CROSSCUT

A Magazine of Student Writing

Husson College
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Number 1

This is the first edition of CROSSCUT, a magazine of student writing at Husson College. We hope that CROSSCUT will appear once a semester from now on. For this first number, members of the English Department kept their eye out for good essays being produced in their classes. Out of about 30 fine submissions, the Department chose the following nine essays.

It is our hope that the magazine will give students a wider audience for their work and show that good student writing is appreciated and taken seriously at Husson. We also hope that, for future editions, all interested students will submit their writing for consideration, and we would like to branch out into fiction, poetry, and other forms of creative writing, as well as essays. Art work will also be welcome. Students may submit their work to any member of the English Department, and we will begin putting together a collection for the Fall.

We thank President Beardsley for suggesting the idea of a magazine of student writing and for supporting its publication. Thanks also to the part-time English faculty, who were among the hardest workers in putting together CROSSCUT.

Steve Berrien
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Linda Labin
Jay Lowe
Shirley Sibley
Inez Toothaker
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BRIAN DAVIS: "Just Because"

Brian Davis of Buffalo, NY, will be graduating this spring with an Associate's Degree in Business Communications. "I have always had an interest in the performing and creative arts. Writing has mainly been a hobby until recently; now I hope to pursue my writing more seriously. After graduation I am considering continuing my education to gain my Bachelor's in English or Drama."

BEVERLY GIASSON: "The Last Bath"

Beverly Giasson is a freshman at Husson College where she is studying to become a Registered Nurse. Living in a small town in Maine she received a great amount of personal attention during her early schooling years, which sparked her interest in writing. Beverly's essay, "The Last Bath," was inspired by her experience as a Certified Nurse's Aid, and her instructor's constant support throughout her training.

JULIE HAYNIE: "Rah, Rah, Sis, Boom, Bah"

Julie Haynie is a freshman this year at Husson College, and is majoring in Accounting. Julie is dedicated to the sport of cheerleading; she began cheering at age twelve, and hopes to one day coach a winning squad. Julie cheered at Husson this year for both the men's and women's basketball teams. Her essay is an attempt to shatter some of the myths surrounding the term "cheerleader."

MARK MCPHERSON: "The Day the Porcupine Died"

Mark McPherson, a freshman in Business Administration, was born and raised in Maine. He graduated from Hampden Academy in 1987.

LAURIE MOFFATT: "A Well Earned Second Chance"

Laurie Moffatt is a freshman in the Husson College/Eastern Maine Medical Center Baccalaureate Nursing Program. She became interested in writing at an early age and was fortunate to have had many teachers who encouraged and helped foster her writing abilities.

KATHLEEN SIERING: "All I Ever Wanted Was His Love"

Kathleen Siering was born on April 13, 1954, in Lodi, California. She is happily married to Jack and has two children, Robert and Jennifer. She holds an Associate's Degree from Sierra College in Rocklin, California, and is currently a Nursing major at Husson. Her goals are to obtain a Master's degree in Med/Surg Nursing and manage a critical care or surgical unit. Her personal philosophy is to "view the world through the eyes of the young, for they see it as it was meant to be, and hear the words of the elderly who have experienced the way it really is."

HOLLY TASKER: "Membership in the Beach Club"

Holly Tasker was born in Sebec Village, Maine, and has lived in the Bangor area for seventeen years. She is a junior at Husson College, working toward a Bachelor's degree in Accounting.

JACQUELINE M. TIBBETTS: "Conflict"

Jacqueline Tibbetts: "I come from a town in the south-western part of Maine. After graduating from high school, I took a year off to get a better handle on where I wanted to be going. After a year of working three jobs and taking classes part time, I enrolled at Mid-State College that following fall and graduated two years later in May of 1991. Wanting to further my education, I transferred into the paralegal program here at Husson College."

A Compromise of Ideals

by Anonymous

Most of my life I have held the belief that each and every creature has one inalienable and inherent right: the right to life. I carried this belief with a strong conviction and acted upon it by becoming a member of the Maine Right to Life Committee. I couldn't imagine anyone even considering terminating another person's life. To do so would be outright murder. My strong moral belief was imbedded deeply in my soul until I reached a horrible turning point in my life.

I have two beautiful children whom I love with all my heart. Both these children were planned; they were conceived within the confines of my marriage. However, I have been pregnant three times--the third pregnancy occurred outside of my failing marriage, at a time when divorce was imminent.

When I suspected that I was pregnant, it was just before the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. All the pride and excitement I had felt at discovering my previous pregnancies were replaced with dread and fear at the prospect of this one. I was terrified. I didn't want to know because I didn't want to deal with it. I tried to erase it from my mind, but I knew I had to find out if I was indeed pregnant.

Although I tried to remain hopeful, I knew deep down what was going on. At my doctor's office, he confirmed my suspicions. He announced what he believed to be wonderful news with a big smile and open arms. I fell into his open arms and cried. I will never forget his response as he tried to get me to reconsider. He stroked my hair slowly, gently, and said, "There are hundreds of women who wish they

could trade places with you right now." Oh, God, how I wished that I could trade places with someone. How I wished that I could turn back time to the very moment of conception and erase this horrible nightmare. What started out as an innocent flirtation had escalated into this sudden, dreadful moment of decision. I knew without a doubt that I could never have this baby. It was conceived with love, like my other babies, but would never come to know it.

