

PRISONER EXPRESS NEWSLETTER

FALL 09

Hello Friends, The time has come to create another edition of the Prisoner Express News. It is an opportunity to describe our upcoming programs, as well as a chance to respond to some of the many questions and comments you send my way. The program continues to grow as we get new requests for services daily. I try to write this newsletter so those of you who have been participating for a while continue in the discussion of how this program is evolving, while those who are new to this project can also get a sense of what is going on and how to plug in.

With every programming cycle, we try continue ongoing programs as well as create something new. Later in the issue, there is a description of each program, and how you can participate.

We create program cycles twice a year. When we send out this newsletter, it is the beginning of a new cycle. We will offer a variety of programs, and it is my hope that you will sign up for the programs you find interesting. I ask that you only sign up for that which you will do, as the photocopying and mailing costs of each program depletes our very limited resources. You would be amazed at how much we are doing with so little actual funding. I specialize in creating low cost learning and creative art opportunities for you, the members of Prisoner Express. I have not yet perfected the art of asking and finding big donors to support our work, but it is my hope that one day we will find the funds we need to continue.

Most of our programs are mailed by bulk mail. That means I do not send out lessons until I have at least 200 responses for a particular program. That is the minimum we can send, to use bulk mail services. Bulk mail rates are much lower than first class, and while the rules for using bulk mail can be a hassle, it is way worth it when I want to stretch a dime. The downside is that if you wait a long time before sending in your registration for the program it might be mailed out before your response comes to me, and then you will have missed your opportunity to get the material. This happens all the time. In the best of all possible worlds, I would then send you a nice letter explaining that your request came too late and better luck next time, but for me to answer each late registration would cost \$.44 plus the time and effort. Usually I disregard the late requests and figure you'll get your chance when the next newsletter comes out. Well here it is, so act in a timely manner if you want to be sure to be included. The good news is that we will not be mailing any of these current offerings before the middle of December. Most will be mailed later than that, all the way through March so it isn't like you have to rush in responding, but for example if you want to participate in the Basic Math program let me know as if you miss the starting date it may be a year before we offer it again.

I hope that explanation makes sense to the many of you who wrote and asked to get involved and have waited many months to get this newsletter. It is not that we do not care or enjoy keeping you waiting. It is just that logistically this is

the best we can offer right now. For those of you who have been quick in your response, than the opposite situation exists. You wonder why you have to wait 3 months before you get your packet of history lessons or a poetry anthology. Perhaps now, you understand our need for a minimum amount of people signing up for programs, combined with our desire to stretch our resources to the maximum.

For those of you reading this for the first time let me introduce myself. I am Gary, and I coordinate this project through my job as Assistant Director of the Durland Alternatives Library. I began by sending books to Danny Harris in Texas 10 years ago, and from that experience, the

Prisoner Express Project has evolved. For those of you who enjoy the programming we have created, give a moment of thanks to Danny for writing such inspiring letters.

I understand that many of you struggle to make sense of life and your experiences while locked up. If it is any consolation to you, it is also quite confusing in the outside world. Relationships end, financial stress effects many of us, loved ones get sick, roof's leak, cars breakdown, and events beyond our control can take over a life. This has been a very difficult year for me, but I know it can always get harder. I just keep trying to take responsibility for my actions and accept the consequences as best I can. I try to remember that life is a gift and each moment is its own unique present, and to enjoy what pleasure I can find in the moment. I understand still, how privileged I am. I still come and go as I please, and through my gardening, I eat great food, which I surely wish was available to all of you. In my dreams, I would find a way to earn a legal living through agriculture. I wish I could find a way to create gardening programs in prison. Nothing grounds me to life and this planet than growing and harvesting herbs and vegetables. I am trying to make each day meaningful, and staying appreciative of life's experience.

I am putting up food all summer and fall so there is plenty for the winter. I have not kept animals for food yet, but am able to purchase beef through a farmer friend. I would very much like to start raising animals for food as well, and hope by next spring to have chickens.

My children are both wonderful and the greatest challenge I face. My 10 year old is so defiant, and I am not sure how to deal with her. I was mistreated as a child and was so fearful of being hurt or starved that I was very compliant. I don't want to try to stamp the spirit out of my daughter, and yet it is quite difficult to listen to a small girl be disrespectful to me. I wonder how many people are plagued by emotional troubles and what the root of their suffering is. When my daughter is being mean to me or someone else, I know that deep down she is suffering tremendously or she would not be doing what she does. I know it sounds simple, and that I should simply punish her. I do when necessary, but it doesn't ever get to the root of her discord. It is hard as a parent watching my children suffer. My eldest is in college, and I have run out of money to help her. I will find a way to supply her with some of the

necessary funds she needs to stay in school. She has offered to quit, but I really want to find a way to keep her education going. She hopes to get a degree in biology and teach science. My youngest son keeps on growing and is now seven. He loves to read and is easy going and kind. I love my family and if I can keep it intact and strong I can pretty much accept the other travails life has strewn across my path.

The student volunteers at PE are great. They really enjoy helping run the program. I have folks from 13 to 50 volunteering regularly. Your letters of appreciation fuel their desire to keep helping. I believe deep down we all want to feel useful in this world, and supplying you all with educational materials helps us at PE feel useful. I wish you were not in the situation you find yourself, but thank you for allowing us to be involved in your lives and to provide what services we can.

Yesterday my 10 year old called me at work to let me know there was a black bear walking around the garlic patch. I have lived on my land for 24 years and have been waiting for a bear to show up. I know they are around but still haven't seen one. I was sorry to miss the show, but everyone else at home was excited for the sighting. I went out to the garlic patch when I got home to at least look at the paw prints. Perhaps the bear will return, but my understanding is that they continually wander. I do have an interesting compost pile so perhaps he/she will return.

I am trying very hard to keep this newsletter to 24 pages. It becomes much easier to mail, using simple bulk mail procedure. Any longer and it has to be sorted and bundled into all sorts of packages based on regions. Trust me it is not a system that utilizes common sense. In the future, I may start making all PE lessons 24 pages, as that seems to fit the weight and thickness limit of the bulk mail regulations. I have so much writing, art and poetry created by all of you that I would like to share, but will have to find new outlets. The newsletter lets all PE participants share in the work some of you are doing in the writing and art projects. I wish I could include more samples for you all to read, but space does not permit it. Please consider joining some of the writing programs offered, as then you will receive the full packets rather than just reading a few selected stories in this newsletter.

Following is a description of the projects we are offering this new cycle. Either send in the enclosed registration form or write out your requests rather than rip up the newsletter. Some of the programs are new, others are ongoing, and a few are repeats from the past. We are constantly evolving so please read the description of the

program and decide whether participation in them will be of service to you.

Blessings on you all,
Gary

Book Mailings

Our most popular program involves mailing you individualized packages of books based on your personal request. Send us a letter stating the types of books you like to read. As we rely on donations, our collection is ever changing. We make the best match we can given the information you supply. The more choices you give us the better you chances for a good match. Packages are generally 2 to 6 books depending on where you are held and the various state rules. Right

now we have an ample supply, but certain areas ore of such high demand that it is certainly hit or miss on whether we have what you want. For example, Every Spanish/English dictionary goes out very soon after it is donated and we might get 50 requests for every one available, so be smart and let us know other types of reading material you would like. You can prioritize your request from most desired to least desired so we know what your first choices are.

We have so many book requests, and cannot currently afford to mail more than 150 packages a month and we probably have 1200 names on our list waiting for books. Some of you are waiting so long for your books, and then when your turn comes we don't have that dictionary you have been waiting to receive. I can imagine the frustration you feel, but I figure the good done by this program out weights the long waits you must endure.

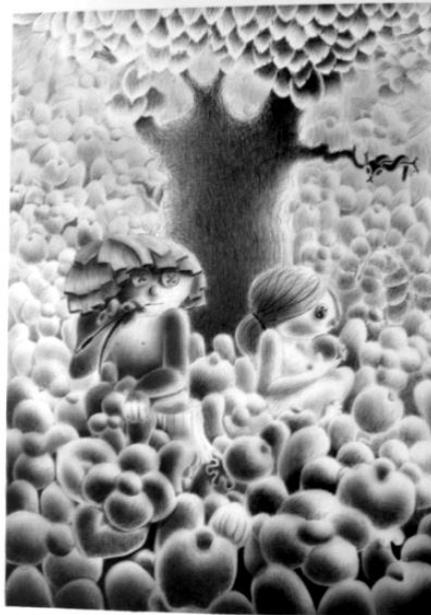
Keeping us informed of address changes is always a good idea.

Poetry Project

We are putting the finishing touches on volume 5 of our poetry anthology, and beginning to collect poetry for Vol. 6. Everyone who submits a poem receives a free copy of the upcoming anthology. We have interested volunteers read all the poetry submitted, and they select the poetry they find most evocative. Other students type it up and create a layout. My hope is that we will contact all authors chosen for this anthology and ask them to submit a short biography about themselves. We can publish it along with their names and contact information as well as put it on our website. I will include a few poems in the newsletter, but if you are curious about the poetry of your fellow PE members, then submit a

Samples Of Art Show Submissions...

Look for artwork displayed throughout the newsletter. I am sorry that we cannot print color, and that our reproductions do not convey the skill in the originals, but it gives all of you an idea of the talent of the participants. I hope more of you will send samples of your art!



Duan Sosbee

poem of your own and receive a copy of the upcoming poetry publication.

The Dark Journey

*I walked alone in this nightmare.
When I looked around, no man was with me, so I went forth
alone.*

-George Warriner

Reflecting

*Thinking of times spent with you,
As the daylight fades away.
Wishing I were with you now,
I feel like this, every day.*

*The things we take for granted,
In our lives led "o"-so-fast.
The "in onlys," rend our hearts in-two,
with torment, sure to last.*

-Ted C. Eason/Woodstock

Archipelago

*I was determined to remain an island when I came here ... a
man alone, here
in this loveless hell I am confined to.
So many groups one can fall into ... the gangs, hate groups,
skin heads,
black radicals, the gays ... the poor confused bastards that
don't know that
sex they are, or the deviant monsters that don't care.
There are the "bad asses", men who have only some badly
misguided sense of
pride that must be protected at all cost.
The poets, the artists, the writers, the performers, the thieves,
the
killers, the game players ... all here.
It is sometimes hard to tell who is who ... so I remain an island
in this
sea of confusion.
I can identify with some, but never lose my sense of aloneness
... I nurture
it, feed it and it sustains me.
It doesn't take long to see who is who in here and each man
falls into his
place.
Oh, some pretend to be what they are not, or pretend not be
what they are,
but it is far to small a world in here for any pretense to last.
One is forced to keep his eyes open, lest he be caught off
guard.
In doing so, you see much more than you wish to. Some things
you can
ignore, others you can't.
But look you must, just as I was forced to look
I watching, I noticed something very strange ... that among the
many here,
there were others that fit in no better than I.
What was even more surprising, they didn't seem to try.
Then I realized, I was much less alone than I ever perceived
myself to be.
Still an island I am ... one of many.*

.-William H. Davis, Jr.

Momma's Song, 1979

*I remember those
twenty cent scoops*

*of black walnut ice cream.
They were fresh from Thrifty's.
We were fresh from running errands
Just you and me
in our lime green Mercury.
We didn't talk, you just drove
nibbling at your ice cream
every so often smiling my way.
Just you and me
in our lime green mercury
We didn't talk, I just rode
licking at my ice cream
watching city streets slide past
Sam Cooke
filled the space between us
telling you what you already knew,
schooling me on what I didn't
A change is gonna come.
I nodded my head to the beat
but couldn't understand truth rhythms.
Had I known then that things
like years would melt away so quickly,
I would have sat closer
held your pretty brown hand
and ate my cone a little slower.*

-Mike Owens

Art Project

The art has been submitted for the 2009 Art Contest and public show. After the current show at Cornell University ends, we will move the show to a senior citizen home in the area. A panel of judges viewed the art, and they have awarded prizes and scholarships. Many excellent pieces were submitted. I leave during the judging, as I do not want to influence their decision. Later in the newsletter are examples of the art. I hope more of you are motivated to send in artwork for next year's contest. I do understand that many of you in TX were not allowed to send in your artwork this year, and I will see what I can do to have that restriction changed regarding your participation in our PE distance learning art class to be created down the line.

**First prize[\$100]-Duane Sosbee, Second Prize[\$75] Valentino Dixon, Third Prize [\$50]-David Reese
Scholarship Winners [\$20] are Mike Ford, James Glico, Jackie Sollars, Rob Johnson, Adam Share, Ron Stewart and Dave Velasquez.**

Please know that even if you were not chosen for a prize much of the work submitted was excellent, and I appreciate the gift you share with us when you send in your art creations. Please send your art in for our next exhibition which is in the planning stages.

History Project

In our last cycle, we had two offerings, **WWII and Culture and History of West Africa**. Volunteers are busy reading your responses. They will create a compilation document on the best responses to send back to all of you. This cycle we will also offer two units of study. Chris will create a packet on the **Latino Migration to the US**. The packet will cover a range of topics including: debate around the word Latino,

being Latino in the U.S. and what this means for children, adolescents, adults, and the aging, cultural contributions to the U.S., and the stories of the four largest Latino immigrant groups: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Dominicans. **Jackie**, a student will create a packet on **The Civil War**. It will focus on the conditions in the country prior to the civil war, as well as the military and national dynamics during the course of the war. Both packets will contain critical thinking questions for you to answer, and as with our past packets we will create a document of your most interesting responses to share with all participants.

