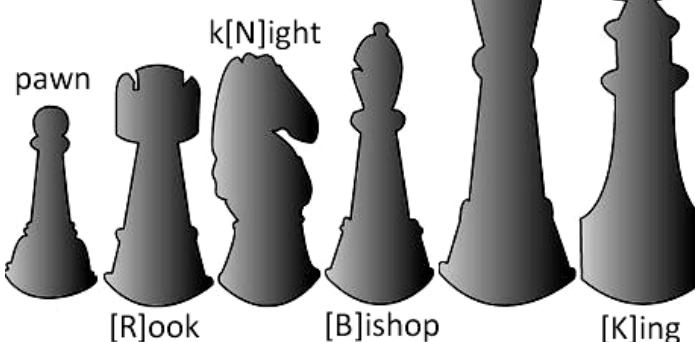
(Here, Fischer says that 17. c3 is the right move and if Black answers with 17... Qc6, 18. Rf2 leads to a much better game for White; however, Fritz says that instead of 17... Qc6 black can play 17... Qg4, after which White only has a small advantage.)

- 18. Qf3 Qxa4**
- 19. Bxd6 Qc6**
- 20. Bxb8 Qb6+**
- 21. Kh1 Qxb8**
- 22. Qc6+ Rd7**
- 23. Rae1+ Be7**
- 24. Rxf7 Kxf7**

(After this move, the position is completely lost according to Fritz. Fritz provides 24. Qf6, Kd8 25. Qxf7, Re8 26. Qxh7, Qd6 27. c3, bxc3 28. bxc3, Kc7 with an advantage for Black but not a won position.)

- 25. Qe6+ Kf8**
- 26. Qxd7 Qd6**
- 27. Qb7 Rg6**
- 28. c3 a5**

[Q]ueen



29. Qc8+ Kg7

(Fischer cites 29. Qc8 as the losing move. He offers 29. cxb4, Qxb4 30. Qf3+, Kg7 31. Qe2 and says this is a draw; however, here Fritz gives 31... Bd6 32. g3, Qb7+ 33. Qg2, Qf7 34. Rf1, Qxa2 35. Qb7+, Kh8 36. Qc8+, Rg8 37. Qc3+, Rg7 38. Qc6, Bb4 as winning for Black.)

30. Qc4 Bd8



50. Kb4 Kc7

51. Rb5 Ba1

52. a4 b2 0-1

JOURNAL PROJECT - Keeping a journal is a great way to explore your inner life as well as keep track of the stories of the day. It is also a way to draw out your memories. We invite you to keep a journal of your experiences and send it to us. We will create a file for you and keep your journal in order. We will look for student volunteers to type some of the Journals and put them online on our website www.prisonerexpress.org.. We have an introductory packet on how to keep a journal and some other pointers. If you are interested in writing about your life and observations, than please consider joining the Journal project. Below are some suggestions for those of you who want to start now. If you want the more lengthy list of suggestions please sign up for this program. We are waiting for 200 new enrollees before the next mailing will be sent out. If you are already enrolled, please keep sending in your submissions.

Journal Writing Tips

Keeping a journal is a great way to practice writing because it is so personal. A journal is not only a way to record the activities of your day-to-day life, but also a means of self-reflection and self-understanding. Because journals are private, they can be used to explore the inner emotional life that tends to get hidden in daily interaction with others. Journals are also a great way for aspiring writers to practice their craft. You can work on your writing skills, experiment with different forms, or try new styles. Some simple tips to help you get the most out of your journal:

Write nonstop. Your goal should be to write for at least 10-15 minutes at a time. If you get stuck, write "I'm drawing a blank" until something comes to mind.

Focus on ideas. The real satisfaction in keeping a journal is making new discoveries. Make that your goal.

Always date your entries. And make sure to read them from time to time to see how far you've come. This is a great way to get to know yourself a little better.

Push an idea as far as you can. You'll discover new thoughts and feelings when you write about an idea from many different angles.

Experiment in your writing. Write like your favorite author or someone you know. Write to make yourself laugh or to give yourself a pep talk. Make

lists, imagine a conversation with someone, write poetry or song lyrics...the possibilities are endless when you write using your own rules.

Don't write for anyone but yourself. Instead of worrying about how others would respond to your writing, focus on how you respond to your own thoughts, ideas and feelings as you write.

MATH PROJECT - Here is a project that is still languishing. It is hard to find a way to deal with the individuality the math class creates. I have to find a few volunteers who want to coordinate this project and keep it running smoothly. We have gotten out entry level packet together, but for those of you who succeed in that we are still struggling to create a math 2 program that makes sense and is easy to administer. I tried to cut corners by not creating records for each participant in the computer, and that just made keeping track of all of you even more confusing. We are still waiting for 200 new folks to sign up before we mail the next beginning math packet. Currently there are about 100 of you signed up so we should be ready to mail it soon. If you received a beginning math or math 2 packet and have not heard back from us that please let me know when you write next what phase of the program you were up to and where the communication broke down so we can get you going again exploring the world of math. We have a number of folks working hard developing lessons, and we just need to figure out a labor and cost effective way of delivering the material. Thank you for your patience with us as we struggle to figure out the best way of presenting these study units to you.

YOOGA INSTRUCTION PAMPHLET - We are still working on compiling a thorough introduction to yoga. The volunteer who was working on it, injured herself and was unable to continue focusing on the project. She is so skilled I have been patiently waiting for her to finish this packet. Now I see the wait is getting to long and another volunteer has stepped up and said she will take this on. She is developing the packet in lieu of paying the library fines she owes on overdue books. I will recruit folks to help in this project any way I can. Hopefully these lessons will be done soon. If you have already signed up for the yoga project we have you registered, but if not here is one more chance to join us in a course designed to make you more flexible in body and disciplined in the mind.

THME WRITING PROJECT - This is my personal favorite of all the projects we offer. To date it has worked like this. Every month we post a topic to write about. You can write whatever comes to mind on the subject. We will then send you a copy of what everybody else wrote on the same topic. We then recopy a few selections from each theme into this general newsletter. Due to printing and postage costs I limit the amount of themes that get reprinted in the newsletter. The only way to read them all is to submit a theme yourself. It is just like the poetry anthology in that regard. Your poem submitted is your ticket to receiving a copy of the anthology. Your theme writing submission is a ticket to receiving all of the selections submitted. I hope more of you chose to take part in this process. We are going to try something new this time around, and these new instructions will come at the end of the themes that are now before you to read. I have to tell you that I think the selected themes have a lot to offer anyone who reads them and I salute the writers included in this collection for sharing their stories with us all.

Animal Companions

Our Dog Ambrosia

It was early spring of 1988. My pregnant wife and I were newlyweds and had just moved into a little duplex with a small yard in inner-city Houston, Texas. Our good friend Robert, who was still working at the night club where Amy and I had worked, met, and fell in love, called us one day and told us he'd picked up a friendly, nice-looking, well-kept stray dog he'd found wandering near his Westside apartment. He'd had no inquiries from the notices he'd put up around the neighborhood, and he was allergic to dogs, so he couldn't keep her. Robert knew we'd just moved into the duplex and were considering getting a dog, so he invited us over to meet her.

We went over to his apartment and took a look at her through the glass door to his patio where he was keeping her. Sure enough, she was a pretty, mid-sized Spitz-looking mix, white with a brown patch on the hindquarters, and she was eager to

meet us. So we had a seat on his couch while Robert let her in. She immediately jumped right in both our laps! It was love at first lick! We couldn't help but be charmed and sold on her. Talk about destiny! So we quickly worked out the details, and came back a couple of days later to pick her up and take her home.

We decided to call her Ambrosia, and she did indeed prove to be a nectarine, heaven-sent blessing to us. She was young enough to still be quite playful, yet mature enough to be not too high-strung or insecure. She did soil the carpet a few times in the early days, but otherwise she was well-behaved. Amy and I soon trained her to obey a few simple commands, so we quickly became a fairly happy little household, with some extra love and protection.

We had plenty of fun and bonding with Ambrosia during those initial months. We particularly enjoyed taking her down the boulevard to Hermann Park on nice weekends. Amy put a red handkerchief around her neck to give her some extra pizzazz, and we tried to teach her to catch a Frisbee. She liked to chase it, but wasn't brave enough to catch it in midair, though she did pretty well at nabbing it once it hit the ground. And she helped our relationship be more loving and stress-free. We were looking forward to having our baby complete our fairly happy little family in a few months.

Unfortunately, at that time I was out on bail for a criminal case I'd been arrested for several months before. In May, after an eight month delay of the court hearing, my attorney (that my parents paid well) couldn't get me a probated sentence, like we were hoping and assuming, so I was sent to prison on a 10-year sentence. Amy took my unplanned departure to prison hard; she almost fell apart in the courtroom, and went through a lot of grief, anger, abandonment, and

despair soon afterward. The emotional impact and other health complications took their toll, and resulted in her having a miscarriage a month after I got locked up. Fortunately, she wasn't shy about asking for help from friends and family, and good ol' Ambrosia was a



great comfort to her at home alone during that stormy period.

My attorney was able to get the judge to agree to release me after four months on a “shock probation” filing, so I was released to intensive probation in September of that same year. Amy couldn’t afford to stay in our duplex by herself, so her dad was good enough to let her and Ambrosia stay in his garage apartment next to his house in the rural suburb of Katy. So I joined them there and got settled in while looking for a job and complying with my rigorous probation requirements. Again, Ambrosia played a key role, this time for me, as it took me over two months to secure a job. She helped keep my spirits up and my ample spare time filled with fun activities. We’d go out at least twice a day onto my father-in-law’s two-acre spread and frolic around the yard. Our favorite game was playing hide-and-seek amidst the two rows of brush lining the little drainage ditch on the back of the property. We also loved playing toss-and-fetch with her rubber balls or the pine cones in the yard. One day, we had a challenging adventure rounding up our neighbors’ escaped hogs and getting them back to their pen. Those times with Ambrosia made me feel like a carefree kid again.

After a few months, I’d found a secure job, and Amy’s younger sister Dana came to live with us (to escape an abusive step-father), and Amy became pregnant again, so we moved into a two-bedroom duplex closer into town. We had plans to make that a happy home and growing family, and it went pretty well for a little while. But I let my addictions and selfishness and fear of fatherhood get the best of me. So I agreed to go to a thirty-day inpatient treatment program. That went fairly smoothly, and soon after, we joyously (as best we could) welcomed our daughter Lisa into the world in October of 1989. Ambrosia was good with and protective of our baby, and we formed and maintained a good family bond, considering.

But I was still holding back from making a full commitment to recovery, and Amy and others could see that. So friends and family helped her decide that she’d suffered enough and that it was in her best interest to cut me loose and reduce the risks for herself and Lisa. She gave me her one-month notice in early March of 1990. I took it hard initially, but I soon acknowledged that she was doing the right thing. At the end of March, Amy, Dana, and Lisa all went to Austin to move Dana up there on a business-related venture, so that left me there alone with Ambrosia in our failed little home, facing the breakup of our family. Ambrosia was once again a great shoulder to cry on.

Amy’s father let her, Lisa, and Ambrosia move back

into his garage apartment, but due to carpet and property concerns, he wouldn’t allow Ambrosia to stay in the apartment or garage. So Amy had to chain Ambrosia up on a clothesline in the unfenced back yard.

When I went to visit them and pickup Lisa, it was really sad to see Ambrosia tied up like that. Lisa was still just crawling, and Amy was working full-time, so Ambrosia didn’t get much attention or exercise. I couldn’t keep her, since my apartment wouldn’t let me, and I didn’t make time to frolic with her during my visits like in the old days, so she was a pretty frustrated, lonely pup.

Eventually, Amy acknowledged that she wasn’t being fair to Ambrosia, even though they had a strong emotional bond, so she decided to ask her uncle, who had a kennel with two dogs of his own in his backyard, to take Ambrosia for a while. He and his wife and son agreed to keep her, so I joined Amy (and Lisa) when she took Ambrosia over there. (We were still good friends and loved each other.) It was a sad parting for all of us, and it didn’t help Ambrosia’s anxiety either. She still didn’t get the proper care, love, and attention, and she’d lost her job as companion, protector, and comforter.