The trip home was the longest time span I have ever experienced. I knew at the other end of this ride I would have to make an appointment with a gynecologist. And a dreadful thought occurred to me. My birthday was coming right up--the day before Thanksgiving. What if the only appointment available was on that day? I felt so terribly empty. I had no feelings, no emotions; I was totally numb. I had to block everything out and not allow myself to feel. Even when the secretary informed me that the only available time was on my birthday, I wasn't a bit surprised. I scheduled the earliest possible time slot and took a deep breath, trying to suck in some courage, to inhale some magical air that would provide me with bravery to face the long days ahead of me.

The next few days were a nightmare. I tried desperately to block everything out. I reminded myself constantly that I was sick, that the doctor would soon make me well. But my raging hormones would continually force images into my mind. For fleeting moments I would recall the enthusiasm of calling my midwife, Jill, at the beginning of my previous pregnancies, or I would remember wondering about the baby--what was it (boy or girl), what would it look like? I would recall wanting so much to hold it and love it. These mental movies played over and over in my brain, torturing me relentlessly. I knew that I would

never know, could never know the sex of this baby, that I would never hold it or love it or nurse it. I just kept shoving these memories deeper and deeper into my subconcious and insisted that I was sick. But the dread of my upcoming appointment, the shame and the guilt, kept seeping through as if the baby were crying tears into my bloodstream and they were coursing throughout my entire being. My body and soul ached and I desperately wanted to cry out. But I blocked it out each time this feeling welled up in me. It was a constant struggle, a see-saw of guilt and emptiness.

When the morning of my appointment came, I woke early. I had planned to have a fast cup of coffee and get my children ready for their babysitter before I left. Without thought or concious effort I slipped out of bed and knelt on the floor. I put my palms together, bowed my head on the side of the bed, and I prayed. Assuming the position of a small child, I prayed to God for my adulterous sin. I prayed for forgiveness for what I was about to do, I prayed for my soul to not burn in hell. And, exactly as I had prayed for my children at their birth, I prayed for the soul of this unborn baby.

I did not dare to pray for strength to commit this heinous act. I felt very thankful that my doctor was prompt. He briefly explained the procedure to me before performing it. It was not as easy as I had hoped. In fact, it felt exactly like labor. I tried to block them out, those unrelenting memories, but I couldn't. I could remember laboring to bring my babies into the world. It wasn't nearly as hard as this--before, I knew that after all the pain was over, I would get to see my precious baby. The work involved seems miniscule compared to the reward of holding the baby for the first time. Although the contractions felt

the same, this time I would have no reward. The pain that I was enduring was my punishment for the sin that I was committing. I felt that I was very deserving of that pain.

When the procedure was over, the doctor told me that he would leave me alone and that I could use the room for as long as I needed. He touched my arm and said he knew it wasn't easy for me, but that I had done really well. All the feelings that I had supressed came to the surface right then. I could hear my midwife, Jill, saying those exact words to me as she placed my firstborn child into my arms. All the excitement, all the noise and confusion that come after the birth of a child, was gone from this room. It was cold and stark, just like the reality that was painfully slapping me in the face. When my babies were born, I was overwhelmed with pride, surrounded by people I loved. Now I was saturated throughout with guilt, scared and all alone in this strange place, surrounded by the implements necessary to terminate a pregnancy. I covered my face with my hands and I cried. My entire soul ached; I knew I had just committed an atrocious act. I prayed desperately once again for forgiveness, for my soul to be saved, to be spared.

Just Because

by Brian Davis

"Just because": it's the only real reason that anybody needs to start or finish an argument. It makes sense at the time, but later you can sit and think to yourself, "God what an idiot I must have sounded like." You can remember all those times you wanted something when you were little, and the only reason you couldn't have it was "just because."

I guess it's all in the matter of an argument that we say stupid things or, worse yet, things that don't make any sense at all. There is a possiblility that arguing is an instinctive habit that we easily slip into, something like a car slipping into neutral. We can just be coasting along, windows down, seat back, sun beating down, and all of a sudden the engine revs up like you just put jet fuel in the gas tank. An argument works in a very similar manner: you'll be there perfectly happy with the other person's presence, enjoying the conversation, when all of a sudden somebody will say something and you'll jump into an argument like somebody put a live carp down your underwear. You'll argue along at some ridiculous rate of speed, trying to convince the other person that you are right and they are wrong.

One of the many problems that will arise in a conflict or argument is what I refer to as the "UhOh" factor. This happens when you have been having a decent argument and you could possibly even be on the verge of winning when you suddenly realize that you are wrong--"UhOh." So, as a civil, rational human being, what do you do? Do you run and hide? Can you bury yourself in the sand? Do you actually consider for a brief moment admitting defeat? Or do you simply go on arguing a point

that you don't even believe in anymore? Most will let their egos obstruct the process and argue the point. What is even worse is when you win the argument. So now you are wrong and they are right even though they are wrong. Right?

As I mentioned earlier, a lot of arguing is basically pointless. One of the favorite pointless arguments you will get into is with little kids whenever they want something.