Journal Project

We have created a starter packet on how and why you might want to keep a journal of your thoughts, experiences, and memories. If you sign up for this project we will send you this starter packet. We ask you to mail your journals to us, and we create a file of your writing. We search for volunteers to type your journals up and then we place certain of them on our website. Usually we put as many as we can on line. We recommend that you write at least once a week, but you can write as much or as little, as serves you. You can send us your entries as it serves you. Some people send a few every week, while others save it all up and mail it in every month. Do it any way that is best for you. Keeping a journal can be a good way of exploring your life, and learning more about yourself. It also helps refine your thoughts. For those of us on the outside your writing illuminates the humanity of the people in prison, promotes understanding, and can act as a motivator for us to improve the present model of incarceration. We seek writers who will begin a journal in January 2010 and stay with the program for a year. It has become difficult for us to send paper in to prisons, and I hope all of you who are interested can find the paper you need. We will send a starter packet to all who are interested, but you do not need this packet to begin keeping track of your thoughts and actions

The Memoir Project

This is an exciting new project. David who is coordinating this project was introduced to PE when he performed in the play **"Poetic Injustice"**. Ashley created this play last year. Ashley was an intern at PE and a student at Ithaca College. She compiled certain journal entries, creating a play and had actors portray you, the Journal writers. She did not change your words. It was very powerful, and for me the most effective actor was David. Imagine my pleasure when this year I get a call from David who was so moved by your words that he wants to create another stage play of your writings. Hence, he has created the Memoir Project. He is

looking for a personal story about something that is meaningful to you about your life. We will compile all the stories sent and send each participant a full copy of what everyone writes. He will also select certain stories and adapt them to the stage, and in the spring, we will have at least two performances of this piece. Below are his words about the project. I hope some of you are moved to participate and share something important.

Everyone has a story. Everyone has either told, or been told a story that just sort of sticks with them. I would like to hear your story. This can be a story from your own life, in or out of prison, or a story that has traveled through your family. Really any story will do, just as long as it is something that is meaningful to you. It can be a favorite bedtime story as a child, or a legendary event from your life. The mundane can



Scott South

be wonderful, so no need to strive for anything amazing or conventionally "impressive", just simply tell your story, whatever it is. For instance, one of my favorite stories involves the smell of my father after he ran marathons when I was a toddler, or the little plastic toy trumpet I used to play with that annoyed my mother. Telling one's story is the key to having a voice in society. Everyone does indeed have a story. We may not always think our stories are "good" but by no means does that devalue the power of storytelling. Suggested length would be five pages or less, but this is by no means a limit or requirement. There is no perfect length for this assignment, just as there is no single ideal length for a story. It can be as long or as short as it needs to be in order to be complete.

-David

Math Project

We will offer our basic math package again this year. It consists of an evaluation exam, which mirrors the material you would need for a basic high school diploma in NY. Take the exam and send in your answers. If you score above 80%, we will send you a packet of Japanese math puzzles called Sensidoku. If you score under 80%, we will send you a 63-lesson pamphlet explaining the entire math covered in the placement exam. This is the same math packet offered last year so some of you have already taken the test. If you feel, you do not need basic math, you can sign up directly for the sensidoku course. Please note this is the same material offered last year. If you have already completed the first sensidoku packet and sent it back to us you will automatically receive our third math course offering when it is completed. Look on the registration form and choose which math course is best suited to your needs.

Chess Project

Ettie, our local chess master has been creating a newsletter for those of you who play chess. A typical newsletter will answer chess questions, include interesting chess playing

tips, facts and puzzles as well as include a couple of games played by the great masters of the game. Let us know if you want to join our chess project.

Newsletter

Due to the expense of postage and copying costs it is required that you re register for the newsletter every year either by writing us a letter or sending in the registration form. This newsletter has gone out to anyone who has written us in the year 2009. If you wish to get our next newsletter, we will have had to hear from you sometime after May 09. If you are unsure when you last wrote us sign up for the newsletter or at least send us a letter by the end of winter to receive the Spring 10 Newsletter. We cannot afford to be mailing this to folks who are no longer at their listed address, or who are not interested in the publication. This process keeps our active database accurate.

Book Club

Our last selection was Lincoln at Gettysburg, an in-depth look at Lincoln's historic speech. We are still receiving your comments about the book. Some of you felt it was too scholarly a work for a random book club. For those who think that way I have good news. Our next selection will be "The Grapes of Wrath". With any luck, we hope to get up to 500 copies. For those of you who have not read it you are in for a great read. This is a book chosen for the entire Cornell freshman class to read. Along with the book will be a series of critical thinking questions. We ask that you respond to certain questions. We will compile your responses and create a document of the most interesting answers. *The Grapes of Wrath* was first published in 1939, and received the Pulitzer Prize in 1940 before being adapted for a 1940 John Ford film starring Henry Fonda. It eventually became the most widely celebrated of the 17 novels that Steinbeck produced over the course of his career, and it formed an important part of the basis on which Steinbeck won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1962. Yet the novel's early reception was mixed. His then-contemporary and very American story of the Joad family and their fellow migrants in 1938 and 1939 was banned early on in response to the claims of some California farm owners that Steinbeck had misrepresented their treatment of migrant workers. At one point, it was even publicly burned in Steinbeck's hometown of Salinas, California.

Despite that, Steinbeck's novel has, of course, become an American classic. It is an extraordinarily rich account of a major transition, upheaval, and transformation in a way of life for large groups of people in America. What caused the transformation was partly human activity and the growth of technology, but it's an extraordinary documenting of the ways in which people's social and cultural lives were totally torn apart by this kind of upheaval.

Drawing Pamphlet

This is an offering we are repeating, and was created by Toby a PE intern two years ago. If you already received a pamphlet on perspective, shading and how to draw a dragon, this is the same packet. So many of you want to improve

your drawing skills, which motivated Toby to put together a packet that offers basic drawing instruction. I am going to have it reprinted and will send a copy out to any of you looking to improve your basic drawing technique. I am looking for a volunteer to create an Advance Drawing packet to go with this one and I hope will be able to offer something new in the future

Picture Story Project

The picture story project is a relatively new edition to the PE pantheon of writing projects. Below are a series of pictures. Each one has a date attached to it. We ask that you write a story about the picture. It is interesting how we can all look at the same picture and see very different things. It happens in life all the time. Everyone who submits a story will receive a copy of every story written on the picture. We will also reprint some of the stories in our PE newsletter. Let your imaginations soar, and see what comes.

Below are some stories submitted on some previously printed pictures.



Long Day Ahead

I am standing here looking down this long road. I am just getting out of the old gray van we have all road in to come to this section of the fields. It is about 60 degrees outside. The sun is just rising up. It might be 6 AM or seven. I know I have a long day ahead of me. I haven't even begun and I can feel the weight of the sack of corn I will be carrying back and forth to a trailer tractor that will be arriving soon. I can hear my aunt calling me. Asking if I want a cup of hot chocolate that she has in a red thermos. I nod my head and run towards the old gray van. She tells me it's going to be a long day. That I will need my strength and that I must keep up. I've known that ever since my first day I laid my eyes on the corn crop. The Rain God was good to us this year. In a way, I am at peace. Though I know, it will be a long day. I really don't mind. We will have food on the table. Good meat and maybe a sweet now and then. Yes, the Rain God was good this year. We have to thank him again today. Well it's time to pick up my sack. I can't wait until tonight comes. When I can tell my friends in night school how my day was... But then all my 3rd grade classmates have similar tales... There is a long day ahead of me.

-Lucio Shadow Urenda

Kept Promises

"No mommy! No!" The little boy cried as he hugged his beloved puppy.

"Baby, we've already talked about this." The little boy's mother said, also in tears. "We just can't afford to keep him anymore. I know how much you love him, honeybunch. But since your father lost his job, money has been tight and we can hardly afford to feed ourselves."

"I'll give him my food. I don't want to eat anymore." The little boy said, most seriously.

His mother barely suppressed a giggle, in spite of the seriousness of the situation. "Honey, we can't let you do that. I'm pretty sure the police would try to throw me and your papa in jail for starving you."

To that, the little boy said nothing. He just hugged his puppy tighter and sat staring out at the night through the window of his mother's old rusty Ford LTD. Life just wasn't fair! What had he done to make God mad at him? To take away his only friend? His puppy!

The dog licked the little boy's face, sensing something was wrong and that his little boy was sad, but didn't understand why.

When she finally pulled the battered car onto the side of the road in the middle of nowhere, she turned to the little boy and said, "say goodbye to the puppy now, baby."

"Mommy, no! Don't make me mommy!" The little boy wailed, now crying even harder.

Pulling the little boy to her breast and hugging him to her, the little boy's mother cried too.

"Baby, I know you love the dog, and it hurts mommy to have to do this, but we just can't afford him anymore. I know it hurts right now, but you will get over it. And one day you'll understand why we had to let him go." She explained to the crying boy.

After she said this to the boy, she released him and reached for the dog. At first the boy tightened his grip on the dog, and she was afraid that he would not let go, but the boy let his mother take the dog. She opened the car door, got out, and set the dog on the side of the dirt road in the middle of nowhere. And as she got back in the car, the dog did not try to follow. He lay down and watched the car pull away.

The boy did not look back to see his puppy one last time. He was very quiet on the long drive back home. He cried himself to sleep that night while his mother held him. In time, he did get over the dog, and one day he did understand why they had to let him go. He made a promise to himself that when he had kids that he would never make them go through what he went through with his puppy. When he had kids some 20 years later, he kept that promise.

-Jeffrey Robinson

In all His Ways

With the dawning of the day yet to be seen, I was already an hour deep into my preparations for what there was to come.

Looking at my wife and two children still asleep, I said my silent prayer that seems to come all too often--that the day ahead be bountiful and productive and that the ones I love so dearly be provided for and content within our meager lives.

Going out to my old truck to go to headquarters of the farm to pull my number and begin my day in earnest, I am caught in the thought that if only the times were better, I could? We could? It is always the questions left uncompleted in this day and time that is a constant reminder that at best, our road is insecure.

With day light finally breaking, I pull up to the barn where several other workers have gathered to plan the upcoming day and to try to bring about the best results, not only for the workers but for the farms as well. With the plans laid out, I gathered my required baskets and put them in the bed of my truck to head to my appointed section for picking.

The day was warming up nicely and the coming sun just beginning to dry the dew from the apple trees with the sweet scents of ripe fruit becoming richer by the moment. The trees in my section looked good from where I decided to start, and if my luck held out, I may just be able to come out a little better today than I had the previous three.

With my ladder set up and my baskets in a line, I began my first climb of the day with the realization that, once again, it would take a short while to work out the small aches from the previous day. Like the day, I myself was warming up for what was to come, and after working out the soreness, I became engrossed with my gather to make the grove manager happy in the hopes of pulling more sections as plentiful as this one seemed to be.

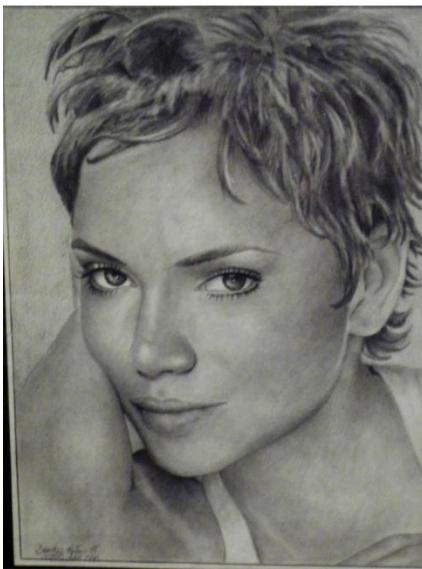
I picked throughout the morning without seeing many of the other pickers, and this alone brought back a comforting thought that with 30 pickers working and each to assigned sections, hopefully I would be able to work longer at this orchard than I had at the last, before my family and I would have to leave again following our life of dreams.

As the day drew on, my luck stayed good in one respect that the baskets that I had been issued seemed to be filling at a rapid pace, but also the burden of heat entered into the element and made the morning coolness a pleasant thought in the back of my mind. By 2:30PM, I had filled my quota of bushels and was glad to know that with several hours left to pick I could be well ahead of my last few

days if it just held out like this.

Shortly after returning to my section to work, coolness slowly started creeping into the orchard that could only mean one thing--rain. While picking up my pace to try to get as much done as possible before the rain set in, my new batch of baskets filled rapidly and with that thought, I was content that, despite the weather, I was still ahead. As the day quickly passed, I worked steadily and was so thankful for not only the somewhat cooling overcast but also the fact that it had not actually rained and put an end to my day early.

Feeling that my section was in good shape and thoroughly picked through, I began to make my preparations to quit for the day, knowing that little daylight remained in which to work. With my truck reloaded with the last of my gear and ladder, I headed back to the barn to where my pick would be weighed and added to my previous amount that I had turned in earlier in the day. Not many of the pickers had actually stayed as late as I, and a few others, but still there was



Donald Hooker

enough there to make the wait in line last longer than what I would have liked.

When my time came up, the farm manager asked me if I could wait for a few minutes to settle upon my day because he would like to have a word with me if I didn't mind. I could not conceive any reason whatsoever that this man should want to speak with me, and in my mind, I could think of nothing that may have gone wrong or any of my produce that may have been damaged in any kind of way.

My paranoia was in overdrive.