Ambrosia eventually contracted some cancer-type disease (probably emotionally related) and Amy concluded that she (and I) wouldn’t be able to take her back any time soon. So she advertised to give Ambrosia away, and a kind woman was nice enough to give her a good home for her remaining days. I saw Ambrosia one more time at Amy’s uncle’s house, but it was hard to feel anything beyond sadness at seeing her, petting her, and parting with her that last time.

Looking back, I shed tears at the memory of how Ambrosia represented our and my failed attempts to create a happy family. She was a great, comforting, fun, unconditionally loving presence in our lives during that emotionally tumultuous time. GOD BLESS HER BEAUTIFUL SOUL! May she be well rewarded for her great selfless service to us! I look forward to the time when I can give such a dog the proper, well-deserved love, attention, and secure, purposeful home life throughout his or her remaining days.

-Andy Benander

Killers in Cages

Killers don’t deserve a second chance.

All those plump sparrows were an irresistible enticement for a hungry hawk and when he happened on the gas port he was as happy as a kid in a candy store. That was before he realized he couldn’t find the way back out. The sparrows could fly in and out through the mesh of the chain-link fence on the covered recreation yards, and had used them for protection for years, but

the hawk had to find that one opening if he was to get out. What had looked like a buffet had become a trap.

"You've got a choice this morning, Alabama. You can have recreation in a cage with a hawk or without one." Officer Meece quipped.

"Put me in with the hawk and I'll see if I can catch him." There really was no other choice unless I wanted to see the hawk dead and his feathers and claws part of some prisoner's craft supplies.

"I can't do that. It was a joke." Officer Meece was pretty new and had no idea how a convict's mind worked.

"Look, he's trapped and needs help. Give me a chance to see what I can do. You can't want to see him killed."

"Alabama, if you get hurt it'll be my ass in a crack, not yours."

"No it won't. No one will ever know."

Officer Gamble overheard us. He'd been around a long time, longer than the kid Meece had been alive, and he took my side.

"Put ol' 'Bama in with the hawk. Let that country boy catch him for us." Officer Gamble was looking forward to some entertainment.

"Thanks, Bossman." I went down to the last cage and joined the hawk. Officer Meece locked me in and took off the handcuffs. I watched him shake his head in wonder as he walked away.

There sat the hawk on the basketball goal. Regal. Vicious. Beautiful. An unrepentant killer if ever there was one. A full-grown red tailed hawk, his plumage mottled and ragged from fighting the chain-link and razor wire. He seemed young and inexperienced, but maybe that was just the way I saw him.

How in hell do I catch a hawk? If he stays in the top of the cage he'll be out of reach until someone is willing to knock him out of the air with the basketball. I ran a few laps to see how he'd react and watched him fly about. I stopped in the middle of the cage and took off my jacket in hope he'd give me a chance. I waited and shivered and hoped he'd land on the ground just once. He flew at the wire in a fury and screamed in frustration when the sharp barbs bit and held him. The sparrows screeched in terror as they cowered. With a wrench he tore free and was suddenly at the other end of the cage where he fluttered to the ground.

In two long steps, I was over him and had my jacket pinning his wings to keep him from hurting himself. The hooked beak caught my finger through the padded cloth, but his heart wasn't in it. When I only waited, he released his hold without drawing blood. Darkness calmed his fiery temper and he lay in my arms,

surrendered to his fate. I slid my hand inside the folded jacket to stroke his feathered breast and feel his heart beat and he accepted my touch.

Officer Meece came back with another prisoner for recreation and I passed the hawk out to be cradled gently in his arms.

"Be careful. Don't hurt him." I looked in his eyes and saw that he cared as much for that fierce bird as I did.

"It's okay. I'll release him behind the gym where he can have time to get oriented without anyone around."

"Thanks." It was a long walk and he didn't have to take it for a killer that wasn't likely to appreciate it and might take off his finger if he wasn't careful unwrapping the jacket.

Some prisoners insist on making pets of any creature they can catch. Not me. It's not every day that a killer gets a second chance. Seeing that hawk go free was mine.

- Daniel H. Harris

"Misty!" (Whistle) "Misty, here Girl!"

I have had various pets in the 31 years before my incarceration: dogs, cats, a rabbit and a ferret named Stanley, but Misty holds a special place in my memory. You see, Misty was a beautiful, sleek three-year-old Black Labrador Retriever, who, like most animals, had her own uniqueness and strange behavior. She never failed to let her moods be known.

Misty had this thing about hiding when she saw my truck, and even though I would see where she would go to hide, I would play the game with her. I would call her name and whistle, walk in the area where she would be hiding, but would never let it be known I knew she was there, and within reach. I would often notice her peeking out then retract back to hide. Not to disappoint her, I would act as if giving up and would go sit on the porch step (many times that is where she was hiding). Only then would she come out: running up to me with tail wagging vigorously, and doing all she could to lick my face. Sometimes in looking at her, it would look as if she had a smirk on her face in saying, "Ha-ha! You couldn't find me!" This game with her would always brighten my worst days.

Misty was protective of my daughter and with Nicky's (name changed) children. If our children had done something that constituted discipline to be served, they would run to Misty. Misty would not let us near the kids if she sensed the slightest hint of anger. This gave the necessity of calming before discipline was handed out.

Misty exhibited jealousy when Nicky and I would hug, cuddle, or sit together. She would step in between

us or jump in my lap to separate us. Many times we would have to put Misty outside, and the funny thing is Misty was Nicky's dog.

Unfortunately Nicky and I split up after a year and a half and I had to move out. I was more hurt because I was leaving Misty behind. As I loaded my truck I knew Misty could sense I would not return and she moped beside me. When I sat in my truck to leave Misty kept trying to get in with me. After quite a few times of pushing her back, she finally submitted and sat. In driving down the driveway and looking to the rearview mirror, I saw Misty had lain where I always parked my truck.

It has been 12 ½ years since the day I left Misty and have heard she had changed. She shunned away from Nicky and her new beau was less energetic.

Animals can play a big role in our life's make-up, and we can learn about a person by the mentality of their animal.

Misty will always hold a special place in my memory as a blessed animal companion.

- David Jackson

When I write or talk, I tend to do so in terms of tradition. At least in terms that once transcended across time and cultures until recently where, due to some very odd reasoning, they have slammed into a stone wall and stopped short of breaking into the postmodern mind. Today when we attempt to talk or write in terms of "truth" we are often scoffed at as clinging to some antiquated old tradition. What once made sense is laughed at as senseless today.

In my mind, animal companions are compared to those great pets like Ol' Yeller, Benji, or Lassie. Maybe even the pack mule, Ol' Number-Seven, from the show "Grizzly Adams." In each case, they were all animal companions to their human owners. Today, this old truth has gone the way of most cherished traditions when we have the popular opinions of those with minds like the professor Peter Singer, who says ultimately there is no difference between a person and a pig; nor does the person have any more right to ownership over the pig than the pig ought to have over the person. In this idea, we are all simply animals and may at times find some great companions; we are not humans having the great privilege to enjoy an animal companion.

On the surface it would seem right and noble to take up the cause of the animal rights groups and elevate the status of animals to that we as humans hold; it seems only human to do so. However, in all our attempts we have failed to elevate the animal and have only dragged the human down. The tragedy of it is: in dragging the

human down we have taken something from ourselves that the animal desperately needs from us; we have taken away responsibility. Animals do not need rights that are inherently human; they need the responsibility only rational beings can offer. When we begin to mesh humans and animals together to where we all just sprung from Darwin's "warm little pool," animals are left with anything but a better way of life and the idea of an animal companion is obliterated, swallowed by a very complex competition between evolving species that are goaded on by a nature that is "red in tooth and claw."

The result is confusion and we always either, as humans, act like animals or we expect animals to act like humans. Recently the San Francisco Zoo was closed temporarily after a tiger (who tipped the scales at close to a quarter ton) was able to escape from its "habitat." This magnificent animal then killed one teenager and mauled two others. It is a fundamental fact that you cannot tame a tiger. It is true that you can train a tiger to a certain degree, but you cannot turn a tiger into a tom-cat. Yet, however big a mistake it may be to think we can turn a tiger into a tom-cat, it is a colossal blunder to think that we can turn a tiger into a man named Tom and in doing so, reason with the tiger as if he were some acclaimed "Professor Tom" at some prestigious University.

On the day the tiger at the Zoo leaped over a wall and proceeded to be a tiger, the San Francisco police failed to think of a tiger in a traditional sense or in a true sense. They converged on the Zoo displaying very keen tactical strategy prepared to deal with a very violent and very big terrorist. If they had contacted the experts who could deal with a tiger then they may have been able to regain control over the situation and ensure that the habitat would be secure and up to standards to prevent any further attacks. Instead, they dealt with the tiger as a type of terrorist and ordered the animal to stop the absurd mauling and surrender, somehow thinking of a tiger as a rational being who might recognize the authority of the officers and give up. Hearing a representative of the San Francisco police department explain the events was quite incredible to me. He talked about the tiger refusing to heed warnings to "stop" and when the tiger advanced towards officers in a "threatening manner" they were "forced to shoot." The tiger died on the scene.

Traditionally when a person is in close proximity to a tiger, it is recognized as a threat even if the animal doesn't advance towards you – the threat only increases when the tiger is confused and surrounded by screaming people in the midst of a chaotic situation. When we as humans confound the nature of the animal, we can never

respond or react to the animal in any real or relevant way. If this view were not so prevalent today then that great and beautiful tiger would still be alive. We have to understand those old forgotten traditional truths that there is a fundamental difference between Professor Tom and the tom-cat. And as much as Professor Peter Singer talks about people and pigs being the same, I question his sincerity and his commitments to those ideas when he fails to invite any pig, however charming and intelligent, to share dinner at his home, or to lead one of his lectures at the University. In both instances it is certain that the pig would prove to be a pig to the profound shock of those who embrace Professor Singer's idiocy. Unless we come to terms with what an animal is, then it is doubtful that we can ever experience the true joy and wonder of what it is to really have an animal companion.

- J. S. Karch

Rowdy

To say I had over-protective parents is putting it mildly. They weren't over-protective, they just believed in complete isolation. To be blunt, they believed no child of any age should have any kind of a social life. I can count on one finger how many friends I had of the human persuasion, and I could subtract from that. Such an isolated life upon the Llano Estacado helped me grasp the true depth of cowboy ideology. My only friends in life had fur, feathers or had skins of a boot-maker's dream. I could write several stories of these pets (who were some of my best friends) but alas, I must choose only one. That choice would be Rowdy.

Rowdy came into my life in the spring of '77, during the completion of my eighth grade year, and in preparation of the dreaded freshman year. A lot of things happened that year: I got my first job at a full-service Exxon gas station (yeah! I'm old) and I signed up for driver's education, ready to add to the hazards of the U.S. highways. I was busily rebuilding my first car, a Ford Crown Victoria, and for the most part, I walked away from the world of simplicity and took the first step down that irreversible path of confusion. I had also signed up for the agricultural vocation class which made me a member in good standing of the F.F.A. (Future Farmers of America).

To be in the Ag Class meant I had to choose some sort of agriculturally-oriented livestock. At that time I had plenty of poultry, rabbits, and ducks along with two pigs and a horse (actually it was a hell-bent mule without social skills). In my F.F.A. project I wanted to expand into new venues of the ranching lifestyle; I wanted to raise a calf.

It was a simple enough decision, but one that didn't

set well with my mother.

Cattle cost money, especially the Angus breed so common with the local industry. I did not have the financial control which meant I had to compromise with my mother who wanted a milk cow. (I was horror struck with a vision: I would walk into the show arena with a milk cow. Me and my milk cow among dozens of Angus, Brangus, Herefords, and even Brahman

steers. How humiliating.) Fortunately, the local dairy didn't have any milk cows or newborn heifers. He did however have dozens of little black and white calves doomed for the slaughter house. I took pride in knowing my education would save at least one of these critters.