To an adult, an M2 grenade launcher might be the most ridiculous thing you have ever heard of, but to a little kid, that is going to be the one thing that makes him fit in in the neighborhood. But the thing is, when that cute little face comes up to you, puts on those Bambi eyes and that maple-syrup voice and says, "Father, I have been such a good child to you over the many years, god knows I have never tried to do any harm to you. But father, you see none of the other children I play with will ever, ever, ever, ever like me if I don't get an M2 grenade launcher to use in Joey's sandbox." This is usually followed by a never ending string of, "Please, PLEASE, PPPPLEASEEE!!!!" which is the child's convincing factor. In the mind of a child, the more pleases they say, the weaker your force-field becomes. But the saddest part of thie whole ordeal is your response. It's the one that keeps kids awake at night and causes you to hit your head against the wall. "Well daddy, can I please have that shiny all-purpose M2 grenade launcher?" Your response: "No." "Why not daddy?" It's built up to this; now for the climax. "Just because." What? Wait a minute, I asked for a climax and all you can give me is stupid reasoning. That's right: the only reason your perfect angel of a child can't have the weapon, that shiny, all-purpose, conventional M2 grenade launcher for Joey's sandbox, isn't because

tactical weapons aren't allowed by town ordinance, or because if your son has one what will the other kids want? Not even the fact that Switzerland doesn't have one of those M2 thingies. None of this crosses your mind. The only thing you can say is "Just because."

I guess a part of being an adult is being able to make rational statements like that. The only other time you can ever use an excuse like that is when you are having an argument with somebody who has had too much to drink. They will always make funny statements like, "Hey Bob, let's drive to Hawaii and get some of those flowery things for our necks and hula 'til we puke!" You respond, "No man, I don't think it's a great idea." "Why not man?" "Just because." Being in their state of total mental paralysis the "Just because" factor seems to satisfy their urge to hula and puke.

None of this paper is saying that conflict isn't to be taken seriously, because some arguments are very valid and are worthy of indepth discussion. All I am trying to say is sometime, when you are flinging yourself into some heated debate, stop, think, and reason for just a brief moment. And for God's sake, don't do it "Just because."

The Last Bath

by Beverly Giasson

It was warm inside the nursing home, but through the frosty bay window you could see the frigid snow being piled into great mounds by the plowtruck. The sun was shining, but it wasn't the warm kind like the sun in the summer, but more like a hopeful glow, there to remind us that spring would soon be on its way. The scent of fresh-brewed coffee lingered in the spacious nurses' lounge.

"Time to punch," someone called as I butted out my cigarette, ready to face another day of training.

My instructor, Mrs. Barton, was always so cheery. She carried her holiday spirit everywhere she went, all decked out with christmas tree pins and rosey cheeks to match. She gave us our instructions and sent us on our way. Discreetly taking me aside, she informed me that I would be alone today because my partner was sick, and that she'd only be a shout away in case I had any questions.

"No problem," I chimed before setting off for the day's work. "Bed bath for Mrs. Richmond," I mumbled to myself, reading off my duty list.

The walk to Mrs. Richmond's room was a long one. She resided in a private room at the very end of a dimly-lit wing. I guess she liked to be alone, or so it seemed. No family ever came to visit her, nor did she ring the call bell, except for those rare occasions when her television went on the blink. Aside from her reclusiveness she was a rather pleasant lady.

As I made my way down the eerie hallway, I noticed the newly hung drawings done by some elementary students at the nearby school. The

bright colors so delicately scribbled across the tattered construction paper burst with life. Caught for a moment in their liveliness, I ambled on. Knocking twice as I always do, I pushed open the clumsy wooden door. The room was chilly. I looked around expecting to find a window that needed shutting. I spied her water pitcher half off the bedside table, suspended in a near fall. I picked it up to insure its contents. The dew that had collected on its outside drenched my hand. The room smelled different than all the others. It wasn't that particular smell of old ladies' perfume; it was the scent of loneliness that lingered here.

"Mrs. Richmond," I said in my makeshift professional tone, "it's time to get up for your bath."

Expecting to hear a muffled groan of disapproval, I continued to gather the necessary supplies from her bedside stand. Not conjuring up any reply, I went to her bedside and gently shook her shoulder: no response. Reacting from my nervousness, I felt for her pulse---nothing!

"Maybe I'm mistaken," I thought, and felt again, this time on her neck. Her body was cool to the touch and lifeless. Almost as a reflex action, I pressed the buzzer. Knowing no one would answer, due to the wondrous "morning rush," I shouted in a choked voice, "Mrs. Barton!" No reply. Almost in tears I tore down the hallway to find her. After I nearly mowed her down on my way, she commented on how badly shaken up I appeared.

"What's wrong?" she asked. I didn't even need to answer. She read the expression on my clammy, tear-soaked face, and we trudged arm in arm to the foreboding room.

"Are you going to be all right?" she asked before we entered.

"I think so," I replied in choppy syllables.

Assuring her I was now composed, I watched as she showed me post-mortem care. We got new water and began to wash Mrs. Richmond's cyanotic body. The only difference I noticed was that her skin didn't redden like the other patients' did when the washcloth passed over it. We washed every nook and cranny from head to toe. I took special care to assure that her last bath was a thorough one.

We dressed her in a lovely purple dress with little pink roses on the lapel.

"It really isn't that awful, is it?" I asked while returning all the supplies we used.

"Everyone thinks of death as a terrifying scene with an overly dramatic closure, but it's not. It's a time of peace, a time to realize the virtues needed to attain such a long, enjoyable life, and to pay respect to the deserving few who make it to such a ripe old age," she concluded.

I breathed a sigh of relieving composure and dragged down to the lounge to finish that pot of coffee which smelled so inticing this morning.

"I guess everyone is pretty nervous when faced with a situation like this," I thought. Now I know what death is like when looking in from the outside.

To this very day I look at life a little differently. I find myself noticing the little things, things I used to pass by when I was in a hurry, without a second thought. I'm glad this event touched my life because now I'm a little different, a little wiser, and a little less afraid.