When finally he finished with everyone, he called me back to the counting table and scales, and proceeded to bring my count up to par. While relieving me of some of my anxiety and sense of impending doom, he assured me that my section was the best take of the day and that I had come out of it very well. He then told me the reason that I was asked to remain, which was that the farm owner had been talking about the amount of work already to be done and some expansion to the existing operation as well. In order to accomplish that end, he was looking for another man on whom he could rely to do a thorough job on the farm plus have a working knowledge of it, and asked if I might consider such an offer.

He let me know what the benefits would be, which were a house for myself and family, a decent pay scale per week, and a 5% of the profits that my section provided. The job was not seasonal as the trees on such a large scale needed constant attention year around, not only from pruning in general but from fire on to cold or drought or bugs, and the list went on.

My silence during his sales pitch must have somewhat baffled him because it almost seemed as if he had stopped in mid sentence of his oration to look for my reactions. To put it mildly, there were no reactions because I was in shock.

That was when his silence brought me back to reality, and I knew that the man was waiting for my answer. My only reaction was that yes, I stated that I would be glad to be part of the operation and that I was ready to begin as soon as I could get my family settled.

He told me to follow him and got into the large farm truck that all of the day's produce had been loaded onto and would be taken to the market the next day. We went farther onto the farm to where he pulled up to a small but comfortable looking house set within the orchard itself.

He told me to take my time and that I would find everything in order from electricity to propane, which the farm would supply as long as we remained. I was told to move my family in and get comfortable then to report to him for further instructions about my new duties on the farm. He drove away with what seemed a sense of contentment that he also had accomplished something that he himself wished for.

I stood on the porch of the house feeling much of my burden being lifted from me. From where I stood, I looked down a lane of the orchard in the waning light of day. The overcast was still there but farther down the lane, a ray of sunshine penetrated through it all. And, with a smile upon my

face and tears in my eyes, I again gave thanks not only for the answer to my prayer for my family but also for the token of love that God shows me in the beauty of his light within a gray world that he shines for all to see.

-Grady P. Sartor

My Road

Such a long and lonely road I have traveled. It is desolate and most times so dark. Not a day goes by that I don't question myself, "Why go on? Why do I keep forcing myself to walk down this road?" Day after day, month after month, and year after year it is the same. Solitude and emptiness are my only friends.

I wrap my arms around myself and wonder why these tears fall from my eyes. Has sorrow or fear come to join me on my journey? It's hard to tell one from the other anymore. Or is it you, Misery? I could taste my tears and know which one of them it is, but I can't lose my focus. I have to keep moving. I'm afraid if I stay in one spot for long, I will lose my concentration. Give up and walk off this road. I can't let that happen. I have worked too hard these last nineteen years to lose hope now.

You wonder about this road I travel on? It is the path of my sanity where one misstep within these walls will leave me unhinged. An unbalanced lunacy that I may never find my way back from. Is that why I weep? No! do not think about it. Stay focused and keep on walking. One foot in front of the other.....

-Baldomero Garcia

It Ends, Someday

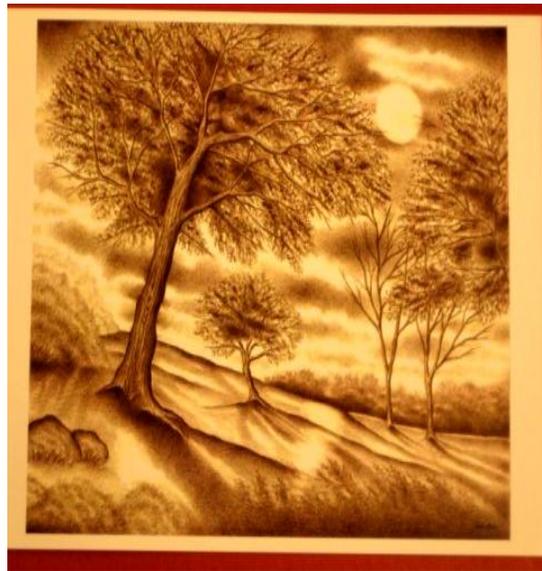
The journal program, the art of peeling an onion, deals with escaping pain and discovering, a lot of what I thought isn't what was. I have few memories of my natural father. He was a six foot two inch brawny, Blackfoot Indian with a great disposition until the alcohol took control. Yet, he had his moments how-be-it they were so few.

One of those times was when he had a sharecropper's job on a farm in Tahoka, Texas. It is from that, that the cloud-

darkened row with a light upon the horizon seems to quicken a lesson of truth in life itself.

The old clay jug was already heavy before my sister and I climbed into the back of the old truck and dunked them into the large oblong water trough. Each jug gurgled as air bubbled out, allowing the water to fill its void. Momma said we had the most important job in the family at that time, ferrying water from the old Ford truck to where they worked somewhere between the truck and forever.

It was the end of an era, the Great Dust Bowl finally re-tamed in the early sixties. The soil, blown sand from every state between Tahoka, Texas and North Dakota had been plowed under, mixed with the blood-red hardened clay. This produced a nutrient-rich water-absorbing combination that sucked the flood canals to yield cotton that towered over my head like the jungle foliage in my dad's old black and white photos. My mom, dad, and siblings and the black pickers didn't even have to stoop to snatch the bowls of King Cotton's beard. This was our daily life that began seasonally with the



Valentino Dixon

cotton chopping to days like today where the family and pickers began dragging the long white bags down the rows before sunrise and vanishing into the first heat wave.

Looping the cloth strap about our neck and shoulders, we turned to make our third trip of the day. The seemingly permanently fixed searing white sphere set high in a perpetual noon hour. It heated the dark brown jugs to the point that we chose to carry them by hand rather than suffer the burning. We carried them in a series of short journeys, set them down, then peered down the narrow corridors of the dense plants. We never strayed from our little hallway for fear of being forever lost in the jungle itself. Starting down that narrow path, we hoped to see something in the quivering waves and distance illusive blue ocean, but we knew we had a great distance to cover because the world remained silent except for the rustling of leaves from the occasional whirlwind. Unable to see anyone, we picked the jugs up and began moving on, stopping again where the old truck itself was consumed by that consuming blue ocean beyond the wavering landscape. Picking up the jugs, we continued on until suddenly the vague harmonic sound of Sunday hymns began to grow louder with our every step. The singing, sometimes low and mournful other times gay and uplifting became our reserve of power, encouraging us to speed up. The chanting and singing became more pronounced.

*Gonna keep my eyes on high--on high
Whilst I keep my knees to the ground.
Coz I aims to hear that sweet, sweet sound
Let the Saints sing loud 'O' God ye Mighty.
Let the Saints sing loud Mighty God art
thee.*

Once in sight, everyone, black and white, wrestled free from the now bloated bags. Few grumbled about the hot water. They were just happy to taste something wet. Dad twirled the jug around, rested it on a bent arm and paused before lifting the drink high, "Water's hot. The weight is great. Long is the row, but it's mine to hoe," he'd say then drink. With a deep sigh, he would pull the Red Massie Ferguson cup, wipe his brow and examine the rows they'd picked. I'd take the jug and stand in the narrow sliver of comfort his shadows provided. There was seldom conversation lest there appeared a reason to chastise. "Look at all of them bowls you're leavin'. Ma'be you need to go back and start all over again while we wait for ya," he would say, more a warning than a complaint. He'd never stop everyone, but they knew he would send them back down that row the next day for pickin's that wouldn't amount to squat in pay. Replacing the cap, he grabbed the cloth tethers of the cotton bag.

We left the full jugs with them and grabbed the empties of the previous trip. I'd look back in time to see them sling the jug straps over neck and shoulder before slipping into the harness of the cotton bag. Within minutes, the heat engulfed the company, swallowing them up into the illusion. The third trip ended and our fourth journey required us to carry three jugs of water and the large lunch basket filled with biscuits, honey and fried chicken. It was a tricky load in that my sister and I had to not only carry a jug each, but we had to hang a third jug and the basket on a broken hoe handle and hold it

steady upon our shoulders. The lunch journey began. The pains of our daily suffering, trekking on through a great heat void of air. It amazed me at how we seemed to catch up to them just as they were dumping the cotton bags in trailers parked in the middle of the crop.

Walking up, I craned my head to see dad and one of the black pickers' silhouettes atop the trailers on mounds of picked cotton that loomed higher than the roof on our two story hay barn. He and the picker wrestled each bag up the side of the trailers then carefully dumped them so that the cotton bowls cascaded down into every nook and cranny. Finally, after tossing the last bag, he would climb down the side of the trailer and slip below it to where mom began pulling lunch out for all to enjoy.

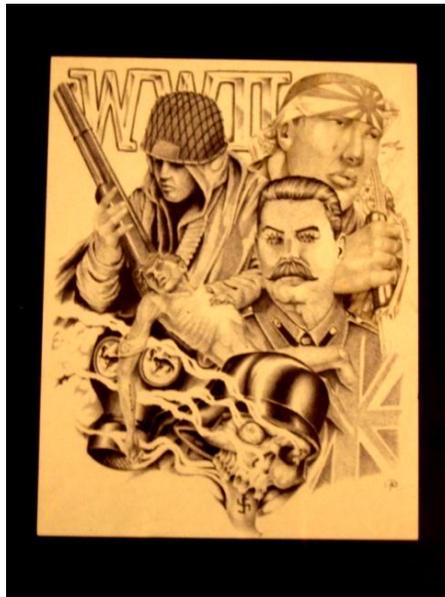
Dad called lunch his daily 'midlife crisis.' I always thought this was because it was the middle of the day in the middle of the field. To many, a basket lunch (sometimes nothing more than honey and biscuits) below an overloaded cotton trailer would be inconvenient especially in late summer when there was no breeze in the heart of chest high cotton where rats and snakes were busy playing the game of life. But when a farmer chooses to raise cotton, he has sentenced himself and others to six months of hard, seldom rewarding labor. It begins with the plow, then the planting, followed by months of continually maintaining the flood canal and long black hoses. Somewhere around mid-season, there comes the cotton chopping. Finally, the bowls burst, the cotton expands and dries out, and the pickers must begin strenuous weeks of pain-filled turmoil. It was a hard life, void of blessings and at his age, an epiphany of his own madness, the 'midlife crisis.' This wasn't so for the black pickers who spent their lunch break festively boasting about what they planned to buy with their wages before moving on to the next farm.

To dad, the rewards after sharing the profit of the harvest didn't appease his perspective of the American Dream. He had a wife with five kids (two of which couldn't contribute to the income) that had the basic needs of life, food and clothing. There were many things however that contributed to my

dad's proclamation.

When lunch ended, my sister and I were shuffled off. There was yet more water to be hauled. The journeys to and fro became lengthy excursions that allowed no time to dally. They required us to run back nearly every step of the way with no time to rest save the few minutes that the three jugs took to fill. Then we set out, lugging the three jugs in an uneven gait. The two trips were endless under the excruciating heat. Each trip ended with the droning of spiritual hymns. With the last trip completed, our daily chores were fulfilled.

The last two hours of the day I spent walking backwards in front of my dad. I would wrestle and wrangle some of the lower bowls. Dad said nothing. He continued his steady pace, gripping bowl after bowl, twisting and yanking them free before stuffing them into the now extremely bloated sack. Try as I could, I never lasted long for the cotton balls were quick to shred fresh skin. After a while, I began to glance over my



James Glica

shoulder, searching each quaking heat wave for the picker's truck.

One day, the row seemed extra long. The sun, having lost its throne slowly fell towards the horizon somewhere beyond the end of the rows we were picking. Dark rainless thunderclouds crept northwards. I turned and gazed down that narrow green corridor growing darker by the minute. Dad stopped, dropped to one knee and pulled the cap to wipe the muddy toil from his forehead. I looked at him, noting an unusually peculiar expression. He took a deep breath then pointed towards the beacon of light shooting down the darkened row at us.

"You see that?" he quizzed.

I nodded then looked at the haunting vision of the darkened green lined path before us.

"That boy is a perfect picture of life. You stand at the beginning of your own life's row everyday ready to start picking. You'll pick more curses than blessings," he said, turning my hands over and wiping the blood from my own cut hands. "And believe me. It'll never get easier than it is right now. You'll never get a just reward. But! Don't despair. Every row before every man, woman or child," he smiled, something he never did and tweaked my nose, "It ends someday."

-Jackey R. Sollars



A Responsible Man

Her singing woke him up, although he couldn't say for certain that he had been asleep, just as he wasn't sure he was really awake now. He hasn't slept well in months, maybe years.

Yesterday was supposed to have been fun. Instead it was just a trial. Fourth of July, with relatives and friends over and he was constantly called away to the telephone, to the fax machine, and now he had to fly out later this morning. His wife had been disappointed, again. When would he slow down? The kids were growing up fast; he needed to spend time with them or soon they would be too old to want to. Couldn't she understand he had responsibilities? Didn't she know he was doing it all for them?

She had laid a burger in front of him at his desk with a neck-rub and a sigh.

The song came from outside the house. Even though he couldn't make out the words, the tune and the sweet voice singing it seemed so familiar, just out of reach of his memory.

His wife lay curled up beside him, asleep with her hand resting on his shoulder. So she hadn't heard it. He gently placed her hand on his pillow and slid out of bed. He pulled the curtain aside and looked down at the swimming pool. There below, floating in the water, was a young woman in a long white lace dress. Her black hair flowed around her

shoulders and her hands languidly stroked the water. She was singing with a trace of a smile on her face.

Somehow her wasn't struck by the oddness of this scene. But he did wonder why the dog, usually so alert to any outside noise, wasn't yipping her head off now. His wife, his kids- none of them seemed to have heard anything.