It was a crisp mid-May Saturday morning. We pulled up, parked, and after five minutes, my mom handed the dairy man the twenty-five bucks she had taken out of my paycheck from the filling station. Then we waited.

In those days, dairies stripped newborn calves (the males) from the cow on the second day of their lives. They were then put into a pen full of newborns until the dairyman had an opportunity to load them up in a trailer to drink a gruelish drink or starve; the milk being sold to market. These little fellas had a very cruel short life. And in the event that a calf was sold to an individual, the dairy hands simply drove a front end loader into the pen and scooped one of the calves up. This act often resulted in broken bones or their hide being ripped from their flesh.

Rowdy and I were destined to be together. We in many ways shared a kindred spirit. He was born for the sole purpose of money; I was born to work on a share-cropper's farm that ceased to exist. The big tractor came bouncing around the corner of a barn with its bucket twenty feet in the air. That was the first time I saw



Rowdy. He stood unsteady peering out over the edge of the bucket. He had a black and white face of rounded patterns across his head with one black and one white drooping ear. He was already bawling with a heart of gold. Then, without reason, the Mexican farm hand tilted the bucket, dumping Rowdy out. The small calf, two- maybe three-days old landed with a thud and went lifeless.

The dairy man cringed as my mom commenced to reading him the riot act. I ran over to this poor critter to see if he was still alive. I found no real injuries. A few minutes later he began to come around. I yelled at my mom. She and the dairy man were walking toward the holding to pick another calf. While she returned, I ran and grabbed my rope from the truck and looped it around Rowdy's head.

There was something different about Rowdy from the start. We learned he was the runt of a set of twins, his brother, nearly twice as big, had received the better part of the intravenous feeding. Rowdy was only three quarters the size of a normal calf which explained the long dangling ears. He had distinct black and white markings evenly distributed over his body. The border of these markings made an "S" across his face and a white spot was centered between his eyes framed by the black upper curl of the "S." He stood maybe thirty inches tall and was of a sickly frame. This was, by all

rights, the worst prospect of a show calf that a person could buy.

I studied him closely on the way home. We stopped at the feed store to buy a sack of Carnation instant milk and a bottle (or two). The whole trip was one long melodious drone of a calf being totally abused. Rowdy bellowed and bawled every minute and every mile. By the time we made it back to our little ranchette, the sun was well on its way to midday and the temperature had climbed to eighty (somewhat cool for West Texas). This mild weather would soon end at high noon with a high of almost one hundred. With the peak of day came the complete break of all hell.

It all began when I went to unload that little beast. I had carried the 25-pound sack of instant milk inside with the two one-quart milk bottles. On returning to the truck, I found Rowdy wound up in the rope so tight, it was pert near impossible for him to still be standing. Being of a superior species, I figured the easiest way to get him untangled was to slip the rope from his neck. I did! That little critter made a move that only Houdini could appreciate. He jumped straight up, head butted my chin then took off at full speed. I swallowed my snuff, gagged, turned green, then gasped for air while my stomach flipped then flopped.

Rowdy ran around the house, I followed. He saw me, cut to the inside, and retreated to the opposite side of the house, I followed. He darted past me, dipped low to evade my grasp and ran back around the house. At this point, I felt confident on my approach. I had him cornered against the front yard's livestock fence and the barbed wire fence to the pasture. I made my move. Rowdy spun about, kicked, ducked his head below the second run of barb-wire and escaped into the pasture. I ran and picked up the rope, then commenced chasing him. After all, I was the superior species and was armed with a rope ta-boot!

Rowdy hit the brier bush and mesquite-infested land without looking back. Now, a calf Rowdy's size can traverse rabbit trails with ease. That is not something a six-foot-two-inch teenager can do, but it wasn't a matter of what I *can* do but rather what I *had* to do: I couldn't let that little fella run wild. So, despite the pain and agony of mesquite and brier bush thorns, the dagged-bladed bear grass and culkaburrs, I persevered in the chase.

Near the back of our property, Rowdy dove through the fence into the side of Albright Road. After rambling a quarter mile down the roadway, he crossed over to take refuge in the tall greenish-brown cotton bushes. Had I the experience of a true cowboy, I would have let him do what young calves do to hide from danger,



hunker down in bushes. But I wasn't a seasoned cowboy yet.

I slipped through the fence, crossed the road and tried to run him down over the knee deep sandy furrows. Rowdy was just tall enough that I could see his little black and white back slither through the cotton stalks. My fear was that this varmint had gotten a whiff of Mexico and had his heart set on getting there. A half mile later, he darted out of the cotton field and turned east on the turn row. I came tromping out like a pack of hounds. Upon seeing me, Rowdy dove back into the cotton field headed right back for our home. At the time, he was a sight to see. His tongue dangled from his mouth extending a little longer than his drooping ears. He panted. He stumbled. But he kept on running toward the county road. A car came into sight traveling at high speed. I slowed my chase hoping Rowdy would slow. He didn't, he darted right out in front of that car.

The screech of tires was horrifying as clouds of black smoke roiled up around the car. I fully expected to come out of that cotton field to find baby-back road kill, a real crow's buffet. But, I didn't: there, on the other side, stumbling along the fence with a tongue swollen twice its size, dragging the ground, was a calf that had cheated death twice already. Rowdy continued his evasion as the car's driver introduced me to a language seldom heard.

My mother stepped out of the trailer, truck keys in hand. She tossed gravel coming out of our drive and circling the corner post of our place along the county road. Seeing Rowdy, she pulled to the side of the asphalt and moved towards us slowly. Rowdy, totally exhausted, finally stopped and dropped to his belly.

This would be the first opportunity to lasso this critter. I walked slowly and flung the rope. It wasn't to be so: Rowdy jumped up and darted at an ungodly fast speed for a young calf. This game of stop and lay long enough for me to throw the rope went on for an hour all over our property.

I almost roped a jackrabbit and two coveys of quail. I did lasso a barrel cactus, a dozen mesquites and one bear grass clump.

My mom yelled, "Quit fartin' around."

Perhaps it was those words I heard when Rowdy came running past. A little angry, I tossed the rope hatefully hoping to knock Rowdy out. "Fortune favors those who persevere." Rowdy kicked the rope up, the loop flipped up over one hind leg and tightened. Suddenly, he had a fifteen foot appendage dragging behind him. This is when I discovered why cowboys wear those heavy duty, 100% rawhide, soft leather gloves. That rope commenced to smoking; I smelled

burning flesh. Then the pain peaked from my fingers and palm: I was on fire for real!

As I said, Rowdy and I were destined to be together 'cause we were so much alike: both stubborn, both could endure a lot of suffering. He wasn't planning on giving up and I wasn't letting go, albeit I was surprised at how strong he was. Finally, I walked my hands down the rope and grabbed him. After wrestling him down, I hoisted him around my neck and rested him on my shoulders. Evidently, he realized I was no threat (or was just biding his time) and he quit struggling.

It took almost an hour to teach him how to nurse from a bottle. I fed him his first hearty meal of milk along with several quarts of water. I actually liked spending time with Rowdy. During the following months Rowdy and I spent most of our time together. We went rabbit hunting. I'd ride him as he ambled across the pasture. We swam in the livestock pond together. We played hide and seek. Like a big old hound, he'd follow his nose right to me. Not a day went past that I didn't make sure he got his two quarts of Carnation milk. Even in the late summer months when my Ag activities and rodeo began to get in my way, Rowdy always got his milk and a good rub down while we talked. He was by far one of the best friends if not the bestest friend I ever had.

I ended up raising a pig for F.F.A.. For some reason dairy cattle just weren't well appreciated on the Llamo Estacado. In the following March, my folks decided to sell out and move to Arkansas. They made a lot of promises, and had I known how much I would've lost, I'd have refused to go with them. But like a fool, I followed their dream. I had to sell everything, including Rowdy.

The man who bought Rowdy planned on raising dairy cattle, Rowdy was a prize. At ten months old, he stood five feet tall in the back and weighed nine hundred pounds. When it came time to load him on the trailer I simply made Rowdy his bottle of milk and he followed me into the trailer. I let him enjoy it while I gave him a good rub down. And that was the last time I talked with one of my only true friends.

- Jackey R. Sollars

Tucson Ménage

General Grant and the Captain were huddled in the corner. Seemingly in a heated exchange over tactical command issues when General Lee boldly strode into the room and announced his presence by peeing near Grant's leg.

"You little bastard!" I quickly leaped up from the recliner, snatched Lee by the scruff of his neck and hurriedly carried him outside. His satisfied smirk said it

all. He had successfully fired the first salvo in what would turn out to be an endless series of comical skirmished and antagonistic engagements that summer of 94 between himself and his arch nemesis, the illustrious General Grant.

Laid off from my company recently I was between jobs. Debts were mounting, creditors threatening to contact collection agencies. This storm of financial insecurity was wreaking havoc with my recent marriage.

My sole source of comfort during these trying times were my animal companions, ferrets whose frolicking antics and comedic adventures were a constant source of amusement in our desert homestead.

General Lee was a massive fellow by ferret standards His long sleek body was fit and muscular. His beautifully luxurious coat was fawn colored and dappled with soft spot of auburn. He was definitely an alpha male.

The Generals one impediment to absolute rule was the steely eyed and devious presence of General Grant, who along with his trusty cohort the brassy Captain, would constantly challenge Lee at every corner, refusing to recognize his lofty claim as alpha. Now General Grant you have to understand, as the proverbial saying goes, hailed from the “wrong side of the tracks” unlike Lee, who, by god, was descended from royalty, at least in his opinion. General grant was adopted from a shelter for unwanted and abused animals. His age was also uncertain. We know he was a male ferret, beyond that it was all open to speculation. He was recently treated for a severe skin disorder which left leprous scabs upon his small frame. He appeared scruffy and unkempt, quite possibly the offspring of an unholy union between a mangy opossum and ringwormed raccoon.

His newly arrived presence only served to lend a sharp contrast to the immaculately groomed General Lee. From the very beginning the relationship was antagonistic. General Grant proved to be a criminal in every aspect of the word. A scabby cretin with a felonious nature whose proclivities for theft grew more and more brazen. No Queensbury rules in this fellow's book, No Siree!

By hook or by crook he was determined to steal, chew, and destroy any and every item belonging to General Lee. Cherished stuffed animals, his horde or red licorice, a prized copper button. Even his water dish was fair game.

The Captain now, God love him, can best be described as an anomaly. He you see, was a one eyed screech owl with a broken wing which had never healed quite properly. Jutting out from his small body at an odd angle, it lent an ungainly appearance to his regal frame.

Some cruel and insensitive oaf had fired a shotgun into the nest. The Captain was the sole survivor, a fledgling I tenderly nursed back to health.

The little fellow was endearing. Quite shy in the beginning, his inquisitive nature would soon overtake his common sense and off he would go. His forays at first were comical, wandering about the house with uncertainty, stopping only to peer warily around corners to ensure that the carnivorous monster ferrets were safely secured in their respective cages or even better, occupied with combative dynamics in another area of the house.

Once fully assured that imminent death was elsewhere and heartily throwing all caution to the wind, he would screech happily, set his broken wing at a 45 degree angle and with an awkward penguin like stroll, toddle into the room and promptly make for whatever toy captivated his interest. Which unfortunately, on this one particular day happened to be the twitching and lustrous tail of General Lee protruding out from under the sofa, a favorite napping spot of his. The ensuing scene was hilarious and keystone in all respects. Owls, as with all raptors have talons which are lethally sharp. Grasping wicked claws which on baby owls are like finely honed needles. Sauntering over to the sofa, the owl emitted a high pitched shriek of obvious delight and promptly pounced upon the tail of the unsuspecting and now very much awake General Lee, who in a tit for tat exchange of high pitched squeals, unleashed his own piping scream. Only this one of sheer terror and uncontrollable panic.