Rah, Rah, Sis, Boom, Bah

by Julie Haynie

When you hear the term "cheerleader," what is the first word to pop into your head? Maybe ditz, blonde, or airhead is one of them. A true cheerleader is a person who supports a specific athletic team whether that team is winning or losing. Anyone can cheer on the team when it's on top. But it takes a cheerleader to encourage the team when it is on the bottom. A cheerleader is usually female, but male cheerleaders are on the move to being popular.

There are old ideas that cheerleaders are groupies and follow after the star athletes, that the captain of the cheerleading squad is supposed to date the captain of the basketball or football team, that only the prettiest girls can be on the cheerleading squad, and that all cheerleaders are stupid. Those typical stereotypes are extremely outdated. High school cheerleading has been a sport in the state of Maine for almost five years. Not only is cheerleading considered a sport, cheerleaders are now considered to be athletes. Cheerleaders train for their competitions, practice six days a week, sign a contract that forbids drinking, and have to keep up their grades. At my high school, Madison High School, the last three valedictorians were cheerleaders. I should know because I was the valedictorian for the class of 1991.

There are still cheerleaders that fulfill the stereotype. You can tell by the way they act out on the floor and on the sidelines. True cheerleaders say that these girls are there just to wear the short skirts. These fake cheerleaders call attention to themselves when they

are in front of the crowd. They giggle about the mistakes that they make and flirt with the cute guys in the crowd. One thing that really drives me crazy when it comes to fake cheerleaders is that they know nothing about the sport that they are cheering for. Some of the imposter cheerleaders are pretty stupid, but they are just following the pattern that previous generations have set for them. The imposters act silly because they think they are expected to act that way in order to be a cheerleader. I know girls who are fairly intelligent, but they do not act smart when they are cheeleaders. Take my friend Nicki, for instance. I know she is not stupid, but since she made the cheerleading squad, and gained some popularity, all her common sense left her. I think this is because she thought she was supposed to act ditzy. Our present situation and preconceived ideas influence the way we act.

We even let those stereotypical ideas infiltrate the minds of our youth. Little girls can not wait to grow up and be cheerleaders. They see the role as popular and glamorous. Not all cheerleaders are beautiful specimens of human beings. Some girls are large and not so gorgeous. But that does not matter. What matters is their dedication to and love of the sport. As for the glamor--well, that's a joke. I do not see what is so glamorous about cheering in the rain and snow or sweating in a gymnasium filled to capacity. I do not see what is so glamorous about falling off of stunts and having people fall on you.

As for the captain of the cheering squad dating the captain of the basketball or football team, that happens. You cannot say it is always because of their authority on the athletic team and popular status. It is probably because they both have something in common--a love of sports. Rarely does an athlete care about just one sport. Usually,

he/she is interested in a number of sports. Relationships today need something more for a foundation than simply popularity alone.

The cheerleaders of today are pioneering for a whole new perspective on cheerleading. Their hard work, dedication, school spirit, and accomplishments will soon be recognized on a larger scale. People will soon see that cheerleaders are not flighty popularity seekers. Cheerleaders are athletes and should be commended for all that they do for their school, teams, and themselves.

The Day the Porcupine Died

by Mark McPherson

It was a great summer day, and I was camping with my father and my best friend Dave. I was only nine years old, but I felt a lot older that day because we were doing an overnighter in the woods--a new frontier that I had never experienced. Baxter State Park would have a new meaning to me after this trip.

Our tent was set up near the Nesowadnehunk Stream, which was a stream that trickled by with a playfulness that most trout brooks have. On the other side of the stream was a towering pine tree that seemed to climb endlessly into the sky.

"Boy, that pine tree is really big!" I said to my father. "It must be a million years old."

"Not that old," my father said, "but it sure has been here a long time." Dave just looked at the tree and went back to setting up his section of the tent. I got my fishing pole ready and proceeded to fish the edge of the stream. Dave and I both fished for a few hours, and then we got bored and decided to do something else.

"We're going for a little walk, Dad," I called out.

"Okay, but don't stray too far," I heard as a reply. Dave and I proceeded to cross the stream and walk along the edge of it. We got to the big pine and walked around it, admiring how big it was. Dave pulled a piece of bark off the trunk and started breaking it apart. As I watched the pieces fall to the ground, I noticed something. Little balls of black matter were scattered on the ground all around the tree. I kicked a few around and then bent over to pick one up.

"I wonder what these are," I said to Dave. He walked over to me and examined what I had in my hand.

"It looks like some kind of animal poop," he said to me. I then took the animal pellet and threw it into the woods.

"Maybe they came from up in this tree," I said. We then looked up the tree while walking around it and examined the branches. After a few minutes of craning our necks skyward, we decided to give up the search and do something else. As we walked away, Dave decided to take one more look.

"I see it!" he exclaimed, and he pointed to a branch he was looking at. I also looked up and saw a sizeable black ball nestled in the pine needles. We learned later it was a porcupine.

"It looks like it's dead. Let's throw some rocks at it and see if we can get it to move," Dave said. We went to the stream bed, and we both grabbed a handful of rocks. Then we walked back to the tree and started throwing them up at the porcupine. Dave hit it once, and it started waddling toward the trunk of the tree. I threw another rock and made a direct connection. The porcupine lost its balance and fell to the ground.

"I think I killed it," I said as we both stared down at the still carcass. "Let's not tell Dad about this."