He slid his feet into slippers, tied his robe around him and headed downstairs. He couldn't hear her voice now but the song was coming alive in his brain. By the time he had disabled the French doors he could hear her clearly, but he was already singing along in his mind:

Blow up your TV
Throw away your paper
Move to the country
And build yourself a home.
Plant a little garden
Eat a lot of peaches
Try to find Jesus
On your own.

When he looked down at her from the deck her smile widened as she sang. He knew her face. The pool was lit from below and the light shone through her thin dress- he knew all that he saw there, too...

He's 18 and back at his dorm room at college. His roommate and most of the other guys on the wing have gone off to a game or a party - he doesn't know -but he has stayed behind to study. His eyes are tired and he pushes away from his desk. He'd allowed himself a short break.

He hears a girls voice in the quiet hall singing "Blow up your TV, throw away your paper..." she walks down the halls bare feet, trailing one finger along the wall and touching each door. She wears a tank-top and an ankle-length tie dyed skirt. Her gleaming black hair is tucked behind ears and a small cameo hangs from a velvet choker around her throat. When she reaches his doorway she doesn't lower her hand. She pushes lightly on the tip of his nose as she walks by, he blinks and blushes. "your cute" is all she says. As she nears the double doors at the end of the hall he snaps out of his reverie

"You too!" he calls.

She turns around, studies him briefly and smiles, which produces two dimples he could fall into.

"Well come on then" she says and pushes through the doors. He looks over his shoulder at the pile of books on his desk. He bites his lip, but then he grabs his keys, locks the door and runs to catch up. She comes from a big Italian family- come in, sit down, sit down. Did you have enough to eat? How about a beer?- she goes almost everywhere bare footed, even to classes. She loves to sing. She's going to be an actress. She wants to join the peace corps. She wants to help people- she has dreams.

He's the youngest in his family, as each of the older kids grows up they go straight to work and dutifully, give a share of their wages to their mother to help with the one coming up after them. He's the only one who gets to go to college- work hard, get good grades, make us proud- and he has succeeded to somehow make himself worthy of all the sacrifices they've made for him. He has responsibilities.

As they talk and stroll around campus she slips her hand in his. There is a Thunder-clap and a sudden downpour of rain. His eyes dart around, looking for an awning or a doorway to shelter under. He pulls her hand but she hauls him back

saying “silly boy it’s only rain. Didn’t you ever walk in the rain?”

“Oh no, I guess not. Not on purpose anyway.”

“Poor thing. It’s nice isn’t it?” there’s that smile again

“Well... yeah” he grins “it’s different.”

She leads him to her dorm. Her room-mate is away and, well, they have to get out their wet clothes don’t they? And it would be cozy and warm under her covers, wouldn’t it?

And so it went. Sometimes she’s happy to lay in his bed and read while he works at his desk. Sometimes she pulls him away to go out to laugh, to love her. “you should relax you work too hard, you worry too much.” he’s happy to go with her but he never truly stops worrying and he only has to work that much harder later.

Then it was crunch time; final exams and he’s really pushing himself. He has no time for her and becomes irritable and snappy if she tickles his ear or makes too much noise.

Then, two days before his statistics final, she loses his calculator. She swears she asked to borrow it – he doesn’t remember it that way. She laid it down somewhere and forgot it. She looked everywhere, asked everyone. It’s a pricey one, bought for him by his oldest brother with the usual admonishments: take care of it, work hard, and make us proud. He’s living on ramen noodles and ketchup; there’s no way he can buy a new one. The strain and pressure fuel his angry outburst.

“I can’t believe this! You are such an f-in dreamer with your dumb songs and your play-acting. This is REAL SARAH! How can you be so irresponsible?” for the first time he sees tears in those big dark eyes as she runs from the room. The next morning he finds a brand new calculator in his mail box. He knows he should call her, to forgive and be forgiven, but he’s so busy, so far behind in his work.

When his exam is over he knows he’s done fine and rushes to tell her, but her room-mate answers the door “she’s already gone home for the summer” he notices her stereo is still there. “oh that. I bought it from her before she left. It was her idea I guess she needed money for something.” He’s devastated, but he has to go home, too. His brother has lined a summer job for him, to help pay for next year expenses. Whenever he tries to call her house she’s “up north visiting relatives” or “out with her friends” In the fall she doesn’t return to college.

He graduate early lands a good job, starts climbing the ladder. Eventually he finds love and gets married. Then come children and a mortgage and bills and ever more responsibility. His doctor warns him to slow down. His wife worries about him. His kids want to play catch and have tea parties with him. But there are braces to pay for and college to save for. He has to keep pushing, to succeed, to be responsible.

He’s on his knees at pool side. He can smell the grease on the cold barbeque and the wet towels draped across lounge chairs. She smiles directly at him now. “poor thing” she says dreamily, “you should relax. You work too hard you worry too much.”

“How can I?” he pleads. “Everyone is counting on me. They need me.” She chuckles lightly, “silly boy you never did

understand.” She closes her eyes and begins singing softly “Blow up your TV, throw away your paper....”

The whole family heard him hit the water the paramedics arrived in time to restart his heart and rush him to the hospital. He woke up full of wires and tubes, surrounded by monitors. His wife was in the chair beside the bed, her hand holding his. She felt him stir and came awake. She smiled bravely but couldn’t hold back her sobs.

“Oh darling, we nearly lost you thank god you made so much noise. I don’t know what I’d do without you. I’m going to take good care of you and you’ll be better soon, you’ll see.” She hushed him when he tried to speak. “Everything is fine, everything is covered. Don’t worry. But you are going to slow down. Don’t you know how much we need you? How much I need you? I need you honey, not things. Just you. Rest now.”

In a few weeks he was well into recovery. Amazingly the company had not gone belly-up in his absence. His wife was spoiling him and she glowed. He got to know his kids again and they seemed rather fond of him.

One day his curiosity gets the better of him and he Google’s her. He finds several postings from her small town’s newspaper. He smiles at the (mostly) kind reviews of roles she has played in community theater. He nods knowingly when he reads an item praising her for all the time and energy she has donated to local charities and causes she supports. He knows he should be satisfied with that, but finally, he clicks on her personal page. There is a photograph of Sarah and her husband surrounded by children from early teens to young adults. He can only read the first few lines of text before his vision blurred by tears:

To Sarah’s many friends, we are sad to tell you that our beloved mother passed away after her long fight with cancer. She died peacefully at home very early on July fifth. Our dad and all her children were with her. In lieu of flowers Sarah would have wished for you to make a donation to your favorite charity...

-Gregory Vance

Chick Afloat

I’m in my dream. I move, in flight under water. In my element, I breath naturally, I fly effortlessly, I see clearly, from within, Steve Miller’s “fly like an eagle” rocks. –o-ahead of me, something white floats. I move closes, curious. “It’s a chick!” a good-looking young broad. WOW! I’m in LOOOVE!!! I’m filled with a glow, warmth, a NEED to know this beautiful person. I circle around her, just looking. She’s in a white night gown and is floating with just her face above the surface. I wonder, can she perhaps not breathe underwater? I don’t want to be rude and startle her so, I surface. I look at her and she turn to me and smiles. I “FREAK” because if I smile back, I’ll have to breathe! I’m holding my breath because I don’t know if I CAN! Panic city! I duck under and inhale a huge breath, bob-up and GRIN like an idiot. And she cracks up laughing. This cracks me up too, which shows me, air is good too. So, smiling we reach for each other. ZAP!!! The light are ON! “Chow Time,” Chow Time, Chow Time”

Bummer. . .

-Danny Sparks



Ernie Diaz



“Hey! That’s my Boat”

It was a lazy summer afternoon and I was laying on the bank of the Illinois River resting my head on a small tackle box. A long cane pole I had placed just so in the fork of a stick to my side with the line wrapped around the tip of my index finger. There was not but a pair of thin shorts between me and nature, so I could feel the hot sun and warm humid breeze. My mind was attune to even the gentle pull of the waves on the line as I slowly drifted off for a nap. There was not a sound these deaf ears could hear and in another moment the largest fish in the sea wouldn’t wake me.

Still something disturbed me and cause me to sit right up. I was confused at first. Everything was still calm and peaceful. There was no fish on my lie; any lions, tigers, or bears about to eat me. There was not even a bird close by. I seem to still be alone. Yet I had that feeling of being watched and looked around for who it could be.

Down the river bank about half a mile, or so, was Sister Creek and just come out of the mouth of that creek was a boy in a boat much too large for him to handle. He was a kid about my size, which –as usual- meant he was probably fourteen years old to my seventeen. I didn’t know him though I had seen him around. He lived close by but I was new to the area. It was the boat that I knew - a moss green twenty-two foot flat-bottom, square-ended johnboat.

Johnboats are common enough along the Illinois and other rivers, lakes. However this was different and I had great call to know every inch of it personally. The fall before, while exploring my new home, I spotted the front end sticking out of a pond. I asked a farmer about it and he told me it was the best boat in the world. He said it built by his Dad and Uncle when they were just boys, so I figured that made it about 150 years old. He said it had some perpetual leaks and a cow had stepped in it, but I could have it if I wanted. He even used his tractor to pull it out for me.

I left it there in the grass for a few days to dry out. Still it was too big and heavy for someone of my caliber to move easily. It wasn’t just long; it was abnormally deep (42 inches) and made of rough oak lumber. Still I moved it, with just a wheelbarrow, nearly two miles. Okay, I cheated. I took it apart and made about twenty trips. My uncle told me that even though the farmer gave me the boat, he gyped me. But I saw something there couldn’t see. That boat didn’t come out of a factory; it came out of someone head. It was built at a time when people knew how to do things. I never figured I could repair it or put it back together. Instead I used it as a pattern. I recut each piece out of new oak lumber. Each piece was cut to fit together like a puzzle –tongue and groove, then dowelled. It

took me about 9 months from conception to breaking water. I added a fine fiberglass undercoat and paint just a week before. I had only put it into the creek to test it. I had paled it around for a while, but it had no motor, oars, or even a paddle and no registration numbers...

Yet there I sat watching my baby take its maiden voyage at the hands of a thief. I slowly got to my feet, mad as all --- and wondering just how to handle this situation. I could picture myself beating the stuffing out of this kid and tossing him into the river. Still – I was mad not stupid. I knew there was gonna be a little trouble getting into the boat, but no one was gonna steal my boat.

Now, a johnboat is the best boat in the world to pole or row in semi-calm waters. It took six strong men to put this boat in the water, but on the water it easily moves smooth and even without much effort. It rides on top of the water, so most anything will move it. That’s good and bad. It means even the wind or current can move a johnboat – or another boat’s waves.

So it was that I had my plan. I’d simply go under the boat and from there I could rock it easy enough and put him off guard. It sat deep enough in the water that I could come up over the side without tipping it over. I was ready to make my move as he came even with me. Our eyes locked for a minute and I saw the mischievous look in his eyes. I knew he knew this was my boat and I was about to try and retake possession. It takes a thief to know a thief and I know one when I see one. However, the look on his face was a challenge –Boy to Boy. That boat was a work of art and worth ten times what I’d put into it. A challenge – such as this – is beyond monetary value. It would be worth the bruises I knew I’d get and the boat suddenly became the prize.

Yet, even as I was about to make my move something distracted him and he quickly looked back over his shoulder. I had heard something I could not hear, but I saw the new look on his face and I understood. All bets were off and a new challenge had been made. The two of us were no longer opponents, but partners and the stakes had been raised.

Some people don’t realize there are still Tugs or towboats pushing barges up and down our River Highways. If you are frequently use the river you should know about these boats. Now the Captains and Crew look out for smaller traffic; however, semi-tractor trailer drivers look out for smaller traffic too and these towboats are a lot bigger. In fact, one barge is bigger than a tractor trailer. These towboats pull in a lot of water and push it behind them. A motor boat can usually avoid them easily. In a row boat you’ll have a go fight, and if you are small don’t even try. You are best to go to shore. The water level will drop fast enough to partially beach a flatboat and the flow behind the tug will help you get back in the water. This is one of the conveniences of a johnboat.

But...the kid had heard the warning horn as the towboat signaled coming up on the river bend as it came down river less than a quarter mile off. Water and the johnboat was already rushing toward the middle of the river. I could see the first barge and it would be well passed us before the tug came around the corner. Now there was crew on the lead barge and I’m sure they signaled the Captain, but these barges and towboat don’t just stop, especially coming around a bend. So the challenge was to stop the johnboat from being plowed under by the first barge. There was no way the kid was gonna stop it with just a pole. My suggestion today would be jump. A johnboat is not worth a life and it might even come through okay, but a kid won’t. Still, he was a kid and wasn’t gonna

jump furthermore, I was a kid and I would not have jump either.

He threw me the rope and I had to swim out about twelve feet to get it. By that time there was no pulling the johnboat to shore. All I could do was make myself an anchor. I wrapped the rope around me and leaned back, so the pull on the line made me sink in the mud. The water level had dropped a good two feet and was still up to my shoulders, but the johnboat held steady at the end of a twenty foot line. The kid I noticed was sitting in the johnboat waving at the crew on the barges and tug. Water was up to my chin and I was hopelessly stuck in the mud, but I was quite proud of myself.

Then the tug was even with us. The water stopped rushing out and started rushing in. I saw the big side of the 22 foot johnboat aimed at my head. As it came sailing toward me the water level went up about four feet over my head and so did the boat. Luckily I forgot to breath and the rushing water helped pull me out of the mud. The first wave dumped me on shore and the smaller ones rinsed me off as I caught my breath.