Owls have a tendency to violently and powerfully defecate when startled and the little fellow was no exception. Convinced by now that he had unwittingly snagged the tail of a ten foot diamond back cleverly concealed beneath the sofa. He screeched in terror, spread his wings and flapping furiously, began shitting all over the newly shampooed carpet.

General Lee, his aristocratic bearing gone and all pretense at dignity cast to the wind, whipped instantly about in a 360 degree arc and like a bat out of hell, made a bee-line for the relative safety of the hall closet. His one sanctuary from the tormenting antics of General Grant.

Two lamentable events were to add to the feeling Generals woes. One, the lesser of his worries, was that the hall closet door was blocked by the unconscious and still form of Arnold our schizophrenic and heavily medicated Boston terrier. Two, and an unfortunate issue of greater concern, was that his violent whipping about had only served to drive even deeper the knife-edged talons of our by now, fluidly diarrheic, and thoroughly

terrified owl whose piercing screams and incessant flapping sent the General into a wild-eyed panic, certain some unholy feathered and winged demon was set to carry him off and devour him.

Away they both went. The fury racing form with blustery beating wings atop, resembled some ancient and vengeful Hindu deity now resurrected from some ungodly realm and gone amok in our living room knocking over a lamp and sending a Buddha statue crashing to the floor. Both created such a ruckus our aged feline Cleopatra was awakened and put to flight.

Asleep on the kitchen linoleum floor when the ear splitting fracas began, she immediately sprung straight into the air, spat, screamed and began scrambling furiously across the slippery surface. Moving approximately one $\frac{1}{2}$ inch for every 20 movements of her flying legs. This caterwaul of frenzied activity only served to awaken the lethargic Boston terrier Arnold, who thinking it was playtime, decided to join in the festivities by leaping up and down in sheer jubilance, his entire body shaking in anticipation of his thorazine wrapped in raw hamburger pill.

His exuberance was infectious and so as not to be excluded from the strident racket below, our parakeet began her own shrill vocals. Tiny wings beating air as they traveled the length and breadth of her lofty gilded perch, perhaps wishing to show solidarity with her fellow inmates in this desert asylum who more likely than not were protesting the oppressive policies of “the man.”

Standing in the middle of the room, mouth agape, the newspaper “help wanted” section under my arm contributed nothing to the bedlam unfolding before me. Just when I thought what else could possibly compound this zoological lunacy, why, the front doorbell sounded!

Before I could scream “Oh God Nooo!” The front door would be gently prodded open to my returning wife’s sandaled foot, both her arms heavily laden with groceries. At which point every animal in the house began en masse a mad scrambling exodus for the front door.

Eventually order would be restored and the broken eggs cleaned up. General Lee would be rundown and captured under a mesquite tree. The spiky talons with baby owl attached gently extricated from his bleeding tail. A dab of mild antiseptic later and he would amble off to the hall closet, his pride and dignity wounded more than anything else.

A warm bath for the baby owl, his tiny feathers and emotional state ruffled by his choppy ride on the General’s tail was the only balm needed to soothe his agitated state. He would spend the rest of the day

napping in the flannel pocket of my shirt, cooing softly as he nuzzled snugly against the wool fabric.

Our ancient cat, apparently fed up with the lunacy of our menagerie, chose instead to stay away and forge for her subsistence in the hostile desert surrounding our isolated homestead. Vultures would lead me to her scattered remains a few months later. The coyote tracks near her carcass told me all I needed to know.

Arnold, as usual in a befuddled state as to what the hell just transpired, eventually would come back into the house panting heavily and farting loudly once or twice to announce his demented presence and promptly fall asleep, lending truth to the adage that nothing can faze the truly insane.

General Grant would ultimately seize upon the owl incident and in a brilliant Machiavellian scheme make it advantageous to his own imperial designs on power. He somehow would form an alliance with that baby owl who dutifully and forevermore after, followed him like a high noon shadow. An unfriendly hiss, wings spread defiantly and a baleful glance was the only attention paid Lee from that fateful day on. We considered several names for our one eyed broken wing friend. We eventually settled on “Captain.” In light of his undying loyalty and devotion to the General, it only seemed appropriate.

Other adventures would occur as other wounded and abused animals joined our whacky animated ménage in that sun blasted sonorant desert. The flood of memories both poignant and at times ridiculously absurd will stay with me forever.

A tragic fire some two years later swept through our idyllic homestead, cruelly claiming the lives of most of my beloved animals.

Later, with a heavy heart, I would sift through the smoking ruins and recover each one, the fading sunset and dying embers lending a note of grim finality to this chapter of my life.

Their simple grave are windswept now, traversed my Mexican beaded lizards, mule deer, rattlesnakes, and Gila monsters. There, in an isolated sandy arroyo marked by desert scrub and shaded by cactuses furry with long spines lies a solitary brass button and under it in gentle repose, General Grant and the Captain. It seemed appropriate.

- Robert Salvador Morales

As I begin writing about this topic, I can’t help feeling how silly it sounds. Most of the theme topic participants are men in prison. And all of a sudden they’re writing about a puppy or kitten they used to have. Ha! Ha! Ha! But the truth of this matter is a topic

like this makes me think about something a bit different than the daily activities which take place around us. Notice how my first thought was about puppies or kittens. Well I'm a dog man rather than a cat lover. I grew up loving dogs. I felt close to the dogs I owned. Most of the pups I had didn't last long; I was terrible caring for animals. I used to have a hamster which lasted longer than any of the dogs I owned. This big fella' used to run on his wheel all freaking night. I loved putting together his hamster cage and adding to it tunnel by tunnel. I wanted to have a city for him to run around in. I started collecting gerbils too but these little guys were too much work. They could make more and more of their kind and before I knew it, I was overwhelmed with all these rodents. Then I started playing football at school and my coach owned a big rattlesnake in his office in a cage similar to my first hamster's cage only made of glass. Well, I started donating little friends for the rattle snake to play with. I wouldn't see a one of the gerbils again. As I think of all the pups and gerbils that I would never see again, I can't help but feel compassion or pity. Today I actually wish I had a dog to keep me company. I am older and responsible enough to care for an animal now. Sure does make one think. We all must have animal companionship.

- Paul Tovar

Never was there two more terrible toddlers than the deaf dwarf twin. I've said it before: we were non-human as all deaf children (in those days) were not human by some unspoken social order, and being "Dwarfs" (extremely small) made is more so. That doesn't mean we were ill-treated; or maybe it does, but we didn't see it that way. Spoiled pets is what we were.

We were raised on a big family farm, actually four of them, and by our eleven older siblings. There were lots of animals, thousands: cows, pigs, sheep, goats, horses,..., our little sister. They all were our friend. I think at an early age we closely connected with animals. We thought we were like them-not human. But it is one special animal companion I would like to tell about.

I think from the start our brothers and sisters knew they were going to have to help keeping up with us. So, as much for our sake as theirs, about the time we started to crawl they added one more small animal to the horde. We call him Beau, but his name was Brutus.

Brutus was an Australian shepherd. Brutus was proof of how they really felt about their two little deaf dwarfs. Brutus came from a line of highly trained show dogs. The breed is not Sheep Dog, but Shepherd for a good reason. These dogs have been herder and guardians for thousands and thousands of years. With no training they still basically protect other animals and seem to

understand what their master says. It is as though the knowledge is bred into them. Around the farm -farms- there were other dogs. What we called cow dogs and sheep dogs and hunting dogs. None like Beau. Beau cost our brother a thousand dollars and a truck driver, who eventually married our sister, brought him from Montana when he was about six weeks old and we were about seven months. We were small to say the least (3lbs. at birth and not premature), but not true dwarves. That is -we were correctly proportioned, just extremely small which I never grew out of. Australian Shepherds are one of the few dogs that are not born in litters. They are born mostly in pairs (twins) and sometimes singular-rarely triplets. They are also unusual large puppies. They are not large dogs-maybe half the size of a German shepherd, but the puppies are large. Beau at six weeks was larger than Daniel and I. It is too much for my memory to recall our 1st year. What I do remember is that we thought, and I believe Beau thought too, we were all the same -just three puppies. My siblings will tell you, never was a pup more abused than Beau. However, I remember him giving as well as he got. Puppies actually like that and after all Daniel and I were the same with each other. We fought and wrestled all the time, not like brothers - like puppies.

When Beau was a year old he had to go away to school. That was a long six weeks for me and Daniel, and probably Beau too. It was part of the agreement in the sale. Beau came from a highly regarded line. Most of his brothers, sisters, and cousins were sold to showmen and breeders. Beau was sold to be the companion and guardian of the deaf dwarf twins. The owners of his parents agreed that it was a worthy cause, but Beau had to have every advantage of his station and breeding.

Beau returned from school not so much different that we could see. He was still the largest of the three, still ready to wrestle anytime. What we didn't know -we couldn't hear- was Beau used the rough game to keep us where ever he was told to keep us. By the time we were in our terrible threes Beau was an adult dog -still larger than us, but as big as he was going to get. By then we knew he -for whatever reason- herded or corralled us one place or another. If we were to stay inside he made sure we did. I'd be headed for the kitchen door and suddenly get head butted from the side. We'd be all ready to sneak outside and Beau would take a shoe. We'd spend hours chasing him down and then have forgotten what we were going to do in the 1st place.

But someone made a big mistake and didn't know until it was too late. Our brother bought Beau. His name was on Beau's papers. He paid for him, paid for his food and shots and school, but... they gave Beau to us. When

we were little more than half a year old they brought him to us and from then on he was ours. We were deaf so we didn't learn to talk like other children. We were five before we had a vocabulary of 50 words, but it was for Beau that we learned those words. Still there was more to it. As all deaf children, our first language was homesign – sign language made up by the deaf child and those they most communicate with. Beau knew our homesign and it was Daniel and I that he took order from.

Beau remained our protector and kept us out of a lot of trouble no matter what we said. That was his main purpose in life. However he was one of the litter; one of the pack. And most often you'd find him going along with the mischief we got into – as long as he didn't feel we were going to get hurt. He would stand guard when we stole melons. He was the one to make sure all the house was asleep before we slipped out, and he could hear if someone was coming to our room – just in case we were smoking.

They only realized too late the tool they gave us and there as no taking him back. He died when we were twelve years old. I've had a lot of dogs and other pets, but Beau is the only one I'd call a true animal companion – except my brother.

- Michael Pace

Any person looking to ameliorate their quality of life should consider an animal companion. Animal companion encompasses any domesticated animal. Being an avid fan of dogs myself, I cannot stress enough the joy of a good canine, no matter the breed. There has been aggregate data from empirical tests as well as medical research that has proven animal companions can also add years to a persons' life.



DIE ÜBERLEBENDEN

KRIEG DEM KRIEGE! [4]

When I think of animal companions, I consider all of the areas of everyday life animal companions are used to assist humans. In therapy, search and rescue, protection etc. Choosing the right animal companion to be consonant with your lifestyle may take a lot of research. There is a variable amount of information to consider, like the longitudinal amount of time needed to ensure the health and welfare of your animal companion for its lifespan.

There are a lot of unhappy people in the world that spend an inordinate amount of time worrying about how to fill the void in their lives, voids made by losing a loved one to death, break-ups or just moving to a different area. An animal companion can fill that void. Yes, I know, the thought of an animal doing what a human cannot on a social level is almost antithetical in its essence. Yet the facts are the facts. It doesn't matter if you're currently in an impecunious state; it doesn't matter if you're fresh out of prison, none of that matters, because the most beautiful thing about an animal companion is they don't judge you. All that's required is a lotta love.

- Kevin Betts

I'm in ad. seg. at the Coffield unit here in Texas. One day while at recreation, I was looking out the window and noticed right under the window there was a small baby bird. It was thrown from the nest or it fell out. It was obvious that it was hatched probably that morning, it had no feathers and could not stand without falling over.