"Let's not tell Dad about what?" a booming voice said over our shoulders. My father looked at the dead animal and said, "Doing a little hunting, eh? That's good because it's just about suppertime. Bring that over to the edge of the stream, and I'll show you boys how to clean it." We didn't know what to say to him, so we did as he asked. My father then put on a pair of gloves, took out his knife and cut a

slit up the porcupine's belly. He then started cutting the quilly skin off the animal.

"Boy, isn't this greasy. You boys should have picked a leaner cut of meat," may father said with a grin. He then stoked the fire he made in the grill earlier and put a frying pan on it. After the pan got a chance to heat up, my father put the rodent in it. The sizzling sound it made gave me the chills. Then I saw the tears come to Dave's eyes. He knew what my father was going to make us do.

"There! She's all ready to eat, boys. Mark, you get the plates, forks and knives and set the picnic table for two." My father started cutting the meat up. I set the table, and Dave and I sat down, ready to eat a feast we would never forget. As the greasy flesh was served to us, I felt the bile well up in my throat. Dave had a glassy-eyed look of sorrow on his face. "Start chowing down, boys. You killed it; you eat it."

The thought of hot gobs of greasy flesh sliding down my throat was enough for me. I leaned over the edge of the table and started to vomit. Dave must have been thinking the same, because he was not long behind me. "Maybe you boys will learn a lesson from this," my father said.

I never forgot that day, and it still projects vividly in my mind. I learned from it, however, and was taught that the wanton slaying of animals is wrong and immoral. I still go hunting and fishing, but you won't see me shooting something I'm not going to eat.

A Well Earned Second Chance

by Laurie Moffat

Sometimes things happen in your life for a reason that may elude you at the time. In retrospect, the reasons become as clear as spring water, but when you're struggling to reach that point of understanding, it's about as clear as mud. I had such an experience while taking my driver's test. This was a learning experience for me in that it showed me what a strong sense of determination I have and how resilient I can be. I'd like to share it with you.

I learned to drive in a van. This wasn't just any van, though. It was a moving party, a wild time on wheels. It was extra long with no side or rear windows. This allowed for a full-size bed in the rear and allowed the occupants the highest degree of anonymity. It also forced the driver to perform an act of perfection to back it up using only the mirrors to gauge the distances. In the center of the van was a bale of hay that served as a makeshift seat. It was well used---a great deal of hay had been scattered about the interior, and the skeleton of the bale remained intact only because of the strips of twine that hugged it tightly and the endless amount of beer that had been spilled on it. It was in this moving tribute to the free and easy lifestyle I had adopted that I took my driver's test.

A spring day has a sense of newness about it, a freshness and promise of good things to come. It gives one a sense of purpose and accomplishment. It was with this attitude that I pulled up in front of city hall. My feet barely touched the ground as I walked into the instructor's office to announce myself. On the way back to the van, my

back was warmed by the sun's rays. Mental note: after getting my license, I had to hit the beach.....And then I saw him.

The instructor was the height of his official capacity. Every crease on his uniform was exact. His shoes were shined to such a high gloss he could see his reflection in them. In his hand was a clipboard that I would soon learn to hate. He walked over to the van and checked my blinkers, brake and parking lights. All the while he was making notes on his clipboard. Man, oh man, this guy looked tough. I thought he would have me drop and give him twenty any time. But I knew the value of a sweet smile and overexposure of leg, so I knew as soon as he got in I'd be golden. And as well as I knew this fact, everyone in five counties knew that you never, ever opened the side door of this van. Everyone, that is, except Mr. Driving Examiner. When he tried the front door that I had inadvertently left locked, his hand automatically went for the side door. At least one of every imaginable beer can tumbled out onto those painfully shiny shoes.

At this point, you might think I'm done for. Not so! Without so much as a glance downward or a flash of acknowledgement, he reached through the side door, unlocked the passenger door and entered the van via the usual route.

I realized in a sudden wave of desperate anxiety that my driving skills alone would get me through this test. I very discreetly shifted my weight, and pulled my skirt down to cover a bit more skin. I took a deep breath and let it out. I tried to relax and it paid off. I managed the first few maneuvers quite well. Taking off on a hill can be tricky, but I did it as smooth as satin. The school zone was next, and although 15 M.P.H. wasn't the usual speed for this particular vehicle,

we got through it nicely. The next hurdle to leap was a yield sign. I wanted to be very technical and stop but I did just what it said: yield. I was gaining confidence by the second---I knew I could drive! I had only one part left and I was home free: parallel parking.

Mr. take-notes-every-time-I-blink Examiner pointed me toward Main Street. In the small town where I lived it was the only place with marked parking spaces. When I got to the first available space, I put on my blinker and pulled over.

"What are you doing, Miss?" he demanded.

"Uh, well, I'm parking," I said. "Don't I need to parallel park?"

"Not yet," he said and made a note on that God-forsaken notebook. So, without a word, I put my blinker on and pulled out into traffic. About a block down the street, he pointed his pen at a parking space and uttered one word.

"Here."

"Here?" I said. I was appalled. In the space behind me was a compact car with its bumper near the line. That was okay. But in the space in front of me was a pickup truck with its tailgate down. It protruded into my parking space like a tongue sticking out at me, making a mockery of my driver's test.

"But...," I said. My explanation was lost, not even having the chance to fall on deaf ears.

"Park," he said, "here." He barked his orders at me like some kind of drill sergeant.

With agonizing inches, I backed my way into the parking space. I had to do this perfectly, yet I knew it was impossible. In the middle of a prayer that objects in the mirror really are closer than they

appear, I felt my bumper make contact with the car behind me. As anticipated, my front tire was parallel with the tailgate in front of me.