I looked back out at the river as I came to my feet. The tug had slowed and watched to see that we were okay. Mostly they waved and laughed. It must have been a funny thing to watch and also the mud had stolen my clothes. I didn't really care about that, but where was my boat and that dam kid. Well, the johnboat was laying upside down about 15 foot from the waters edge. The kid was bruised but not really hurt, under the boat. His pants were wet and don't let him tell you it was jus water. I know that smell. His name is Guy Pettite and I married his little sister – one of them, Oh – The Boat? He still has it and never did pay me!

I hope you enjoyed reading those submissions on previous pictures. Know it is your turn to look at the new pictures and spin your own tale. It can be fact or fancy, short or long. All that matters is that it comes from you and you share it with all of us. I hope more of you chose to put pen to paper. It is a gift you give yourself for a complete packet of writing sent to you will follow.

-Michael A. Pace

Below are the new pictures for you to consider. Please submit your stories by the date under each picture



Due 2/1/10



Due 3/1/10



Due 1/1/10



Due 4/1/10



Due 5/1/10

We all have to thank the theme writers for the heavy lifting they do in writing and submitting their themes. From my limited understanding, prison culture discourages many of you from really exploring your emotions and vulnerabilities. I understand it does not feel safe. Through your writings you can really process a lot of the emotions and thoughts that do run through you. By sharing your writings with PE and all of the program's participants you help open up others to experiencing their own feelings as well. We place these themes on our website, and it is a chance for folks on the outside to know you as individuals rather than statistics. Your writing breaks down barriers, and as prisoners I can imagine the satisfaction derived from reaching out beyond the walls to make a difference.

Upcoming themes and their due dates are

1. **Music due 1/1/10**
2. **Body Art due 2/1/10**
3. **Cousins due 3/1/10**
4. **Health Care due 4/1/10**
5. **Hiding Out due 5/1/10**
6. **Best Friends due 6/1/10**
7. **On the Road due 7/1/10**

Below are some themes from our last cycle

Mom

One Mother's Gift

It's hard raising a hell raiser, but it's not easy being one either. Life threw a lot of curves at mom and me, but there was one constant truth. As long as mom lived, there was one person that loved me beyond my faults. For that, if nothing else, I forgive hers.

My earliest memories of mom are filled with switches and belts. She was out of patience by the time I arrived, her fourth child and second accident. Even if I had been an only child, or even been born first, there would have been problems. I gave new meaning to stubborn. Once my mind was made up, you could beat me bloody, and I wouldn't give an inch. That was my mule-headed nature.

Mom placed me in a private school for first grade so I wouldn't be behind due to my birthday being in October. I hated it and wouldn't go. My ride would pull up in front of my house, and I'd go out on the porch and wave them on. The lady would call my mom at the bag mill, and she'd have to leave work to come take me, so I wouldn't be left at home alone all day. The last day I was adamant that I wasn't going until Ms. Green, a sweet teacher, coaxed me out of the car with promises that I wouldn't be punished. She lied.

Mrs. Agree was ancient and owned the school. She called me up in front of the class and grabbed my little hand in her big one to bend the fingers down and force the palm up until I was up on my toes. Then she blistered it with a handful of rulers. That was the end. I never went back. My aunt Loyce kept me at her house, and no one could whip me there. Ruff didn't allow it, and his bite was worse than his bark. Good dog and a better friend.

The next intense period of my life was when mom decided I needed to go to church with my sisters. They liked it, I never did. Every Sunday for months began with mom beating me for refusing to go. It did no good, but she beat me anyway. Mom would make me stay in bed until my sisters



Due 6/1/10

Theme Writing

Most PE participants program let me know how much they enjoy receiving mail. Participation in the PE theme program is an excellent way of getting more mail as well as receiving interesting reading. Every month we present a topic.. You can use this cue to write about whatever comes to your mind. We will type up your submission and create a packet using all the submission on a particular theme. Then we reprint the packets and send you a copy of what everybody wrote on a particular topic.

We also reprint a few themes from each topic in the upcoming. Truth be known it is the theme writers that inspire me to keep this newsletter going. I would read some of the themes and then want to share it with all of the program participants, and creating this newsletter was the way to do it.

came back from church, and before they came back, she'd come in and cry and tell me how much it hurt her to have to whip me. Maybe it did--she cried more than I did--but the welts were all on my ass. She finally gave up, and I blame my lack of religious reverence on these days of pain. More likely it is just my innate intelligence.

Dad believed in haircuts and in saving money by doing mine himself. He also had a knack for biting chunks out of my neck with the clippers. Every couple of weeks he'd decide I needed a haircut, and we'd fight it out with me getting beaten and drug out from under the kitchen table. I didn't cry. Dorothy, my sister, did. Mom's nerves couldn't take the stress, and long hair didn't offend her near as much as my screaming. Aunt Loyce started cutting my hair and leaving it long. Dad hated it. I'm not sure whether it was the long hair or that I had won that pissed him off most. He would never have given up if mom hadn't interceded.

The greatest gift my mom gave me was a love of books. From my earliest days, she read to me. When she couldn't, my sisters did. Words seemed to calm the beast within me. Once I began to read on my own, I could never be found when mom took me shopping with her. I'd take a stack of books off the shelves and snuggle down to read in the middle of a rack of clothes. That's where I'd be when I heard the intercom calling me to come find my lost mother at the front desk, and I'd have to run and find her.

Things changed in my teen years. We moved to the country, and suddenly my parents wanted to be my friends. Mom and I had horses and rode together daily after she came home from work. She bought me a motorcycle. Dad bought me a 1956 Willis Jeep to drive to the bus stop and to the creek for swimming. I had more freedom to run around in the woods and access to guns to play with than any kid should ever have. The level of trust was extreme and unearned. It's a shame it was too late. The dye had set in the years of pain and nothing was going to change that.

In 1996, while I was incarcerated on this sentence, Mom died. Until then I had family. They're gone now, have been for years. My mother's greatest gift is still with me. Every time I pick up a book to read, I think of mom with a book in hand and know she and I were more alike than either of us ever realized. We did our best, and in the end, we let each other down. That can never change. Neither can the love that was never in doubt, not even when she beat the stubborn boy that grew into this mule-headed man.



Jeff Harnden

-Daniel H. Harris

Dedicated to Mom

Why do we hurt our moms by committing crimes to land in prison? Is it something they did? Is it payback for how they raised us? I cannot come to believe that they have done things so bad to us that we retaliate by committing crimes. Now, I do know some incarcerated individuals grew up with alcohol or drug addicted moms, others had moms who abused them, and some moms were not home due to work or who just left. We cannot blame them for how we turned out. We make the choice to either better or worsen our lives.

My mom was a stay-at-home mom until I was eleven or twelve. She did not drink, smoke or do drugs, and she did not abuse us. She did her best to guide us and take care of us. I am her third child of four and was the one who caused her most of her grief. I can't say that I was a bad kid. I just made stupid decisions. I use to blame my acts on the lack of affection I thought I received and did not realize how much my mom did care for me until I looked back in preparation for writing this.

My first memory of my mom's comfort came at age four or five. We were playing in the yard and my older brother had thrown a dart in the air, and it hit me on my eyebrow. It was mom who took me to the emergency room. She also spoon-fed me ice cream after I had my tonsils removed at age three or four. It was mom who would get out of bed when I would get bad leg cramps and help me to walk them out, and then, she swept yellow jackets off me after my older brother stuck a stick into their nest. (Mom took a picture of my swollen face, which brought quite a few laughs over the years.) Mom was also the one who took me to the emergency room when I broke my arm and injured my knee after a bicycle wreck. It was my parents' anniversary, and she took me after working an eight hour shift. We did not return home until after midnight. Mom also had to have a picture of me in my cast and my leg wrapped. I remember her not being mad at me but very comforting.

A stupid act of mine had put a scare in my family and me in the hospital when I was fifteen, but that is not what I now chuckle about. I was dating a girl who was a candy striper at the hospital that I was in, but that weekend she was the hostess at the high school play. Anyways, another candy striper would come by every chance she got just to talk to me. She was pretty and sixteen. My mom had come by after work to see me before going home, and the candy striper was in visiting me. Mom came in and said hi to her and asked me if that was my girlfriend

Connie. Well, that ended the visits, which was for the best. I probably would not have seen her after my release due to attending different schools. All mom could say was, "Oops, I didn't know." Mom got really pissed at me one day after this. She had found the same can I put my cigarettes out in. I had scarred my lungs, and smoking was definitely not good for me.

We would take trips every year to visit my grandparents in Maine. My sister and I would look through my mom's school books that she read as a child. We also looked through her childhood photos. I still remember the smell of those books and go back into my memory bank when I receive an old book with the same smell. I will go back to the times spent in Maine, to the wonderful meals prepared by my mom and grandma, the daily desserts they made and my expectations. Mom would often bake us cakes, cookies and homemade pies (my favorites are apple, pumpkin, and her lemon meringue), which I really crave during the holidays. Another few things of mom's I miss are her homemade bread, zucchini bread and banana nut bread. Ooh, they are so good!! She makes awesome lasagna also.

I don't think mom liked even one of the females I dated, and I made some bad choices. I think she only tolerated Kristin because I was married to her, maybe she knew it would not last. It didn't, and the only good thing that came out of that marriage was my daughter Amanda, and mom loved that little girl. When Kris and I split, I moved into my parents' house, and Amanda did about a month later. Many a weekend morning, mom would get Amanda dressed and go shopping to get breakfast, or mom and dad would take her to the zoo or flea market. She would always bring something back with her. I rarely went with them due to still being asleep when they left. When I did wake and did not see them, I would just shake my head and smile as I thought, "Spoiling Amanda." I actually did not mind because they were spending time with her.

Mom did her best to stay in contact with Amanda after my arrest in 1995, but eventually my parents were given excuse after excuse to where it became pointless to even call. When Amanda had gone back to live with my ex in-laws in early 1994, it was only to be a two week visit. I had agreed to the visit for the break. I was financially strapped and could not provide for Amanda. I ended up getting caught up in my drinking and females that I let them supersede my daughter (what a piece of trash I was). Fortunately, I was able to get my mom and Amanda back in touch with each other. I had written a letter to my ex-wife in late 2006 by way of her brother-in-law. I told her not to take her animosity and hatred for me out on Amanda and my parents, and mailed the letter after Christmas of '06. My parents received a phone call in January of 2007. They have since seen her after a twelve year hiatus, and they correspond with her by e-mail. They converse by phone and visit as time allows. If I am never able to do one more thing for mom, I am so glad I was able to bring them back together.

What other things stick out in my mind about my mom, how I would sit at the dinner table with her while she ate her supper. These were on the nights she would not get home from work until almost 10:00 PM. I would ask her about her day and just listen. She would also attend church with me as her work schedule allowed. We would also throw darts. I had found a dart board, went to Wal-Mart to buy some darts and hung the dart board in my parent's garage. Mom got really good. It was during one of our games that she told me she would feel better if I drank at home, so I did more often, though I did go to the club from time to time. Mom and dad even went a couple of times, and I got her to two-step. Quality time!

I have hurt mom quite frequently during my 39 years of life, but I don't think they quite compare to March 1998. This is the day I went into hiding after violating my probation and knowing I would be coming to prison. On two occasions I lived no longer than ten minutes from my parents and would see them drive by. I wanted to see them but did not want to take the chance of getting caught. I feel like crap knowing the pain I was causing. I was finally arrested three years later and could not bring myself to write them until almost a year later.

Dad wrote, but mom wouldn't. I knew she was hurt, and I did not blame her for not writing. I thought I would never hear from her but did in October of 2008 after writing to request a letter after Hurricane Ike. I had to know she was okay. That letter assured me that she does love me even though I caused her much pain.

None of my actions are mom's doing nor were they in retaliation, my actions are solely mine though I've tried to place the blame on others. I no longer apologize as I have done so many times, but as the saying goes, "actions speak louder than words." My actions from here on out will show that my apologies are sincere and that I am no longer the person I once was. Will mom like the man I've become during the past eleven years since we last seen each other? I sure hope so.

"Mom, I do thank you for your guidance, your caring and comfort and your motherly love. I cannot take back all the deep pain I have caused you, but will pray that it will subside one day. You are a wonderful mom, grandma, and great-grandma. I love Mom!!!"

-David Jackson



Glen Vivenzio

Because She Believed

A blessing to be born unto
 A woman who believed,
 The angels danced a joyous dance
 The day he was conceived.
 At first he was so tiny,
 He hardly could be seen,
 Her ambitious thoughts foretold her
 That her son would meet a king.
 So deep and safe inside her,
 She sheltered him from harm,
 But then one day she felt a pain
 That caused her great alarm.
 The pain grew in its intensity,
 The doctors made aware,
 Her precious son was born that day,
 Placed in her arms with care.
 His name was selected
 From her most ambitious dreams,
 The name she chose was DAVID
 In remembrance of a king.

She took him home and loved him
 As she laid him in his crib,
 Every need she met for him,
 She put love in all she did.
 She taught him love from infancy,
 A most endearing trait,
 His manners were impeccable,
 The path he walked was straight.
 She made sure that he went to school
 And never missed a meal
 She worked hard all day selflessly,
 So god's sweet love he'd feel.
 She kept his standards very high
 And put him to the test,
 Always keep the golden rule
 And always do your best,
 On Sundays she would go to church
 With little Dave in tow,
 She played hymns on the piano
 So dear Jesus he would know.