There was no way I could get it back into the nest and if I just left it there it would have died if a cat didn't get it first. We have about 30 cats running around freely at any given time. So I took my t-shirt off and used it to pull the little bird close enough to the window so I could grab it.

Once I got it back to my cell I had to figure out a way to feed it since it was too small to eat on its own. I had to figure something out.

So I came up with an empty pen tub to use to give it water. Then I got a popsicle stick and cut the center out of it to make a pair of tweezers to use to feed it. Once I had that figured out I had to figure out what to feed the little fellow.

Not knowing the first thing about feeding little birds I figured all birds liked bread so I would pinch off small pieces of bread, wet my thumb and finger and roll the bread into little balls. I'd use my homemade tweezers to stuff the bread into its throat like the mother would have done.

After about a day or so it started growing feathers and making a lot of noise, I had to feed it about every 15 or thirty minutes or so. It was a real challenge to my patience at first.

This went on for two or three weeks them one day she started getting her water and eating on her own.

I couldn't figure out what to call her at first. After about two months she still couldn't grow her tail feathers, she had one tail feather, so I started calling her One Feather, once she was about three months old she had all her feathers but I continued to call her One Feather, that was her name.

I made her a little bird house out of cardboard and hung it on the wall, when she got ready to sleep or nap she would get in it. Sometimes she would get in it and work on her bed. I would shred paper to put in her little house for her to sleep on. She would throw out pieces that didn't fit or work the way she wanted it to.

When I was writing or drawing she would sit on my hand or wrist or my shoulder, she loved to sit on my shoulder. She liked to listenn to music When a song came on that she liked she would sing along with it. If she was happy or in a good mood she would hop around all over the place singing. She loved to play too, she would like to chase little paper balls. Once she caught it she would fly over to my shoulder and drop it for me to toss up again.

When someone would stop at my cage she would fly to my shoulder, she knew she was safe on my shoulder. She knew I wouldn't let anything happen to her.

Sometimes she would wake up before I did, when she did she would come over and get under the cover where it was warm and lay by my neck, or she would pull on my ear to wake me up.

It didn't take long to fall in love with my little buddy. One Feather and I learned to know each other. She was the best friend I ever had.

On January 4, 2008 I lost my little buddy. After washing and shaving my face I was drying my hands

and turned around to pull my pen cap out of the sink bottom and I stepped on my buddy, it happened so fast there was no stopping it. Once I heard her yell it was too late, I jumped and looked to see if she was alright but she wasn't. It was over for my buddy. At that very moment it was like my heart was ripped out, I picked her up and held her while I cried. I still cry when I think about what happened. I miss One Feather more than I miss anything in the world. The little time that I had with One Feather is the best time of my life.

She will always be in my heart and in my thoughts. When I first got this last news letter and saw one of the upcoming topics was animal companions I asked One Feather if she wanted me to write her story. I talked to her all the time; she would act like she knew what I was saying.

Now that she is gone I feel she deserves to have her story told.

- Thunder Cloud Davis (David J.)

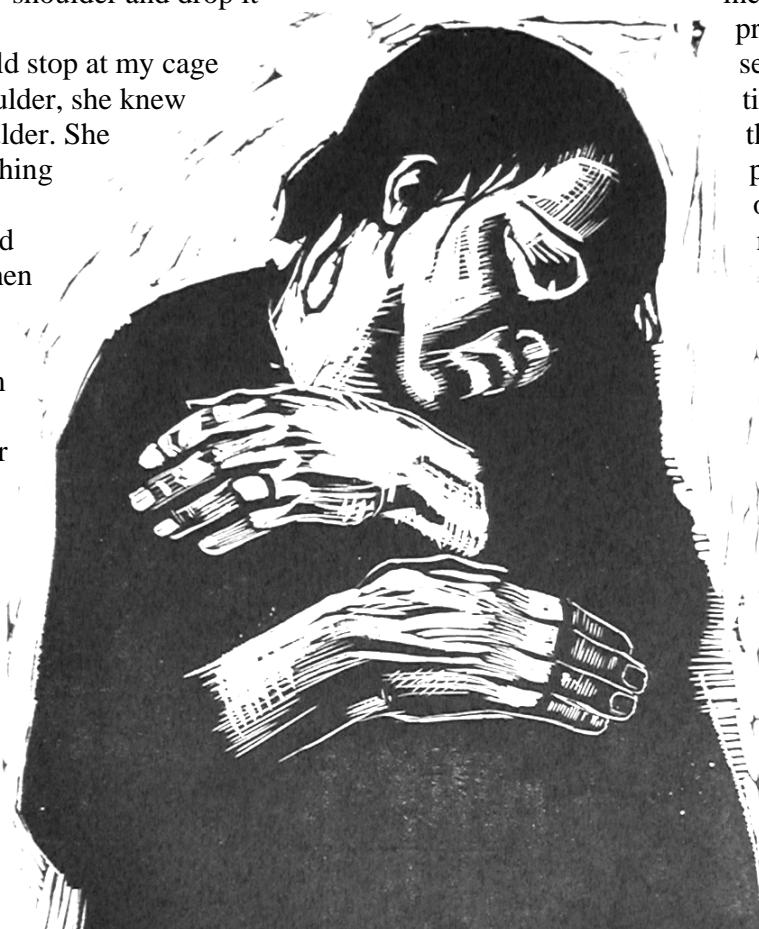
Information

Information: Data Mining vs. Mind-Mining

Now that the FBI is having prison "library" clerks have their inmates record for them the title and author of every book we captives check out, is there not now some

incentive for authorities to provide real libraries? It just seems like a complete waste of time for everyone involved in this massive data-mining (more properly, data manufacturing) operation for the cops to learn merely which inmate is least bored with Louis L'Amour or Stephen King, or other types of escapist fantasy.

Now I'm sure that the government has spent massive amounts of our tax cash and tax credit funding hundreds of psychologists, etc, to tell it something useful about the reading habits of the near illiterate. Likewise, I am certain that such richly-paid professionals were and are determined to find something useful for the government to make of these studies, if for no other reason than to



foment the purchase of more studies.

But consider this: of the thousands of libraries in each of the thousands of American prisons, each and every one of them is nothing but a pimple on the wart of the education department that dangles precariously from the massive ass of a security apparatus determined to provide only two services: escape-proof cages within which millions of persons can be held captive as long as possible for the yearly taxpayer-paid profit that can be made off them, and, the creation of a loyal, pro-government voting block to watch the captives and vote for any legislation the government chooses to enact.

Libraries are a recent addition to prisons and would not even exist if it were not for the pretense made toward humane treatment of captives. Society and politicians could not care less whether captives read or not, and prison bureaucrats only grudgingly permit space for libraries so as to look as if they have something to do with the word so recently claimed in their titles: "corrections." As a result of this attitude, only fake, mock, or inadequate libraries exist within American prisons.

We all want the cops to get good information while illegally spying on us citizens. The information cops get from spying on inmate reading habits is anemic because so few of us can read, and sub-par in quality because we who can read are limited to books that are mere fiction/entertainment nonsense. What these suspicious, inquisitive cops could do to improve the worth of their data streams is this: teach these idiots how to read; give them something of quantity to read; stop preventing us from obtaining our own literature to read; give us some incentive to read.

This may sound like a huge burden to ask our poor, over-worded, underpaid cops and guards to shoulder, but it actually entails relieving them of work. A better-educated inmate will compete in the workforce, relieving cops of the burden of abducting him for more cage-time. Relieving themselves from censoring inmate reading material will tell them more precisely whether an inmate is determined to continue to perform outlawed acts and which outlawed acts he is intending to perform. Also, tons of educative materials are thrown away in America daily that would have been donated to prisons except for the prison bureaucrats' refusal to accept it. Further, inmates would be deliriously happy to learn skills and pass tests in prison if they were merely rewarded with a few months off their always-excessive sentences. (Bureaucrats do pay lip-service to this idea by offering, for example, a paltry 90 days off one's sentence for completion of a GED, and mere days off for lesser programs, but these gains are exceedingly small

plus they are swiftly yanked away by guards who get "disrespected" when they prevent captives' access to showers, clothes, the law library, and other services.) The uselessness of these two competing systems of giving and taking away time off captives' sentences is easily seen when compared. The most that a captive can get off his sentence is 90 days, one time, for a GED. The least that is taken away by guards for petty infractions such as cursing once is 60 days, and the usual time-theft intervals are 90, 180, & 365 days. Obviously there is very little incentive to participate in any prison programs when the primary reason for taking them is so easily and often removed after completion. Program effectiveness could be easily raised considerably merely by making this time off one's sentence permanently safe from removal by the guards.

If persons with the authority of law wished to get really progressive, they could institute a program of skill improvement. This would be similar to government and educational programs already in use that allow "auditing" college classes. It would entail little more than putting educative books in the library for prisoners to read and study. When they felt they had self-taught themselves enough, they would individually be permitted to take a test. If they master the test, they get x amount of time off their sentence.

Everyone profits from such a system as this, it costs virtually nothing because the books are free, and the prisoncrats' time and effort is minimized by letting the captives do most of the work. We more educated captives teach the less-educated ones how to form study groups and work together toward a common goal of learning something useful, and the citizens get back people who have a more positive attitude toward society and who are more able to compete for employment. This is what the cops like to call the "force multiplier effect." This is what they think they're doing by having inmates give them lists of what books prisoners check out at their prison libraries. Providing captives with incentives to learn useful skills is much more efficient and no more costly.

- James Bauhaus

When I conceptualize what it will take for me to succeed in this life, I'm motivated by the empirical contributions of academics the world over, into the venerated field of information. A proper dissemination of correct information can equal success in all aspects of life. Success is a paradigm of information and within that paradigm are different levels of success for every aspect of life.

If you consider the aggregate information derived from years of research, a salient point in proving the internet is a contemporary and efficacious means of communicating information is seen by the technological advances of today.

The invariable need for information at a more expeditious rate is proof the internet is emblematic of how far technology has advanced since I was incarcerated 16 years ago. We must continue to seek information. Information can be the soft voice of reason that mitigates failure. Information = intelligence = knowledge = wisdom = peace!

- Kevin Betts

Right to Choose

Being well informed can change a person's perspective. Every event is subject to "spin" these days. Often the truth is much different when you get to the facts found in the raw data. In the last few years the history of America's birth has been spun so much it's hard to know what to believe.

Some elements lean toward the right and others to the left. Looking toward the center at the Founding Documents is the only way to find our path to the best course. When you remove political rhetoric and view them in their historic context they are quite extraordinary.

If you've never read the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, you should be ashamed. To give equal rights to common land owners was a radical move in the 1700s. Though this freedom was first bestowed upon mostly white heterosexual males there was nothing in these documents to restrict this freedom to them only.

The steel core that gives strength to the whole is the Bill of Rights. These first 10 amendments set a precedent that the U.S. Constitution was a malleable document subject to modifications that would allow it to evolve as America grew and its people diversified.

Every right given in the Bill of Rights was a seed planted in fertile American soil and meant to spread. They did. With each new group brought under the protective umbrella America became stronger, though never has any group's admission been easy. There are always some that don't want to share and feel their personal freedoms infringed on when a new group begins their struggle. They don't want to make a little room for the newcomers. But you'd expect minorities and women, not so long ago they were newcomers themselves, to be a bit more accepting and willing to move over.

Gays and lesbians strive for legal acceptance and a place in society outside the closet, in the light. It's time.

They hurt no one with their lifestyles. Until recently their private lives were illegal in many states and some think they still should be. They have been beaten and lynched and burned for who they are and lived in fear of discovery and reprisals for urges they could no more change than another person might change their skin color or gender. For years their sexuality was listed as a mental illness and was thought a disease to be treated. Some would still have us believe it the only choice. Why would anyone choose a life fraught with such challenges?

The day will come when a Gay Rights amendment is ratified. On that day closets will only be for clothes to hang in. Gays and lesbians will take their proper place in society as equals. Fear-mongers are sure to see they are not welcomed with open arms, the same way they did when blacks and women got the vote that made them full citizens.