I wanted to scream!!! I wanted to get right out and point out to this authoritative jerk the diametrics of parking in a too small space. And more than anything, I wanted to drive that clipboard down his throat. He was frantically scribbling a diagram on it. A DIAGRAM, mind you!

I choked back the tears all the way to city hall. The lump in my throat felt like a football. I was angry, I was frustrated, I was humiliated and I felt helpless all at the same time. How could he do this to me? How could he sabotage my driving test? Geez! Just when things were looking up.

Then, without a blink, he said, "I'm failing you. But it isn't because of the parallel parking; it's your mirrors. They are too small- they are not regulation size. I should never have allowed you to take the test."

I exploded in a fountain of tears. This man was unbearable. I had never been so angry or so humiliated in all my life. But as he got out and walked away, a strange and wonderful thing happened. I was overcome by the promising realization that even though things looked pretty bad right then, I still had hope. As I watched him walk away, sticky shoes and all, I knew that I would get another chance.

But that's another story.....

All I Ever Wanted Was His Love

by Kathleen Siering

The following represents an inner moral conflict. It concerns a young woman trying to come to terms with what she has been taught since infancy and what she truly feels within her heart is justified and right.

Most conflicts consist of two outwardly opposing forces--parent and child, employer and employee, husband and wife, friend and friend--each has his/her own viewpoint and both are sure that they are correct. Most of the time, a compromise can be reached where neither side is completely happy, but both sides can live with the outcome. In an inner conflict, both sides reside in the one body and there is little chance of compromise; a choice must be made one way or the other, and such is the dilemma facing the young woman in the following dialogue.

This young woman has been taught, and truly believes, that any child owes respect and love to its parents. But she feels betrayed by her father in that after her parents divorced he remarried and moved many hudreds of miles away. This never allowed them to build any relationship beyond a polite, formal, distanced one. She came to feel that he didn't have any love for her, that he replaced her with another daughter by his second wife. She feels more and more justified in this belief as the years pass on, which has made her bitter and resentful of her little half-sister.

Father: She is just a child. She has the emotions and the ability to reason of a child--a child in a woman's body.

Eldest Daughter: She was old enough to travel clear across the country to get here.

Father: And that scares the hell out of me when I think of everything that could have happened.

Inner Self: What about me? Did you ever wonder about the things that could have happened to me? Did you ever give a damn?

Eldest Daughter: She arrived, apparently none the worse for wear, and is safe at Grandpa's. So for the moment at least, you need not worry.

Father: I want you to talk to her, and make her see that she should come home.

Inner Self: Why should I talk to her? Why should I give a damn--it's not my problem. I don't know this girl; I don't want to know her.

Eldest Daughter: You should ask Grandpa to talk to her. She's staying with him, and he knows her far better than I. I wouldn't know what to say.

Father: Please, just get to know her. She's your sister. She's very much like you. I always said that I never missed your growing up because I watched it through her. If anyone could get through to her, it would be you.

Inner Self: You bastard! For 18 years I waited to be noticed by you, wondered if you thought about me, prayed for some recognition beyond a card at Christmas and on my

birthday. How can you say she's anything like me? You never bothered to open the book on my life--didn't need to, you say--you watched it all in reruns, didn't you?

Eldest Daughter: You can only assume that we are alike. There is no relationship between us saving that by common blood. Neither one of us was ever presented with the opportunity to establish one. I don't know that she would listen to me--much less wish to call me "sister." I cannot say that I desire such a relationship. I cannot just walk up to her, introduce myself, and tell her to go home.

Father: I have many regrets in my life; the greatest regret has been allowing my children to be as strangers to one another. I can't change what has happened in the past. Life is not going to allow me the time to try to make amends. I am not able to come for her or to you. I ask of you, please put the past aside and take the first step in getting to know your sister--steps I should have taken long ago. The future belongs to both of you. Each can benefit through a relationship with the other. Please allow yourself the opportunity to share more than just blood ties.

Eldest Daughter: I will talk to her. I will try to convince her to return home. I just don't know if anything else is possible. I won't make promises to you I cannot keep.

Inner Self: I will do as you ask. For your sake, I will convince her to return home. But she, who has taken from me the

love that was rightfully mine, who has robbed me of my birthright--she is nothing to me, and I will never love her.

(At the Grandfather's ranch) The eldest daughter is watching the youngest daughter from beside a huge fig tree near the barn. The youngest daughter (unaware of the other's presence) is trying to halter-break a fractious black angus heifer. It's a toss as to who is breaking whom.

Inner Self: My God! She looks just like me. She's larger than I, but she's wearing my face, and I always thought I looked like my mother.

Eldest Daughter: Let go of the rope! Let go of the rope! She can't go anywhere, and she'll drag the hide right off you. Are you all right? Why are you staring at me?

Youngest Daughter: You look like me.

Eldest Daughter: Thats because we're related--you know, sisters--same father and all that.

Youngest Daughter: Which of my sisters are you?

Eldest Daughter: I'm the oldest one. You're a mess. Leave the heifer and I'll help you with her later.

Youngest Daughter: I don't need your help. I'm quite capable of doing it on my own.

Eldest Daughter: So you have just demonstrated.

Youngest Daughter: Oh, and I suppose you would have done it differently?

Eldest Daughter: Yes, much--but like you said, you don't need my help. Anyway, you'd better wash the blood off your

arms and legs or Grandpa will have a fit.