Then as his youth had slipped away
 And her son was still a teen,
 He made the choice to marry
 A girl at age sixteen.
 Her heart was saddened by the news,
 Her son had moved away,
 At night she'd stay up praying
 That on a straight path he would stay.
 But away from her he was alone
 Without her voice to guide,
 She still continued praying
 That her son would not backslide.
 Years went by and her son changed,
 She couldn't even envision,
 His straying down the wrong roads
 That would lead her son to prison.
 Lost and asking questions,
 His heart broke in his chest,
 He decided that he'd end it all
 He thought he'd done his best.
 Her son was his worst enemy,
 He'd forgotten from his youth,
 The things she always taught him
 About Jesus and the truth.
 So on his face he finally fell,
 Telling God he was a mess,
 He remembered that God loved him
 And his sins he did confess.
 God took him in so readily,
 Her son, he was in shock,
 Blessed is he whose mother prays
 With tears around the clock.
 His father God was jubilant,
 Excited just to hear,
 His lost returning son returning back to him,
 So cold and full of fear
 The angels all swept down in force
 To soothe his broken heart,
 They protected him from the evil one,
 And directed his new start.
 Although his path was narrow,
 And it's edges sharp and steep,
 Her son began to pray for her
 Each night before he'd sleep.
 He thanked God for the times she prayed
 And tears that she had spent,
 He thanked God for his mother,
 An angel he had sent.
 She cast her love out all for him
 And waited for its return
 Now he brings it back to her,
 It took some time to learn,
 And blessed is the one who has
 A mother from above.
 His angels no longer weep for him,
 In fact he's heard them sing,
 Her prayers have all been answered,
 For when he dies he'll meet the king,
 His gift from God is eternity,
 His crown will be received,
 Remembering his greatest gift,
 A mother who believed.

Faith

For many who have read my prior entries, they may conclude that I am an agnostic lost cause. To a degree, perhaps, this is true. Yet, I concur to the cliché that I am a work in process (not progress). Like an ocean tide, I believe faith comes and goes, and slowly erodes the stone facade of our being. Few people would agree with my overall opinion. They believe, or should I say their faith is based on a God that only gives love and good tidings. So-be-it, it is their faith, and the shallowness of their personal experiences only resolves them to a passing ideology that has yet to be tested. For myself, God is the root to all causes. If you desire to be a great philosopher or even leader, you must get down and ask for some serious adversity, life experiences. Oftentimes, I curse a prayer I made as a child in ignorance, a prayer to acquire wisdom. True faith is to acknowledge that all tragedy is by God in the proving of one's steadfastness to remain faithful to the alpha and omega, the beginning and ending, of tragedy and the experience of life. None born upon this earth is of this earth. Earth is merely a testing and proving ground for the development of character or, in the realm of the Infinite Sovereign, the spirit of our being. I can, myself, recount a very few instances where God has been the all-loving compassionate father. In the Ultimate Wisdom, character is developed by only one effect of life, pain. Even the so-called blessings of God are not without pain. The greater the blessing, the greater the pain. The end result of all blessings is pain, regret, guilt, loneliness, isolation, abandonment, "remorse without recourse." As depressing as it may sound, the end result of anything the Good Father blesses us with is in fact pain. In order to attain complete atonement with the Spirit and Divine scheme, one must recognize and accept the final resolution, pain.

This is not to say God doesn't love us. According to His Word, He does. But then, He claims we are made in his image and likeness. Fools believe in a one-sided image; God is good. The truth is God is as much bad as He is good. (He did create Satan, the tempter, the destroyer). Now, who can defend the PERFECT SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY in recognizing the single greatest influence upon many, SATAN? In this, God is as responsible for every pain one experiences in life as He is for the select few times of light-heartedness. So—while the Father is cracking the bull whip and filleting our being, severing flesh and spirit, he is perfecting the spirit to get in line with the true essence of the universe, pain and suffering. The depth of our faith is found in how we remain steadfast in thought or faithful.

Personally, I have come to the realization and truth of another adage: "If it's too good to be true, it probably isn't true." The first warning sign of a godly blessing is how he packages it. I do not speak with pessimism. Occasionally, God does decide to just give us something without strings attached. These are few and far between instances and normally come where he is already beating you with that whip (sort of like the intermission during a bad movie). The minor blessing is merely CPR to a dead man, reviving the dead, so He can beat the hell out of him some more. We human beings call this torture; God declares this as "the testing of our faith." The sad fact is, if God puts some special woman in your life, you can bet you're fixing to get screwed. If God blesses you with a million dollars, prepare for lawyers and court dates. If God gives you a friend, you may as well hand the fool the knife

-Dave Gordon

yourself. God gives us life to suffer. And, if you are not suffering? You better hit your knees and pray for adversity.

Finally, it is impossible for God to lie. Ah—trial courts, judges, cops and lawyers have mastered their inventive manipulative procedures with God’s greatest technicality: “I won’t lie, I just won’t tell the whole story”. It is scripturally sound to say God acknowledges His evil creation, He accepts full responsibility. Now the technicality, although He created it, he can’t control it. Why? Because of the so-called “self-will” clause of mankind. He can’t go against our will. Ah—however, He can send some low life scum to beat you down. He can arrange for you to be raped. He can arrange for your family and society to turn against you. He can control all the so-called exterior factors to include “willing others” to do you harm. But He can’t go against your own self-will. Is there something here we are missing. He can arrange for you to be beaten, raped abandoned and betrayed by others, (and many are self-proclaiming “RELIGIOUS” people), but He can’t do anything AGAINST your will. Excuse me, if being molested, beaten, raped, or abandoned isn’t, by natural design, against a person’s own will, then what is?

Not to lose hope though. Hope is the catch-all explanation, the illusive promise that will or will not come to pass. We hope we are going to Heaven. So we build up some kind of faith, hoping we will qualify. I do not discount the power of hope. Hope, in itself, will often sustain us when all other human concepts in life fail. In hope, we give friendship, love, talents, and business that last shot over and over again because hope is an expectation of what will come to pass if we persevere. As I said, it is the essence of prevailing over God’s Technicalities. Hope is the one thing we are willing to gamble with our very soul.

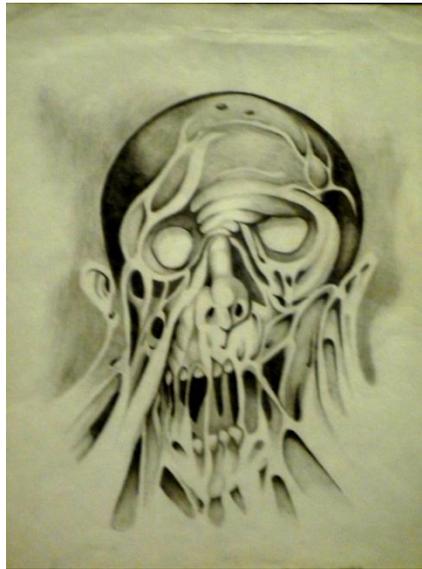
Personally, I am neither pessimistic or agnostic. I am however somewhat bitter about past circumstances. And it really is okay to be angry with God it gives Him something to laugh about. After all, I am intelligent enough to ask myself; “Who or what am I to question or complain to a Being, so far advanced above mortal man that He could not only create man but all things, seen and unseen. So, in many ways I am as ignorant as the highly noted geniuses of every era of time. Carl Sagan looked to the heavens to find god, but Christ Yeshua came to teach us to look at something even more vast, mysterious and precious. It was an enlightening moment when god asked me to describe my ex-wife, daughter, and son’s spirit. Thus, do I dare judge the actions of others? Do I dare judge the Divine Scheme of the making, not of flesh, but of the spirit? My faith is not in conformation to others. To conform to the faith of the masses is to rob God of the unique individuality he wants me to have.

In closing, I can only be thankful for the pain of this life. There are many things I do not understand about myself. Why? With all the anger and hatred, I grew up to despise abuses within the family. Did I, in turn, carry the torch of certain abuses? Why is there the great dark void in my memory? In all truth, the pains suffered are a blessing in that I grow spiritually. The pains I cannot remember are a blessing because I understand that the memories would shake the very

foundations of the very few human relationships I have had. Man is born to fail. A failure strives to be a man. I was once a man, and I was a great failure. Yet, a wise man is born after he has failed at being a man.

There is not a day goes by that I am not blessed. The blessing comes with its pain. As a unit landscaper, I receive the blessings of creating landscapes and maintaining those landscapes. The pain is the regret that comes from memories of the orchards, vineyard, vegetable garden, tropical garden and garden pens that I once enjoyed building and maintaining when I was what society dubbed “A MAN.” I am a blessed writer. The one thing I have discovered is writing isn’t just a skill, it’s a talent. The inspiration doesn’t come from simple thinking men. Even more, few people choose to indulge in such a blessing. I’m blessed by having very few people who think of me enough to write, and after 17 years, I have come to know how much of a blessing these very few people are. I’m blessed in knowing there are no coincidences or accidents in making these relationships as special as God intends them to be. Daily life, with all its blessings, is a blessing. And, daily life, with all of its physical and mental pain, is a blessing. Both are evident signs of personal growth, not in my grand plan but rather, in God’s Grand Scheme. My faith is not who I am, it is what I am doing to be.

-Jackey R. Sollars



Albert Haechten

Untitled

In a few moments of sacred reflection, I enter into the silence, honoring a quiet time and peaceful space. I focus on a pleasant thought or a beautiful scene. I breathe slowly, relax and move to a single awareness of God’s presence. Having released all concern, I know that God guides, treasures and cares for me.

Without doubt, without fear, I trust God. This knowing is a faith that assures me that my life is in divine order. And, in known and unknown ways, my prayers are answered. In this very moment, I remember God is always good, always present.

Taking a deep breath, I return my attention to my immediate surroundings. Whatever the place or the circumstance, the truth is certain:

Wherever I am, God is.
I’d rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light;
I’d rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone by sight.

-Shawn Montgomery

Faith, a Natural Force

Some have faith in Gods, others in priest and religions. Mankind believes in many things, seen and unseen, and some believe in nothing at all. Divine, benevolent beings are unprovable, so my faith is given to the natural forces that inhabit all things. As the wind, these forces can’t be seen, but their power can be felt. Like the mindless wind, they can be soft and gentle, bringing joy and delight, or they can scour flesh and soul. It is for each of us to channel and mold these forces to our will with the actions we choose to have faith in.

That mankind might name naturally occurring energies as Gods and Goddesses is historically documented. Sun and

moon. Storm and sea. Planets and stars. Earth and tree. These have all found themselves the subjects of prayers and sacrifices by faithful worshippers seeking favors. They often thought their prayers answered. Coincidence? Maybe or maybe not.

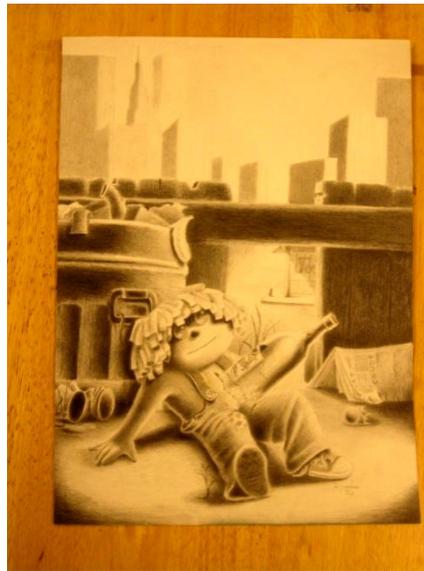
Every religion has documented miraculous events. If you discount the credibility of one, you must discredit all on the same grounds. Science may have stumbled on the answer in recent years when they discovered unknown forces, dark matter and dark energy. Now they know there is much to consider where they thought there was nothing.

There are also subatomic particles that react to scientists' faith in the expected outcomes of experiments. Results differ with the theories of the scientists performing the same experiments. When the experiment is repeatedly done by automation with no scientists present the results are consistently the same. Why? No one knows

I have a theory. Everything and everyone is animated by an energy source, often called souls, that surrounds and fills us. Dark matter, dark energy, and these strange particles are a part of it. Within this energy exists all the Gods and Goddesses from beyond antiquity to the present. No sentience. No divinity. No benevolence. Just energy that each of us can plug into by our actions and our faith in the outcome of those actions.

It is my choice to place my faith in positive actions to produce positive returns. It seems logical. Peace. Sacrifice of self. Courtesy. These usually produce positive results but not always. Some are too caught up in their own negative energies and don't respond. What I've found is a life worth living, a great dividend, bound to my practice of service and personal sacrifice.

Faith may be more important than actions. If not, then why did so many volcanoes go quiescent when beautiful, virgin maidens were sacrificed? Truly an evil act if the same results could have been garnered from a garland of flowers and some fruit being sacrificed in faith. That would have left many a virgin to a much more pleasurable form of sacrifice.



Duan Sosbee

-Daniel H. Harris

Untitled

Faith is a very broad topic. It has been discussed and debated for centuries. Just when you believe someone has come up with a way to verify or bury it, someone else will "one up" them.

Faith isn't just something that can be measured or weighed, which makes it a hard egg to crack. When dealing with faith, you dive head first into the murky world of the metaphysical, and we all know that this is where things can get a bit complicated and confusing. So, here are my thoughts on the subject.

There are two types of faith. The first is religious, and the second is practice.

Practitioners of religious faith must (if they are reasonable) see how their faith shows their true feelings on the inside, even if they don't see it themselves, as there would be no reason for faith if there were no element of doubt. Therefore, even the most devoutly religious cannot truly

believe and still truly profess to have faith. If you know, then there is no doubt and hence no need for faith.