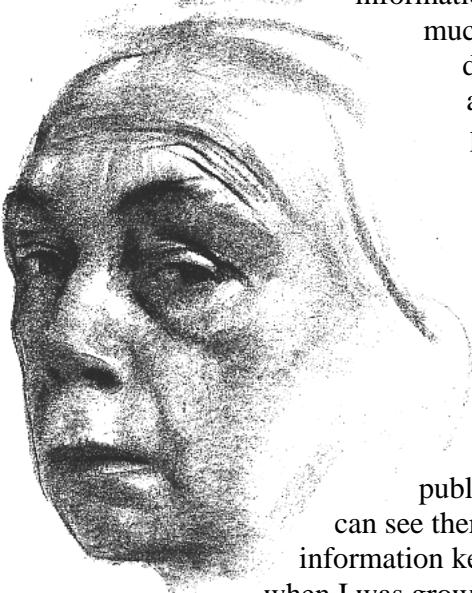
It's time to be informed. All Americans are meant to be equal. We must never let any group be marginalized and denied their full rights of citizenship due to an irrelevant factor. Marriage became a protected right when government took over the province of licensing the act and made multiple wives illegal for Mormons and everyone else. Multiple wives should be illegal when women don't have the equal right to multiple husbands or a choice in the women chosen to join the union they are a part of. But multiple partners, of whatever sex consenting adults decide on, should not. Adults have a right to choose and determine these issues for themselves. Legislation is only needed to stop discrimination and coercion, not to determine the sexual configuration of these unions.

The melting pot is a crucible capable of taking any ingredient, whether race, religion, or sexual orientation, and strengthening the mettle of the whole. All it takes is the acceptance of "We the people..." to make it so.

There is no need to argue about whether sexual orientation is a matter of choice or not. The First Amendment protects every American's right to choose when it protects our Freedom of Religion, which is surely a matter of choice. There's no reason why a new amendment shouldn't protect every American's right to sexual choice and variety in marriage unions. It'll make our country stronger and much more interesting.

- Daniel H. Harris

Information is a great source to enlightenment. Information is a great source to knowledge and power because the more you know, the more you can do. Information is very flexible because there are all sorts of information that help you gain so much knowledge on so many different levels. Through studying all kinds of



information, I have gained much insight that I did have years ago, and this little prison cell I have lived in for years has given me more time than I needed to rack up on all kinds of information that was not provided to me when I was in public school. Now I can see there was so much information kept away from me when I was growing up.

And now I can see that prison is not all bad because now I have more time to think and study information, and through studying this information, I have learned that over a hundred and some years ago (or even more) African Americans were still slaves. By law, they were forbidden from learning how to read and write. Now I can see the reason for that because information is power. Information holds the keys to freedom from mental and physical bondage, and that's why it was outlawed for these slaves to learn how to read and write: because they did not want them to free themselves through information, they wanted to keep them from learning true knowledge of themselves, they wanted to keep them brainwashed, and they wanted to keep that information away from them.

When I was young and going to public school, a lot of information that I needed to know was kept away from me. And from studying and gaining the information that I needed to know, I have come to learn that if you deny people the knowledge of their history and culture, you deny them the ability to develop their full potential. Information is power. And from studying, I have also come to learn that living provides us with an opportunity to gather information and use it to improve the quality of our lives. Studying has filled me up with so much information, and it is the responsibility of every adult to know their history and culture to preserve it and pass it onto the next generation. And youths have the responsibility of using that knowledge to assume their rightful place in history and passing this information onto the next generation. Because information is power, information provides us with food for thought necessary to free our minds. I have to agree with Dick Gregory;. He said it best when he stated information is power.

Education is power. Money is not power. It is only through the acquisition of information that a group of people develops the ability to control its destiny.

- Michael Jerome McKinney

Information. N. 1. facts told or heard or discovered

As the definition above tells you, information consists of nothing but pure facts. And so, with that said, I will begin to share some true information with you. Do you have a little time to spare? How is your patience, does it wear thin? How is your reading ability? Can you pronounce your words properly? If so, do you have any information to share with me? If so, remember to stay with the facts because "information" plays a vital role in the future of our peace and well-being. Did you know that I've been to prison six different times? Did you know that I have a raging drug addiction that just keeps enticing and telling me that I need to use? What do you do when the emptiness inside makes you feel insecure?

These are only questions that I feel need to be answered. Maybe we both, me and you, are going through some similar experiences? I've been incarcerated on this trip here for six flat years and yet still I do not know when I am going to get out. And I'm sure that there are some of you in the same boat as I.

We do not know when, if ever, we are going to be released from this prison. What's wrong with our governing authorities? We do everything that's required of us, everything that's necessary for us to be eligible to be considered for a release, only to find out that we have been put off to go home for a later date in the future. And then when that next possible release date arrives, yet still once again we are shot down like we were the target and the arrows hit their mark. What's wrong with the parole system? Why are they sitting on their prisoners? Our prisons are overcrowded because they are not releasing any prisoners. Not even the ones who were eligible years ago. There's got to be a catch. I just don't understand. They're crying that they are overcrowded but they have not taken any measures to alleviate the problem. This is a big money market. We're treated as if we are cattle and they're getting paid for every last one of us. So it's more profitable for them to hold onto us and not let us go. Look at me for example: I've got six years done on a technical violation. I am more than eligible for release. I'm ready. I'm willing. I'm qualified. Regardless of all that, I am still here. This is not a rumor, this is a fact. Joe is still here in prison. Joe is being held here against his will.

I guess that's why this place is called prison. Joe is looking for the opportunity to be released. Joe has learned his lesson well. Joe will do everything that he can to get out, and stay out. If I keep living it's

inevitable that I am going to get out of this prison one day. And what a happy day that will be for me. Since being here, I have encountered many things that are not to my liking. This prison unit that I am now on, we're like 30 minutes from the border of Mexico. I am African American and I feel like a foreigner here. The majority population is Hispanic. Our unit library does not have any good or interesting books. Most of them are old and outdated. I'm just about ready to write Gary or Steve and request for some more books to be sent to me. Do you receive books from Durland

Alternatives Library like I do? What other activities at Durland Alternatives Library are you involved in? Did you request for a pen pal? Did you get one? I didn't. Maybe I need to write and request again. Here is something else that I've encountered since being here: our recreation yard is not fit to jog on.

The ground is all uneven; you could hurt yourself trying to jog around on uneven ground. I'm tired of this mess. I am looking forward to this new upcoming year, 2008. Hopefully things will get better. It's amazing what a good decent meal can do. I am looking forward to partaking of a nice decent meal on Xmas day. But it all depends on how the food is prepared, and the cooking skills of those preparing. It's not everyday that you get a good meal here and so I know for sure that "prison-wide" every man or woman incarcerated in prison will be expecting to eat and enjoy a good meal. This is a heads up! Don't forget to count your blessings even through adversity. Take the bitter with the sweet. In closing, information can be very useful. Information is king.

- Joseph Alvin Parrish

EDITORS NOTE- Our last mailing to Joseph was returned to us due to his release from prison!

Lost and Found

Lost are we captives who have been caged for 30, 40, even 50 solid years. We rot while the bureaucrats push their venom-filled papers about us to and fro. We die by degrees while the parolecrats pretend to do their evaluative tasks. The politicians stay busy, selling their anti-crime/anti-terror hysteria to the eager-to-believe



public. The corporations are glee-filled to feed off this river of riches. The eager media soils itself to sell this pabulum with shrieks of alarm. All feast at the pie, like jackals and vultures, 'til their bellies drag the ground.

Strangely silent are the eaten. We mumble and groan amongst ourselves, but not too loudly. We have young punks with dim, inexperienced minds. Their hotheaded immaturity keeps all of us tied to the torture chair. These excitable, mindless brats prevent all the progress we experienced hands can make.

Worse, these young fools' antics cause us all to suffer smaller cages, more crowding, worse food, fewer diversions, tighter bars, more steel mesh, and sharper razor wire farther from the public eye. Not one of these illiterate, self-centered pleasure-addicts has ever thought to ask the obvious questions, "Why do they hide what they are doing to us?" "Why don't they televise "public" executions?" "Why don't they show them torturing terrorists?" "Why don't they let us have cameras in prison?"

Why? Because they want us to remain lost! Because if any of their antics got "found" by ordinary citizens, ordinary citizens' stomachs would start upchucking in unison, much as they do when their eyes are fed a steady, repetitive diet of murder, rape, and beatings. Here's a clue! Ever notice that we can see plenty of bloody corpses of crime victims on cop/TV shows, but not a single Iraq-attack corpse, not even a soldier? Can you deduce why? Don't bother—I'll tell you! It's because they're selling anti-crime and pro-war sentiment.

Now switch it around in your mind: imagine what would happen if our self-muzzling media suddenly showed the exact opposite of what our govcrats ask of them. Corpses trundled out of death rows, US bullet-riddled corpses of Iraqi children and women, tortured-to-death and brains-blown-out "terrorists", prison pictures of suicides hanging from the grates, of toilet-sized cages stuffed with victims in rows for decades, of sexual deviates pretending to be women for cigarettes, coffee, food and dope, of captives strung up by manacles for casual torture so common that most of us don't even complain about it anymore. Showing this to ordinary citizens shows them how close they are to suffering our fate. Police, guards, prosecutors, judges and politicians

do NOT want this seen by ordinary people because then ordinary people could rise up and shut it down! When Illinois Gov Ryan's death row was proven by DNA to be wrong half the time, the people forced him to shut it down! When Shapiro caught Fuhrman and Van Adder manufacturing evidence against OJ Simpson, they shut them down! When Stacey Koon and 8 others got taped torturing Rodney King, they shut them down! Whenever dirty deeds are dragged into the light, moral outrage erupts to shut it down! Our elected crooks can only operate as long as their dirty work remains lost in the darkness. This is why they control the media—to keep the dark working for them.

Now look at you simpletons, your asses growing around those domino chairs, thinking that you'll just wait out your sentence. Do you actually think that you owe years off your lives for joyriding, vandalism, petty theft, touch-crime, drug-crime, and thought-crime? If you believe it, you make it true! If you're a worthless pleasure-addict with no higher aspiration than sucking a living off your betters, it needs to be true. Stop reading now and go mooch off someone who still feels sorry for you.

But if you've got a brain, ambition, and some morals, get found! Think! Get a plan! Write it down! Send it out! Benefit someone! Start a movement! Raise moral questions! Propose solutions! Invent! Create! Synergize! The world is large, even in prison. Use your mind to fill it. Food makes you fat; stamps can make you free. Which do you want more?

- James Bauhaus

Every one knows or talks about "lost and found" but not every one likes talking about the found and lost... I think this is because of the emotions one feels towards the feeling of loss. Maybe we are just full of ourselves and blame someone else for our own faults, but for me personally... I lost a lot of good things from my actions. I'll talk about the biggest loss I've dealt with so far.

The year was 1999, which was a good year. The San Antonio Spurs brought home the championship. And it was the year I finished doing a 3 1/2-yr sentence on a 3-yr conviction: a conviction of my youth. No matter, this was a new beginning, a fresh start, and I had just turned 21 years old. It's sad with new beginnings; hardship and good things come, which is sort of like me: good and bad, cold and hot, sweet and sour. But through all my hardships I found something so special and this event would change my life forever. I had big things change my life, but those were always bad...this was something that was finally good! I remember it like it was yesterday...