Youngest Daughter: Dad sent you, didn't he? Well, I'm not going home; you can tell him that.

Eldest Daughter: Tell him yourself. It's hot, I'm going to get a Pepsi from the pumphouse, and then I'm going to put my feet in the irrigation ditch. You can come if you want--your choice.

(The two sisters are sitting in the irrigation ditch; both are drinking Pepsi's)

Youngest Daughter: So, I bet he thought you could get me to go back home. Well, I won't go back.

Eldest Daughter: You've said that before. Okay, he called me to say that you were here; and yes, he asked me to stop by. But I was coming by anyway. I have a horse to show this coming weekend and my mom's having a party on Sunday. I came by to ask you to come along. You have two other sisters you haven't seen since you were a baby. Come or don't come; it's your choice.

Youngest Daughter: How would you have handled that heifer?

Eldest Daughter: Come on and I'll show you.

(The two sisters return to the corral in front of the milking barn where the eldest daughter attempts to show the youngest how much she knows about halter-breaking Angus heifers. Two seconds later, she has accomplished just that.)

Youngest Daughter: Are you all right? Should I call for help? My God, she ran right over the top of you! I'm

going to get Grandpa.

Eldest Daughter: Damn rubber-necked bitch! No, don't call him; he'll shoot that damn heifer. Good God, I hurt. There won't be any horseshow for me this weekend. I've got to call the owners; maybe they can get another rider.

Youngest Daughter: I can show for you.

Eldest Daughter: No, this filly's very temperamental, and this is her first maiden show. Can you ride?

Youngest Daughter: Better than you halter break heifers.

Inner Self: Smart ass! But where am I going to find a replacement now?

Eldest Daughter: O.K., I'll call the owners. If it's all right with them, we'll give it a try.

(At the horseshow several days later)

Inner Self: She's going to break. Tip her head to the inside and sit back. Good, now more inside leg--don't let her cheat at the corners. She rides like I do--maybe better; but then, she was the one with all the lessons, and I taught myself. No one ever picked up the tab for me--not that I ever asked--I worked for everything I got.

Eldest Daughter: You did a nice job. That filly is difficult in the best settings, and damn near impossible in new situations. She's never had anyone but me handle her, so in this situation, to finish is to win. Now let's get her back to the barn. My mother's party is going to start soon, and I don't want to

be late.

(Several hours have passed and the eldest daughter discovers the youngest daughter out on the front porch crying)

Eldest Daughter: What's wrong? Why are you crying? I thought you'd be happy meeting your other sisters. Everyone's been kind, haven't they?

Youngest Daughter: It's not the party. It's that you're all a family. You laugh together, you sing together, you even get mad and bump chests in the most ridiculous way. You don't have many material things, but you have love. It hurts me and makes me sad and jealous. I had the advantages, Dad and my mother always saw to that. I had everything except them--they could afford to give me everything except their time. I can't remember a time we had a family party. We never sang or danced together. If it hadn't been for the reports my governess gave, I doubt I existed for them. I would have given anything to have had Dad watch me ride, but he never came. Now he's going to die, and I'll never have what you have. I'm scared, and I don't want him to die. That's why I won't go home; I can't bear it. At least here I don't have to watch him die and wish for what never was.

Eldest Daughter: I wish I had a magic wand that I could wave and make everything all right. I know that you're

afraid of losing Dad; so am I. You ran clear across country to escape your fear, only to find that it has followed you here. If you can confront your fears, anger, and frustration, you will discover in this confrontation that these things have no power over you. But if you try to run from them, they follow to haunt and mock you like an invisible tyrant. You can yearn for love and affection and, not receiving it, build walls around yourself to keep out the emptiness and pain. The problem is these walls become a prison. Love can come and beat upon these walls until its fists are bloody: but you will never know because you've locked yourself away. Now, Dad's love and recognition are yours by birthright. You still have the time to claim that birthright. Not every one of us has that chance; some have let too many years and too many walls separate them. But you will have to be strong. You will have to confront that which terrifies you most. This is a decision that only you can make.

Youngest Daughter: My heart knows that you are right; but are you saying this for me or for Dad?

Eldest Daughter: I am saying this sister to sister.

Inner Self: I've often heard about you,
I've always known your name,
And though we've walked life's different paths,
Our steps were much the same.

I didn't want to meet you,
I had chosen you to blame
For consuming all a father's love,
Leaving me with just his name.

It took time for me to know you,
Sometimes it's hard to seek the truth,
Yet every time I looked at you,
I gazed back upon my youth.

It's not just the resemblance
Of your eyes, your hands, or mouth,
But in the deepness of your being,
I've looked back upon myself.

I've listened to your poems,
And I've watched you ride,
Where I thought my heart to envy,
I found it filled with pride,

And I have come to love you,
To think of you as part of me,
As if within another life,
I have an entity.

You came to me a stranger,
A father's daughter by a second wife,
But you leave a cherished sister
I've really known all my life.

Membership in the Beach Club

by Holly Tasker

There is a knock at the door. I know who it is without looking. It is 8:00 P.M., Wednesday. Anne comes every Wednesday evening at this time. Her husband allows her this hour every week.

Usually, I look forward to this weekly visit, but not tonight. Opening the door reluctantly, I force a smile. "Come in Anne. There is a pitcher of iced tea waiting for us in the kitchen," I say with fake enthusiasm.

"Did you get the applications for the beach club?" Anne inquires.

"No," I lie, "they didn't have any openings. When the man said there was a waiting list, I decided not to bother."