Practical faith is valid in as much as it is a safe bet to have faith that the sun will rise on the morrow or to have faith that your dog will always love you. These are things that show us real rewards for our faith such as plentiful crops and a faithful friend. Thus, they are verifiable by sense experience, the only valid means of producing an idea.

But, no matter what I think or believe, in the end, you have it or you don't.

-Bryan Webster

Untitled

I do not know if I believe in God anymore. He has not made me feel that He believes in me.

In the Bible, He talks with Adam, Eve, Noah, Moses and others. Why did He stop talking to us? Is it because He stopped believing in us?

I have had visits with clergy. They profess that I must put faith in God. I must comply with a blind faith to a blind God. All this preaching listing all the things I must do for God. I have to give everything up for Him.

Hold on. Where was God, as my father beat me with his fist? As my stepmother abused me? Why didn't He answer my prayers for her to stop? I had followed God's laws. I was innocent and faithful to him. I went to church and mid-week classes. I prayed all the time. Where was "He" the day I ran away? I was only fourteen. Where was he?

Those years I hustled on the street. Those days I had to sacrifice myself to survive. Those years I lost myself. He was not there. I needed Him! I cried out to Him! He wasn't there. He didn't care.

It seems the only time He sends people to me is while I am in prison. These people want me to smile and claim that I am born-again. To be just a product of their capitalist venture of the Christian society Wal-Mart. These Christians are the same people who vote for politicians that promote the death penalty, harsh prison sentences and prohibitions against convicted felons. They turn a blind eye to torture in the name of

justice, yet they claim to be of the highest Christian standard of forgiveness, love and peace. These hypo-Christians spend billions of dollars against abortion, gay-marriage, sex education and evolution but won't put the same amount of passion to create a prison that rehabilitates people. It seems that their God tells them to manipulate politics for religious purposes but forgets the homeless, mentally sick and poor.

I don't understand why God allows terrorism. Why are the Jews killing the Palestinians? How can a loving God of peace let man create nuclear weapons? Why are there mothers killing their babies? Husbands murdering their whole families?

Where is there a reason to have faith in a God who will destroy everyone on Earth?

I was once God's angel. I once had the purest faith in Him. I do not know if I believe anymore. My faith has fallen.

I am still here though. I just wish he'd talk to me.

-Cristobal Garcia

Close Calls

Narrow Escapes

It's been a long while since I wrote an essay. Now, hearing something like narrow escapes triggered many thoughts in my mind because, in my life, I've had many narrow escapes. In prison and out of prison. When I got out of prison in 1988, I was still young, wild, and with an attitude. And, I had a death struck kind of attitude. At times, I would feel like I did not care if I lived or if I got killed because in my family, so much had changed. My mother was struggling with her drug use, and I was trying hard to maintain and not show how much these things were hurting me. On the inside, I was hurt so bad, but no one could see that because I hid behind my toughness, and I kept my hands on as many guns as I could. And I was ready to use them for any lil' reason. I was 17 years old going on 18 years old, and for years, I was told that I was not going to make it to see 18 years old. And the way I was going, sometimes I felt like what they were saying was true. I was wild, getting into shoot outs, and I had dudes shooting back at me. Bullets flew right by my head. I saw death more than one time. But, death could not take me. God was on my side. But when I was caught up into the street life, I did not see it that way. And, getting locked up and given life in prison was my narrow escape. I escaped death in the streets by getting locked up.

-Michael Jerome McKinney

More years ago than many people know how to count I was thirteen years old, living in Queens on what is now called Long Island in New York City. One day I was walking from my apartment down the sloped street past PS139, my prior elementary school, towards the main drag, planning to visit a little magic shop.

As I walked, I heard a child's voice behind me call out, "Stop!"

I turned and immediately had to jump aside. A girl, maybe seven or eight years old, was speeding down the slope straight at me on a bicycle with an expression of panic on her face and crying.

Puzzled, I watched her roll past, and as she did, she cried, "Help me!" By that time, I had lived in New York City long enough to know that if someone asked for help, the best thing to do, usually, would be to get away quickly.

But, as I looked past her down the slope to the main drag at the bottom with all the cars speeding by in both directions, I suddenly realized that, for some reason, the girl could not stop the bicycle!

A picture of her being hit and maybe even being knocked back and forth by several cars flashed in my mind as I began chasing her down the slope, almost as terrified as she had looked. I don't believe I have ever, before or since, run so hard or so fast.

Finally, I got close enough to grab the back of the seat. If the same thing happened today, because my thumb touched her bottom, I would be accused, convicted and sent to prison for indecency with a child. But, in those days, what happened was that I held on for dear life and struggled to stop myself, the bicycle, and her. We all came to a stop about twenty-five feet from the street, but in the process, she was thrown forwards and ended up lying across the handle bars and basket.

With her in that position, it was impossible to balance the bike, and it fell, dumping her on the sidewalk.

As my luck usually goes, a man had just parked his car at the curb and got out just in time to see me chase and grab the bicycle. He came running to me and shoved me hard on the shoulder and started yelling at me.

"What's a big bully like you doing hurting a little girl like that for?! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" and so on, shoving my shoulder again every three or four words.

The girl picked herself up and still crying, ran around the bike and shoved herself between the man and me. She wrapped her arms around my waist, hugging tightly and sobbed, "Thank you—thank you!" over and over.

The man threw his arms up and turned, walking away without ever trying to discover what it was all about.

I wheeled the girl's bike back up the street towards her apartment building, and she walked beside me explaining.

Her dad had just given her the bike and had told her not to try to ride it until he got home to help her, but she had snuck it out to learn to ride, so she could surprise him when he got home. The problem was that she didn't know it had brakes.

In the years since then, I have twice again saved the lives of young girls, but that was the only time anyone ever thanked me for it and just in time.



Juan Flor

Untitled

When I was five years old, my mother took my two older brothers and me on a trip to go visit our grandparents. We were traveling from San Antonio, Texas to Odessa, Texas in one of those miniature station wagons called a Ford Pinto. I, begin the youngest, was assigned to sit in back with my oldest brother of nine. My mother and brother of seven were stationed in the front. I remember complaining because I wanted to sit up front to see the road as we traveled. But, I was denied. As we neared Odessa and after we passed Sterling City, I realized that my oldest brother had fallen asleep. So, he was laid out, taking up most of the back seat. I was sitting where one puts his

feet. That time, there were no seat belt laws. (1973) My mom was just about to pass an 18-wheeler going the other direction. So, she veered closer to the right. The wind of the 18-wheeler trembled our little car so much that my mother veered further to the right. At that time, our right front tire blew out, and we began to flip. Our car turned over three times, and I remember feeling all the dirt all over my body and being thrown about. I was tossed out a window and fell on my back. As I looked up, I noticed our car about to fall on top of me, but it ended its flip and went back in the other direction. I then lifted myself in a sitting-up position and saw my seven year old brother under the car in front of me. He was unconscious and looked as if he was blowing bubbles. Only the bubbles were of blood coming out of his mouth. I started screaming, and my mother heard me. She and my brother were trapped in the car still. My older brother found a way out through the front and helped my mom out. When she saw my brother under the car, she began to scream. It was a scream I can not explain. She told my older brother to get his brother out. So my brother tried to pull. My mother then lifted the car with her bare hands and said, "Pull,

P.J. Pull!" and my brother was out from under the car. My mom cradled my brother, Jeff, in her arms. He died that day of internal bleeding. And, I'll never forget our narrow escape or my mother's sudden strength

-Paul Tovar

Untitled

In 1989, I found myself sitting against a brick wall near someone's apartment door, hanging on it trying to get someone's attention. I was bleeding badly that I knew for sure would be my death.

Lets back up to two hours earlier. It was 1:30am, and I just hung up the phone with the bouncer at the strip joint my girl worked at. This wasn't just some fling. This was the love of my life, and I mean that. We were junior high sweethearts and never had I loved anyone so deep.

When I sat the receiver down, I was having trouble staying calm. The bouncer told me that my girl left the club over three hours earlier and hadn't been back since. He also told me that she left in a nice black Trans Am.

I knew of only one person who owned a nice black Trans Am.—my sister's ex-boyfriend who just so happened to be a crack dealer.

"Great!" I thought! I wasn't new to the game however when it reached out and touched my all, I broke.

Hoping against hope, I had a friend drive me across town to the strip club in hopes she would be there when I arrived to pick her up. Inside, I was dying. Had I been so love struck and blind to think I could keep all to myself, a girl who chose to live a lifestyle as a stripper. Hey, I was a drug dealer, well more of a user, so this was the life, but not my girl, surely not mine.

Once I arrived at the club, there was still no sign of her and knew just were she was. By this time, I drank roughly a six pack of tall boys to drown my pain, and now, I was getting angry. Past anger, I wanted to hurt her and the dude I knew her to be with.

So, I had my friend drive me over to the apartment I knew they were at. Just before we pulled up, I grabbed a sawed off 12-gauge from under my seat and slammed down another tall boy. I lit a cigarette and prepared myself to shoot both of these people for hurting me this way.

Just as I had suspected, there sat the nice black Trans Am that I'm more than sure carried my love out of my life. My heart was pounding so hard in my chest that I couldn't hear anything but boom, boom, boom.

As I walked up to the door, a voice loud in my head and heart screamed no! No, no don't do this. I was already there. My heart was already shredded, everything I ever hoped or dreamed that made sense to me was gone. And, now all I wanted to do was let them know, let them know what the voice said. Before I knew it, my leg reared up, and I kicked the door in. The voice again louder said, "No! Do not do this!" In response to the voice, I brought the shotgun down, yet my leap ran into the apartment. As soon as I came to the doorway of his room, I saw him naked, running towards his night stand, and out of the corner of my eye, there in the bathtub, naked was my girl. I reached him before he got to his night stand. However, I couldn't land the punishing blows I needed so

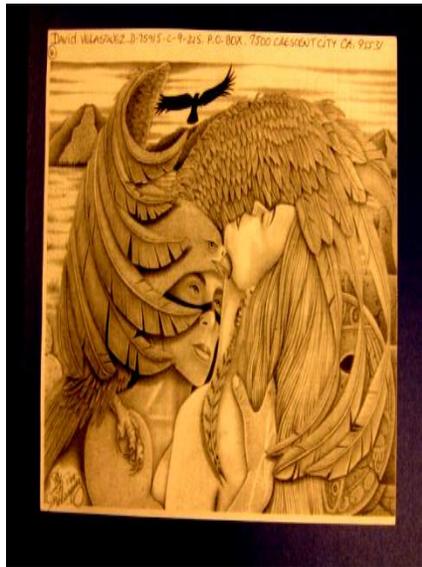
badly to. I believe that I was crying. As he was being hit by me, he reached into his night stand and pulled out what I knew to be an automatic .32 caliber handgun, chrome finish with a white pearl handle, the very one I gave him weeks earlier for his birthday. I turned around and looked towards my love. Over the top of the boom, boom, boom of my heartbeat, I heard another cracking sound about as steady if not slightly faster than the booms. I held her eyes in mine as the room tilted and I fell. I felt a shock ring strong throughout me, and as soon as I hit the floor, the voice screamed "You have to get up. Run! Run!" I'm in a dream now. I get to my feet and run. I saw things exploding just before my face as I ran. When I cleared the door, my friend's car was gone. I didn't stop running. I ran in-between two apartment buildings to get away fast and hard I ran. Then out of the dark night I came to and realized I couldn't breathe. I leaned there in the dark on a wall of one of the buildings, spinning and confused. I was hit. I began patting myself down, and as my hand reached around my back, I felt it. Why hadn't I noticed as I was running or inside the apartment? There in the dark, I could feel the warmth and stickiness of my blood flowing out of my back like a leaking faucet. I still had not found my breath, and when

I tried to breathe in, I couldn't, so with all my might, I bent over and raised up hard and fast, and compressed my air and chest together. As I did, I heard a frightful gurgling and blood spewed out of my back as if someone poured a bowl full of hot water down it. When I did that, I could breathe a little however each breathe burned like fire, and blood was coming up out of my throat. I walked along there in the darkness sure I would die. Not wanting to live, I had given up. Then, again the voice screamed, "Get help! Go! Towards the light."

I thought, "Go towards the light." I saw no lights. In fact, even when I turned the corner of the building and found myself on the main road the apartments lined, I saw no porch lights, no street lights, no nothing. It was as if the world knew I was dying and wanted no part of it. So, I sat down on the ground and leaned against a brick wall waiting to die! Bleeding! So, here's where the

beginning of the story started. The voice ran out again and again. Go towards the light. I couldn't go towards the light. There were no lights, so I thought about my mom and my sister, and after I thought of them, I thought of all the love I felt for them and knew the love they had for me. Then, the word came rising up out of my heart and thundered through my mind, "Jesus." That's it. Just that one word echoing and thundering until I could not hold it in. I had to let it go, and as my lips formed to speak the word just then as it fell from my lips, the world exploded into light and life and people and street lights and a man at a door I had pounded blood all over. There were people across the street shouting words of encouragement. I even saw a policeman in my face holding my bloody hand. And, oh, the pain. I felt pain, excruciating pain, yet I was alive to feel it, and there was now light to see and people and still calm quiet voice that said, "I am with you! It's alright. I am with you."

That night, over 20 years ago now, has been an almost unbearable loss to me. Yet, now I am mature enough and



David Velasquez

spiritually fit enough to relive it. I realize just how close I had come not only to loosing my life but to taking the lives of others. I thank you Jesus not only for my narrow escape but also for all those who shared your awesome unseen love. For if it hadn't been for you, no one would have had any narrow escapes.