I had to go pick up my young cousin from football practice so I waited at the local corner store. In doing so, I saw two cheerleaders coming my way. So when they passed my car, I yelled at them, "Hey! Can you do me a favor? And buy me a soda?" At which they started giggling. And the girl who I was looking at told me, "I don't even know you!" So I start to laugh and say, "No, here's the money! Buy me a soda; I'm waiting for someone." So she took my money and asked me, "What kind of soda?" I told her, "Surprise me." Little did I know those words would make a big impact in both our lives. That's how I came to know her...Roxann, the biggest positive impact in my life. I talked to her about a lot of things and she told me about all the stuff she'd been through. I was straight up with her: I was fresh out of prison with no intentions of meeting someone or falling in love. And she would always tell me "we'll see about that." I don't know what it was about her, but she saw things in me that I didn't even see myself. Through thick and thin, my good and bad, she did something no one has done—she gave me a chance. Through my faults and my wrongdoings, she stood by my side with her head held up high. We loved each other. I loved her like I had never loved anyone else. This is every man's dream: to find that person who is trustworthy, down-to-earth, not afraid to love life, and is a very beautiful person, inside and out. Yeah, man, "I hit it big," like we like to say. She was the one for me. I can't explain; I just felt it in my heart and soul, all the way down to my feet. She was simply the one.

The year is now 2008 and me and Roxann lived life and she gave me a family, something I had but thought I had lost. My first son Ruben was a blessing and I saw him come into this world. And I'll admit I wasn't living right. I was a product of my environment. I did what I thought was right, making fast money and giving my family "the good life". Then she gets pregnant: a second blessing. Long story short, I get busted and end up in jail leading to a long sentence in prison for a repeat offender. She stayed with me, even when she would come to visit. I would tell (and yell) to her to stop coming to visit me, to go live her life without me! Those were always my last words to her and she would cry. It hurt me but I knew what time it was.

This past August 1, 2007 (the year of my loss and maybe the loss of love for other women) I'm in Ad-Seg so all we do is read anything we come across. I came to a newspaper story that read, "Body found on side of highway...Mexican female age 23-26, black hair...anybody knowing something please call..." So I was thinking, "That's sad," finished that day's paper, and moved to the next day's paper. I see the picture but

I don't want to face it: it's my Roxann. You just can't imagine how I felt after having seen and read that. It's not the regular hurt; this hurt went all the way to my soul. "Woman identified, she was found raped and murdered."

Life is so mysterious and we don't know when it's our time to leave. I can't say I could have prevented it, but I should have been there for her like she was there for me when I needed her. I'm not ashamed to admit my losses and that day, I cried for the woman I will always love but lost. I lost things and emotions I will never find in my life encounter again. I lost someone who had the power to change me when I couldn't do it myself. Even until this day in prison, she's changed me and she's been gone. That's how powerful love can be. To lose is very hurtful in many ways, but it makes us grow. I would never want someone to hurt like I do, to lose like I did. But I urge you to find someone to make the loss worth it, if that makes any sense. To those who read this, don't be the found and lost, even through all this. I've lost and found also. I found myself and still continue to grow. I still have my sons to live for. Through them I see their mother...so she will forever be in my life. I lost many things, my selfishness for one, and now it's not always about me. It's time for someone else. So it's about the strongest, highly intelligent people in my life: my sons. In writing this, my words are dedicated to my friend, wife, and mother of my kids: Roxann Cobos (5-28-81 to 8-1-07). Rest in peace forever.

- Ruben Benavides

The phrase "lost and found" can be used as a metaphor for most of our lives. As babies, we are born blank slates. This can be equated with being lost. As we grow older our parents, our associates, our encounters with friends, and our experiences write on the slate of who we are to become. When we become who we are supposed to become, we can consider ourselves found.

I myself was lost for a very long time. When I speak about being lost, I'm not referring to where a person finds him/herself mentally and physically. All my life, I've considered myself at least average as far as intelligence goes, and I've worked to keep up my physical appearance with routine workouts. These two aspects of my life have always been foremost on my mind when it comes to evaluating self. Yet here, when I speak about being lost, I'm talking about being spiritually lost. Being lost spiritually can have more of a detrimental effect on a person than being lost mentally or physically. I'm a person that believes in God but

never drew a correlation between God, my spirit, and myself.

As a child growing up, my parents did their best with me. Unfortunately, I was a bit much for them. As a preteen I was in foster homes, group homes, and juvenile detention. I spent countless years running the streets. Then there was jail, max prison, and now super max prison. Through all my trials and travels, people tried to tell me about God, about thinking positively, and about how I should behave. Through it all, I remained lost.

A while ago, I was watching a children's cartoon. One of the cartoon characters was a bad man and the other was a good man. After the good cartoon character defeated the bad cartoon character, he asked the bad cartoon character why he didn't use his power for good instead of evil. It was at that point that I realized when I did the wrong thing, I was using my power for evil. I didn't want to be known as evil so I began searching for a way to use my power for good. This led me to the bible.

Throughout my study of the bible, I've come to see the correlation between God, my spirit, and myself. The spirit in me is God; I am in God, and God is in me. The more I learn about God and the spirit, the more I learn about myself.

It was recently, while studying a chapter in the bible, that I read something that reminded me: while I may have been lost for some time in my past, now that I've found God, I have surely found myself.

- Kevin Betts

Nothing Left to Lose, Everything to Live for

In a short span of time everything was lost: My health. My family. Any hope of ever being free. With nothing left to lose there was nothing left to live for. Then my sanity was gone.

Violence became a wonderful companion as I made those around me suffer. Someone had to pay for my losses, guilty or not.

It was at this point in my life that I met Gary and Ramsay, two extraordinary people. They made themselves substitutes for the family I had lost and, in the case, the substitutes proved better than the originals.

My health was beyond their intervention, but didn't seem such a burden once I was no longer alone. My life had new meaning as I judged my worth through their eyes and began to feel human again.

It was surprising to find that there was freedom inside the black barriers of prison. The key was my new perspective. The more I was able to help my fellow prisoners, the more I helped myself. Time took on new meaning.

Life is ever filled with surprises. My path isn't always easy, but thanks to all I found when I lost everything, I can make it one day at a time and that's all that is required.

- Daniel H. Harris

I want to thank all the theme writers once again for sharing their thoughts with us. This program is available to anyone who wants to join. All that is required is that you write on an upcoming topic. Don't let the word theme or essay scare you away from participating. All we are asking is you share your thoughts on a subject. If you submit an essay you will receive a mailing from us with all the essays written on that topic, as well as having your essay posted on our website. Besides writing for yourself, your essays help others both in the free world and those behind bars to understand and process the prison experience.

Upcoming Theme Topics

Rivals due 9/1/08

Telling the Truth due 10/1/08

Change of Heart due 11/1/08

Choosing Sides due 12/1/08

Fences due 1/1/09

Close Calls due 2/1/09

Mom due 3/1/09

Faith due 4/1/0

Assignment for everyone: A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Writing often begins with the question: "What can I create out of this image, this memory or feeling?" For this assignment, we want to see what you can create out of an image and the memories/ feelings it provokes.

Take a look at each of the above pictures. Each image is a 'theme' topic for a particular month. The goal is to use this image as the inspiration for a piece of writing. How you do this is completely up to you and your imagination. This task is called 'free writing' because there are no rules as to what you write about—there is only the story the image inspires you to tell. Your piece can be fictional or true-to-life from your own memories and experiences. Some possibilities include:

- a fictional short story
- a personal essay
- a real or made-up diary entry
- a real or made-up letter
- a fictional newspaper article
- a fictional conversation between people
- a short scene or play
- any other form you decide to take

This assignment is an exercise in creativity and in turning your own thoughts into words that can be shared with others. After all, as the old saying goes: "A picture is worth a thousand words." What words will these pictures bring out of you? This project will be conducted similar to the regular Theme Writing project. We will mail all participants a copy of what everyone else writes on a particular picture. We will also include your writings in our upcoming newsletter.

Please let me know if you would prefer we offer pictures for the theme project rather than the word phrases we have used in the past. Write for yourself, but know that your words are a gift to us all. While at times it may feel like you have little to share, your thoughts are of value, and we at Prisoner Express appreciate what you care to share.



Chris Webb



Solitary person- due 11/1/08



House- due 12/1/08



Boat- due 1/1/09



City Street- due 2/1/09

FINDING YOUR INNER CHILD – Ankush, a reliable and caring volunteer at Prisoner Express, has shared with you some interesting ideas in the past. Previously he has suggested a smiling program, and also wrote an article on improving hand writing. In the spirit of this issue and its focus on writing

he has a suggestion regarding children's stories. His words are in italics.

Dear Friends,

Greetings! I pray that you all are doing good in health and spirits. Thank you very much for your prayers, well wishes, and joyful participation in our programs. It makes PE work very enriching. This time I am going to talk about one of my favorite things, something which is unique and contains the most beautiful parts of our beings: innocence, simplicity, a sense of wonder, excitement and, most importantly, joy. I call them "stories", but most others classify them as "children's stories".

My talking about children's stories might seem strange here. However, I have experienced that as we grow up, we want to put away those simple little things while trying to pursue more "mature things." We create situations around us, and things just get over us. We find ourselves getting lost in a mess of words with ourselves and others. We can't find a beautiful expression of our self, and we crave to go back to that loving, innocent child. The child doesn't want to hate or hurt anyone, but just wants to jump around and smile.

One surprising fact is that most of the children's stories are composed by "grown-ups," which is a proof of the fact that we "grown-ups" still have that child inside us who tells us what a little one would like. These stories come out as a deep and beautiful expression of that inner innocence.

I often read "stories" in my free time and equally enjoy torturing my friends by telling them out loud my stories. Often they would say that they don't want to listen to me, but as the story picks up, I can find them enjoying it. But you see, some times I even land up in trouble because I tend to run out of stories (since kids want a new story every time !!!).

Now! I am tempted to tell you guys a story. So here it goes:

Once there was an apple and a banana who were neighbors and used to live in neighboring fruit baskets. They used to play together, sing together and chat for hours on all kind of topics. But sometimes Apple used to feel sad because he was so fat (comparing himself to Banana). Interestingly, Banana also used to be sad because he was so thin and tall when he would compare himself to Apple. One day while they were sad at the same time, they came out to see each other. But because of both were sad, they didn't feel like talking. So they decided to just take a walk around. They walked down the kitchen counter, and onto the next counter.

Suddenly, they were startled by a giant fruit whose body was covered with thorns. They were terrified at the first sight, but since they were gentlemen, they introduced themselves to the giant fruit and the giant fruit also introduced himself and told them that his name was pineapple. They briefly chatted with Mr. Pineapple and bade him good-bye moving further along. As they were walking they just thought how fortunate they are since they have such nice and shiny bodies compared to Mr. Pineapple.

While they were just thinking, a group of green tiny fruits came rolling by the road. They were again surprised to see such little strange fruits. They said hello to the group and during conversation came to know that they belong to a tribe and their tribal name was Grapes. They were happy to make these new friends but were just struck with their experience because these grapes were rolling here and there, finding it hard to stand or walk steadily. After saying good-bye they thought how lucky they were to have such stable bodies and they can walk and stand so nicely. As they were coming back to their baskets, they told each other how they used to feel about themselves looking at each other. They were surprised that each one of them felt that the other one had better body.

After this talk and their day's adventure they were so happy about what they were, and to have made so many new friends that day. They came back to their baskets, and since they were tired after the day's walk they went straight into their beds and fell asleep."

Now it is your turn! Please write some good nice stories and send them to me. If you could illustrate them, that would be great, but if you cannot—no problem. I could request some of the artists in our PE program to illustrate them for you.

Just keep in mind that most important thing in these stories is joy—the innocent joy which we have all felt at

some point in our being. They should be short (otherwise kids would fall asleep!). They should be simple, yet full of wonder and excitement. For a child everything from the eye of his mother to a tiny little bug is a thing of joy and wonder. And yes do tell me how you liked my story, but write some stories for me too. On a different note, if you didn't like the above story, listen to this one :

Once upon a time, in a beautiful green forest, lived a family of little birds. Mommy Jasmine and Daddy Plum were proud and blessed to have their sweet little daughter Tiny. Since she was a baby, Tiny was a joy for their family and for all the forest birds and animals. And for Tiny, the only joy was in helping others and making people smile. She would do stupid things to make others laugh, bring seed for those who were old or sick and could not go around for food. She would help her neighbors to build their nests and help her mommy and daddy in keeping their nest clean and cozy.

Sometimes Tiny would fly out with her friends to a nearby lake where many beautiful flowers grew—the bright yellow ones , the purple ones and the red ones. She would play hide and seek and other games with her friends there. One bright sunny day she went out to play near the same lake with her friends. They played Hide and Seek and then Duck-Duck-Goose. They became so lost in the game that they did not notice the sky becoming cloudy indicating the coming of a storm. Mommy and Daddy had told Tiny that it is not safe to be away from home when sky gets too cloudy. Suddenly there was lightning which made Tiny and her friends aware that they should stop their game and head back for their home. So they started flying towards their home.

In the meantime, Mommy and Daddy of Tiny as well as those of her friends were getting worried about their little ones. So, Jasmine and Plum decided to go look for the kids. Suddenly heavy storm struck the forest and both Jasmine and Plum got stuck by a huge tree branch. Due to the big force they fell on the ground and the tree branch fell over them and they died. Tiny with her friends managed to reach their homes where her aunts and uncles told her that her parents had gone to look for her. Hearing this, she suddenly flew away to look for her parents. A lot of tree branches were falling and animals were running here and there to save their lives. She also got caught in one flying branch which badly broke one of her legs and injured her wings. When the storm was over, her neighbors came looking for her and found her injured. They carried her home. Later they found that her Mommy and

Daddy had also died in that storm. Hearing this news, Tiny's world fell apart. She cried day and night not knowing what else lay in life as she lay in her bed, injured. Her biggest pain was not that she was injured, but that now she could not help others in need. She asked herself, if she could not be of help to any one then what is the purpose of her life. Since all her neighbors loved her, they brought her food and medicine and took care of her. But all of this she felt that she was being a burden to others.

Since she never wanted to make others feel sad, she would always smile in presence of others. But she would sob in her bed all night.

She would look at the moon and the stars and ask them if they could show her some way she could be of some use to any body. One night, hearing her innocent cries, moon came down to her. She could not believe her eyes, but then moon said, "Daughter Tiny! Do you think I am of any use to this world?" She was startled by these words of moon. She said, "What at you talking about? It is because of your moonlight that this world becomes beautiful at night. It is by your light that many of us can see at night, looking at the mothers tell stories to their kids, and after the hot sunny day you provide coolness and relief to everyone." Because of the sound coming from Tiny's house, the neighbors came to see if Tiny was alright. They were surprised to see her talking to the moon. Slowly the whole forest collected around Tiny's house. The moon continued, "But I am not beautiful! I cannot do anything by myself except to move around in the sky. I have black spots on me and even my size keeps changing." To this Tiny said, "But you don't need to do anything! Just your presence in the sky is what makes the difference! You being is what makes all beautiful."

Then the moon smiled and said, "Exactly! It is your presence, Tiny, which makes all the difference in this forest! You being is what brings joy to all those who see you." Hearing these words the whole crowd said, "Yes!!! Tiny! Yes!!!" From the crowd, Aunt Berry came out and said, "Tiny, although you are tiny, your heart is very big. Just your presence makes the days joyful for us." The moon said to Tiny, "Remember daughter, never feel bad for what situations you are in. You cannot move around with your body, but you can smile with your face AND you can sing with your voice!" Tiny's eyes brimmed with tears and she said in a soft voice, "Thank You!" Now she did not want to waste any more moments, and she started to sing in the most sweet voice any bird had ever sung in that forest.

In the light of the midnight moon,
Tiny sings to all of you-
Smile, please smile my dear friends
for this is the night for all of you
When joy is all in the air
Sing, and dance and say thank you
We are blessed by the light of the moon
Jump and clap and say thank you...

Watching this everyone's eyes brimmed with tears. They all joined her. The chorus which rose from the forest touched the skies and stars too joined.

From that day onward, Tiny never shed any more tears, and as before she again became the most cheerful bird in the whole forest.

So now close your eyes and ask your inner child what story would the little one would like. And send them in to us as soon as possible. If it is good, I shall try to get them published. In the least, I shall try to send feedbacks to you.

Sincere regards,
Ankush

IN THIS NEWSLETTER – All unlabeled artworks featured in this newsletter are by Käthe Schmidt Kollwitz, 1867-1945.

Born in 1867, Käthe Kollwitz is considered to be one of the greatest German Expressionist artists. Raised by leftist parents during a time of great social and political unrest in Europe, Kollwitz chose to address the struggles of the working class—and the many faces of human suffering—while many of her contemporaries were investigating form and abstraction instead.

Kollwitz was a master printmaker, producing etchings, woodcuts and lithographs as well as drawings in traditional media such as charcoal and graphite. The bold, definitive lines that reappear in her work reveal sympathy for the common man and a remarkable faith in the strength of the human spirit. When she began meeting the poor folks her husband (a doctor) treated, she said:

"The motifs I was able to select from this milieu (the workers' lives) offered me, in a simple and forthright way, what I discovered to be beautiful.... People from the bourgeois sphere were altogether without appeal or interest. All middle-class life seemed pedantic to me. On the other hand, I felt the proletariat had guts. It was not until much later....when I got to know the women who would come to my husband for help, and incidentally also to me, that I was powerfully moved by the fate of the proletariat and everything connected with its way of life....But what I would like to emphasize once more is

that compassion and commiseration were at first of very little importance in attracting me to the representation of proletarian life; what mattered was simply that I found it beautiful."

During her long career, Kollwitz produced four distinct "cycles" of art that are considered to comprise her masterworks: "The Weavers" (1898), "The Peasant War" (1908), "War" (1923) and "Death" (1935). The "War" cycle was her reaction to the death of her son Peter in World War I. His passing in 1914 was one of the most devastating events in Kollwitz's life. She quickly became a pacifist and actively rallied against war.

The devastation of war would haunt her again later in life when her grandson, also named Peter, was killed in World War II, and her home was inadvertently bombed during an Allied raid, destroying much of her artwork.

The men and women in Käthe Kollwitz's work are bent and burdened by the ravages of history—peasants chewed up by industrialization, mothers lamenting children lost to starvation or storm troopers, towns tattered by world war—but they are not altogether broken. Even in the images where all hope seems lost, the beauty, albeit grim, of Kollwitz's work rises up to offer some possibility of redemption.

Despite the loss and struggle in her own life, Kollwitz was able to produce art that is, even today, powerful and uplifting.

On page 48 is printed "Self Portrait age 18" by Alex Grey, a contemporary artist whose more recent work explores how to put functions of the mind and soul onto canvas.

Two pieces besides Kollwitz's have been reprinted here from the last newsletter. One was printed without the artist's name, and the other was mislabeled. Our sincerest apologies for both mixups to the artists, Chris Webb (page 42) and Rudy Brown (page 10).

FINAL NOTES - Hopefully some of what you have read in these pages, whether it be the program offerings or the words of your fellow PE members, have resonated with you, and give you some inspiration and hope. Life is not easy. On the outside I find myself struggling at times just to get by with all the responsibilities I have. I can only imagine how much more intense the struggle can be in a hostile environment. There exists the possibility of you being an example of change, and that your example affects another who in turn affects others. Change for the better while at times is difficult to imagine is possible, and that

change will begin with you and me. Little by little our concerted efforts to humanize your life and share that experience with the outside world will pay dividends. Your writings do effect people and inspire them in the possibility of change. Together we are creating this program. It is an evolving entity, and your participation controls where PE goes. My main task is to understand where you want me to go with this project. I am always open to hearing your ideas, and growing the program based on what suggestions resonate with what I see as possible.

I am sorry that I do not have a new book club offering this go round. Currently there are a couple hundred of you reading Nadine Gortimer's the "Pick Up". I myself am reading it now, and like it a lot more than I imagined. It is not an easy book to read, but she can capture the workings of the mind, and the subtlety of life and thought very well. Please send back your answers to the questions posed in the "Pick Up" packet by November 1st if possible. I still have a couple hundred copies of the book and if 200 of you sign up for it I will send it out again. As always money is tight, but we will find a way to carry on. I want to thank all of you who have sent in donations of money and stamps. It inspires me to do more when you all directly support the program. It is my pleasure to be conducting this program, and I can only hope it nourishes your hungry minds. I wish I could do more, but for now accept and appreciate what we have created together. Please remember to send in your registration forms if you are interested in any of the programs we offer.

Stay strong, look to the positive, and remember that this life is a temporary condition. No matter our circumstances there is the opportunity to better understand ourselves and to contemplate the universe, creation, and our place in it all. I am unsure of any purpose to this life, but it feels good to be helpful to others, so I follow that path, and encourage you all to do so as well. From all the PE volunteers we wish you the best.

Gary

REGISTRATION FORM

Please note: If you received this newsletter you are on our mailing list for 2008; if you do not wish to participate in any of our other programs or update your registration you do not need to return the registration form. This form should be returned quickly to make sure we receive it before the packets are sent—I hope to begin mailings by the end of October. Note when there are deadlines for registration. You are always free to request books; they are sent on a first come first serve basis. Currently we send out about 150 a month. **If you don't want to cut up your newsletter, you may copy the registration form on a separate piece of paper, but make sure you include all information required for the programs.**

Permission - Please check one choice and then print your name and sign in the spaces provided. Even if you check A, B or C, you can still ask that a particular piece of writing be posted as anonymous or never posted at all. We will respect your wishes.

I give the Alternatives Library permission to post my name, writings and artwork on the web using the following guidelines:

- A. Use my name on my artwork, and my other writings
- B. Use my name on my artwork, but not on my other writings
- C. Do not use my name on my writings or artwork, but you may use any of my work and post it as anonymous
- D. Do not use my name or any of my writings in your program.
- E. Post my address with my writings/art on
prisonerexpress.deviantart.com.

Programs – Please check the box of each program you wish to participate in. Carefully read the requirements of each program before signing up.

Book Mailings – I wish to receive books. Enclose a separate sheet detailing the types of books wanted. How many books can you receive in a mailing? _____

What type of book can you receive? Check one:

soft cover hardcover both are accepted

Poetry Project – Please send me the 3rd Edition *Prisoner Express Poetry Anthology*. **I understand that to receive the anthology I have to submit a poem to be considered for the anthology.** We hope to mail this out in a more timely fashion than the 2nd Edition, so please send your poetry for consideration in quickly.

Art Contest/Exhibit – Enclosed is my art work to be considered for the PE Fall Art exhibit to be held at Cornell University. All artwork received until Oct 15 will be eligible for the show

History Project – I'm interested in studying world history, please send me the next unit featuring **The Rise of spreading of Islam 700 to 1400AD**

Math Project – Please enroll me and send the pre algebra course placement exam. If you have already received the placement exam please do not sign up again.

If you are engaged in the math project and not had a follow up letter from us, check this box and let us know where the process left off so we may get back to you.

Journal Project – Please send me more information. This involves a commitment to keep a journal about your life and experiences for 1 year, and sharing that journal with Prisoner Express for publication with other journals. We will send this out when we have 200 interested participants.

Anatomy Study-Please send me a study guide on how my body is constructed, and why it is truly a marvel of nature.

Chess Club-Yes I want to receive mailings on how to improve my chess game. The mailing will also attempt to

answer some of your chess questions, so include those with your registration form

2008/9 Prisoner Express Newsletter I wish to enroll for another year as a member of the Prisoner Express Program.

Yoga Instruction Packet Please send me this valuable life skills packet so that I may increase both my awareness and flexibility. If you already signed up for this rest assured it will be mailed soon

Drawing Instruction- this packet proved so popular we want to offer it to all of you who did not sign up for it the first time it was offered. This will demonstrate a variety of drawing techniques and motivate the artist within us all.

Book Club- we still have 200+copies of "The Pick Up," a story of clashing cultures set in South Africa and the Mid East. Sign up if you would like to read and join in on a discussion of this intriguing book.

NAME: (PLEASE PRINT)

ADDRESS:

This is a new address.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Donations are needed and welcomed. Any help you or your family can give, even something as small as a stamp, is greatly appreciated. Your donations help keep Prisoner Express running.

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