P.S. I have since forgiven all and am a strong believer now. Who wouldn't be? This is a true story..

-Eddie Jeffrey

Death on Me

I was running down this long black tunnel with no idea how I got here. It was damp, and you could hear the splash from under us as we ran. Someone was chasing me. I didn't know who they were, or what they wanted, but I did know they were gaining on me. Slowly, I started to hear them cussin' me and warning me about what they would do when they caught me.

There were a few times when they came right on me. Every time I felt a finger or two touch me, I'd fight them off. Then, I would force myself to run just a lil' bit faster. I knew this was going to be long and hard.

It was funny because as I was running, I could see parts of my young life on the dark tunnel walls. I saw so much that I'd forgotten that I should have remembered. I also saw so much that I wish I could forget, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't. Every time I looked around, I would see something I wish I would have done. But, more than anything, I saw people I loved and people that loved me.

It felt like I was running for days. There was a time or two when I took a turn I wish I hadn't taken. It only made this chase that much longer and that much harder, which at the time, made me think about my current situation in life because I've made plenty of decisions I wish I never did. Every time I got to a point where I thought my escape would come, I saw another twist or turn.

Of course, there were times when I felt I couldn't go on any more. Like the best thing for me to do was to just give up, but this was a chase that I knew I couldn't lose. It was at these times when I felt I had to reach down deep inside me and find the will and strength to keep going. I knew that no matter how hard it got or no matter how bad the odds got, I had to fight until I came out on top.

I came by a stairway. When I stopped to look at them, something inside told me that this was the way to go. I slowly went up the stairs, wondering what I would find at the top. When I made it to the top, I could see a light coming from what looked like a doorway.

I made my way straight towards the light, but when I finally thought about making my escape, I saw two guys come from out of nowhere. I tried to see their faces, but the harder I tried, the harder it got. They were standing there dressed in all black, kinda sizing me up. I was wondering how this would turn out when all of a sudden one took a swing at me.

I moved as fast as I could and took the hit on the shoulder. And I came back fighting as best as I could. When I finally landed that one to drop him, there was nothing there when I looked down.

As my head was coming up from looking down, the other one was rushing me. I knew this fight would be harder. As we slugged it out, we both knew this fight meant our lives. I don't know how we knew, but we did. We both knew that if we were the first to fall, then we wouldn't walk out alive.

Just when I thought my end would come, I found enough strength to swing one last time. When it landed, I felt an impact go through my body that I would never be able to explain. When I took another swing, I felt nothing but wind. When I stopped to look around, I could feel it in my body all the way down to my bones that I beat death.

I went to the door and walked through it without a second thought. And when I did, I felt my eyes open! There I was, laughing in a hospital bed. I could hear people around me start to get excited. Not knowing why, I closed my eyes and thought about my dream, vision, or whatever you would call that. I don't know what it was, but whatever it was, I do know that it was very real!

I looked around and saw so much medical equipment on and around me that I didn't know what to think. I tried my hardest to remember what happened, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't, but whatever happened, I knew it wasn't good.

I could see my family gathered around, most of them in tears. They were all saying how lucky I was, but I couldn't understand what they were saying and why they were saying it. A nurse came in and removed all the medical equipment attached to me except for an IV. After she did, she gave me a look that let me know death was here and was here for me, but somehow I got away.

When she left, my family explained to me how I had been jumped on and dumped in the alley next to a dumpster, left for dead. I couldn't remember anything from that night, which was probably best for everyone involved. We were all sidetracked when the doctor walked in and looked at me and smiled weakly before starting to speak.

"Well, Tim, you have probably already been told, but you're a very lucky young man.

You're lucky to be alive. There was a time when I thought you wouldn't make it because

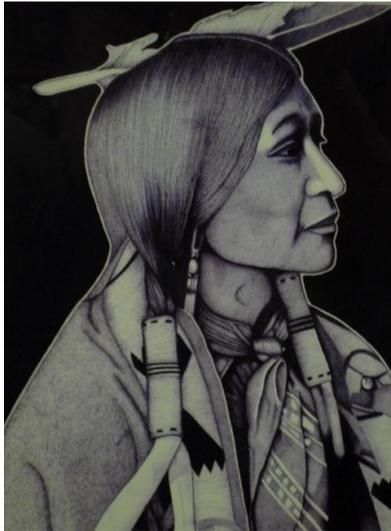
death was on you and was on you hard, but you fought long and hard. There were a few times when I thought you would give up, but you kept fighting. You stood up to fight and made it out alive. I'm going to hold you for 3 more days then let you go home," he said, getting up, looking down at me one more time before turning to walk out.

I was surprised by his words. It's like he knew exactly what happened in my dream.

I always heard people say that death was on me, but I was always thought people were just talking. But, after that race for my life then that unexplainable fight (and trust me, that fight was very real!), right then I knew deep down in my gut that I beat death, but most of all, I knew death was real! Now I know what people mean when they say that.

But the fact of the matter is that no matter how close I came and no matter how narrow my escape, I out ran and out fought death.

-Timothy M. Gonzales



Martin Rivers

Final Thoughts

There were many great essays that I want to print, but I must limit this issue due to the expense of postage and printing. Please consider submitting your writing on a future theme topic.

From letters I have received, I know that we have disappointed some of you with our typographical mistakes, but I cannot promise we will not continue to make errors. There is too much writing coming in, and I cannot compare everything typed up by volunteers to the original work. I rely on volunteers to do much of the work of this program, and I am grateful for their support. This is a grassroots project, which manages to get by with a lot of enthusiasm, dedication, and generosity. There are lots of cracks in our organization and I do apologize for when you or some of your work falls through. Please remember to put your name on all your writings. I know sometimes you put a pen name on your writings, and once it is separated from the envelope we often don't know who you are. It was easier when there were a few hundred folks writing, for me to read everything. Now that there are a few thousand of you participating I rely on more folks to help keep this going, and volunteers come and go, and their dedication to quality work can run from sloppy to neat. I do not sweat what I can't control. I hope I do not sound too defensive, but I did not want to ignore the complaints of a few of you. While I cannot promise change I can own up to my own shortcomings and this organization's limitations. Given it all I hope folks participating are getting quality information and this is a worthwhile enterprise for your being. We will always strive to improve, but I must ask you to bear with us as we continue to serve you.

I am putting these programs out on a wish and a prayer. I have expectations that money will be donated to the program that will allow me to continue with this project. I am hustling up the nickels and dimes I can but with so many of you participating soon, I'll have to conjure up some real money. Any contributions, including stamps, you can make goes a long way to keeping the program solvent. Your contributions inspire me to keep on and I want to thank all of you who send funds to keep the program going.

Please do not hesitate to participate in any program that interests you. All our services are given freely; we always value your feedback and suggestions. This project is created as we go along. We are always looking for new units of instruction that can be shared in a cost effective manner, that we feel resonate with the interests we glean from the letters and book requests you send. I really appreciate those of you who take the time to contribute through sending us your poetry, art, journals, history and book club responses, and picture and theme writing. Your creative thoughtful work certainly inspires the PE volunteers who help keep this project going.

I have been going thru more downs than ups recently and am hoping the pattern will change. One thing I realize is that it may not. I want things to work out for the best for me and my family in life, but that wanting does not guarantee good results will follow. It leaves me with realizing all I ever really have is the moment I am now living. It is not

particularly comforting, but it does feel like the truth. If I can manage the moment, and retain my composure and integrity in that moment, I am living life. Adversity is a great teacher, even if we wish we did not have to be in its' classroom. Once we are, all we can do is make the best of a difficult situation. There are no guarantees in life, and certainly, it is not fair, yet we are all equal in our ability to find our center, to stand balanced on this earth, strong in our integrity. We all slip up at times, and it is important not to continually beat ourselves up for our mistakes. It is also important to acknowledge our actions and live with the consequences we have drawn to us. I know many innocent people also are drawn into affairs they should be spared, but I am only addressing those who have made some mistake that they now have to live with. Here we are, and each new day is one to be appreciated. One thing we can be certain of is that our time to experience life is limited, and the extent of it is not guaranteed.

Money is tighter in my life than it has been in 25 years, but at least I have food enough for a while. I am fully engaged in autumn chores and finishing all my garden tasks and getting the ground ready for next year. I have had a great harvest of onions, garlic and potatoes that sit in the basement root cellar. I have a freezer full of leafy greens, broccoli and cauliflower and homemade pesto [basil, garlic parmesan cheese, olive oil and salt pureed]. I am still planning to turn this fall cabbage into buckets of sauerkraut. There are still cold hearty plants in the garden and I should be eating fresh vegetables thru December, if the bone chilling cold holds off. As much as I am struggling to pay bills, I know most people are struggling even harder, and I am concerned for the future. I am looking for a second job, and hope to put my massage training back into use. I am skilled at relieving pain and reducing stress through massage, and I will try to find some paying clients.

Life is a journey we are all on, and I am glad to have found you all as traveling companions. Send in your requests in a timely manner if you want to be sure to be included in the upcoming program mailings. Let me know how you are doing, and please understand that we are doing what we can to keep this project moving forward. If we cannot address your individual request or concern, please remember we are looking out as to how to use our resources to help the most folks we can.

The Center for Religion Ethics and Social Policy [CRESP], has reinvented itself and is now the Center for Transformative Action [CTA]. This organization of which the Durland Alternatives Library is a project partner, is the umbrella group that provides Prisoner Express with our tax exempt status, as well as our ability to utilize the non-profit bulk mail rate. We are proud to be aligned with this organization, dedicated to promoting social change through transformative action.

Be well,
Gary

REGISTRATION FORM

Please note: If you received this newsletter, you are on our mailing list for 2009; 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 in a timely manner to make sure we receive it before the packets are sent—You are always free to request books and they are sent on a first come first serve basis. Currently there are about 800 names on the list and we send out about 150 a month. If you don't want to cut up your newsletter, you may copy the sections of the registration form regarding the programs you want to join on a separate piece of paper

Personal Profile - 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 personal profile, 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

Programs – Please check the box of each program in which you wish to participate. 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 6th Edition *Prisoner Express Poetry Anthology*. **I understand that to receive the anthology I have to submit a poem for consideration in the anthology.**

History Project – I'm interested in studying history, please send me the next unit "The American Civil War"

History project-Sign me up for the packet on **Hispanic Migration to the USA**

Math 1 Project – Please enroll me and send the pre algebra course placement exam. **This is a repeat offering of our Math Placement exam and 63 lesson packet**

Please let me skip Math 1 and send me the Math **Okidoku Puzzle Packet**
You can only choose 1 of the Math options this cycle.

Journal Project – I will keep a Journal for 2010, and share my entries with PE. Please send me a Journal Starter packet

Memoir Project-I will submit a memoir, and wish to receive a copy of the other submitted writings. Some of the memoirs will be used to create a stage play.

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.

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- I wish to join this book club. Please send me a copy of the **Grapes of Wrath**.

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 appreciated. Your donations help keep Prisoner Express running,

**PRISONER EXPRESS
DURLAND ALTERNATIVES LIBRARY
127 Anabel Taylor Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853-1001**

CTA/Durland Alternatives
Library
127 Anabel Taylor Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853-1001
www.prisonerexpress.org
Address Correction Requested

Non Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit 448
Ithaca, NY 14850

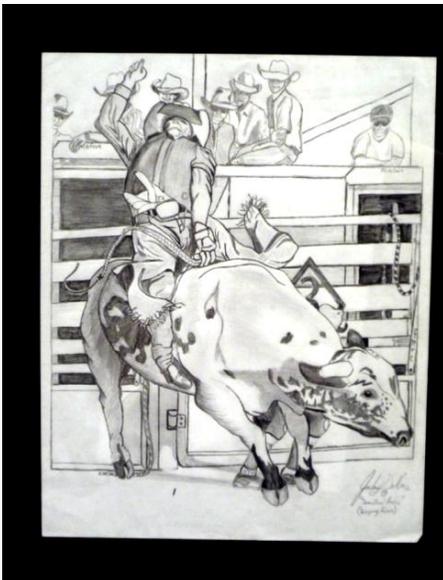
NEWSLETTER

Prisoner Express

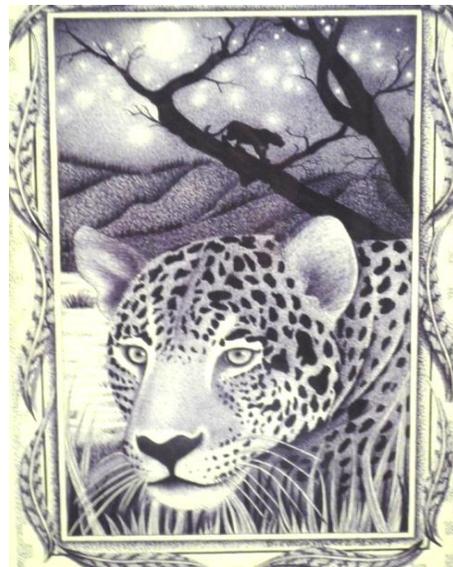
Fall 2009

Prisoner Express promotes rehabilitation by providing information, education and opportunities for creative self-expression to incarcerated individuals throughout the United States. Subscriptions are free to prisoners. All others please contact Prisoner Express for rates. All proceeds are used to fund programming.

The Durland Alternatives Library, which funds Prisoner Express, is a project partner of the Center for Transformative Action. Additional Support comes from the Cornell Public Service Center and [Cornell University Office of Minority Educational Affairs](#)



Jackey Sollars



David Velasquez



Valentino Dixon