Earlier that day, I sat with the other young mothers at the playground. Keeping one eye on Suzanne, I chatted with Anne. "The heat bothers me so, and the drive to the ocean is so far. I wish there was a beach nearby," I complained.

"There is a very nice lake a few miles from here," offered Carol, as she applied sunscreen to her freckled nose.

My interest heightened, as she described in detail the benefits of membership in this beach club. She said that a sponsor was needed to join, but she would gladly sponsor me. Enthused, I learned where to go for an interview and application form.

Later, as I pulled into Anne's driveway, she talked of joining also. I was quick to assure her that I would get a form for her. At that moment her husband came out of the house.

"Where the hell have you been, woman?" he yelled at Anne.

"Why didn't you tell me he was coming home for lunch?" I asked in a low voice. "I could have brought you home sooner."

"Don't worry," she whispered. "I am only ten minutes late. He just likes to fuss."

But I noticed she hastened to get her daughter and car-seat out of the car. I also noticed that Anne's husband offered no assistance. I felt sorry for Anne. Her husband, bossy and mean, expected his wife to obey his orders, which she usually did. He seemed to enjoy embarrassing Anne; he would often insult her in my presence.

After arriving home, I hurried lunch. The day was growing hotter, and I wanted to complete my errands as soon as possible. The summer afternoons in Lexington Park, Maryland, are difficult to endure.

Carol's directions were easy to follow, and I soon found the building. The small store afforded no relief on this hot, humid day. Making matters worse, my shy two-year old whimpered and held up both arms. Obliging, I lifted and carried her. Clinging to me, she buried her face in my neck. The shared body heat caused instant misery.

"Good afternoon," the man behind the counter greeted. After taking a large, white handkerchief out of his pocket, he wiped his face and the back of his neck. "The darn air-conditioner broke," he explained.

"I am here to join the beach club," I started abruptly, anxious to get back to my air-conditioned car. "I would like two application forms, please."

While he was getting me the forms, I wondered how Maryland's lakes were compared to the cool, refreshing lakes back home in Maine. With

alarm, I suddenly remembered the stories I had heard of fatal snake attacks in southern lakes.

"Wait a minute," I called to get his attention. "Are there any.....?"

"Don't worry about that," he interrupted. "There ain't any niggers allowed."

I was stunned.

Having grown up in rural Maine, I was not prepared for this. All residents of my small home town were white. Also, no Afro-Americans joined the tourists who crowded the lake in the summers of my youth. The only contact I had with this minority group was in history books, where I learned that segregation was an injustice and of the past.

But it is certainly thriving in Maryland under the guise of interviews and sponsors. The interviews are to allow the bigots to see the color of your skin. The white sponsors are to sponsor only whites.

Now, I sit here facing dark-skinned Anne. Disgusted with the hateful truth, I am forced to lie. The realization that she has probably had many experiences with prejudice saddens me.

Conflict

by Jacqueline M. Tibbetts

Growing up in a military family, I was exposed to such issues as guns, uniforms, and war. As I aged and matured, I began to develop my own insights towards these issues which, as a result, may have gone against the family or daddy's occupation.

As a child, my impression of military life was pure fun. The family got to go and watch daddy march in exciting parades and to visit him at military summer camp where he and other men practiced their skills by playing war games. We also got to ride in big trucks and watch him and mommy get dressed up in glamourous clothes to go to the military balls. My father was always working and busy away at either N.C.O. (Non Commissioned Officer) schools, military summer camp, or weekend drills. Meanwhile, my mother, Neil (my younger brother by two years) and I had our own life. I recall the three of us spending our summers at the beach, having cook-outs, going to drive-in movies, and seeing daddy on special occasions. During the winters my brother and I went to school, ice-skated, slid, and built snow forts.

The years flew by unnoticed and before I knew it, my little brother was graduating from high school. He was a boy in a man's body and he decided to follow in our grandfather's and our father's footsteps. He enlisted in the service. A year later, at age nineteen, he was flown to foreign hostile and deadly territory to perform the unexpected task--his job. He was ordered to defend his country, which was something he never believed he would ever have to do. He had joined the military for the direction it would provide in his life and for the

college fund. He was sent to a never-ending sandbox with sweltering heat during the day and frigid air at night.

Meanwhile, back here in the States, I had been forming my own beliefs and views towards the war. I was in deep pain fearing the loss of my brother, possibly my father, and the thousands of other men and women around the world who were risking it all for the many others they would never meet. I did not, and still do not understand why this country has spent billions of dollars since World War II on military strategies to prevent unwanted deaths if we were just going to rip our men, women, and children away from their families to slay our enemies anyway. Parents have spent painstaking years teaching their children that fighting never solved anything and have instructed us to work out our problems. World peace is what I believed in and still do, which is what I demonstrated for at peace marches.

During the Vietnam war, those who demonstrated in the peace marches were against the cause and against the soldiers who were serving there. Unfortunately, the men who were there did not seem to receive all of the moral support and compassion they so needed. The difference between then and the marches during the Saudi Arabian War is that we marched for the soldiers but we were not supporting the cause.

When my father caught wind of my activities, he was horrified. He claimed I did not respect him, my brother, my grandfather, and the United States. This statement cut deep inside and he was testing me on where my loyalties were. I was torn but unable to shut off the beliefs I had. It was ironic because I knew both my father and I wished that Neil had never had to go to war or that the concept of war was nonexistent, but it was my father's duty to uphold his status in the

military and it was my duty to maintain mine. We came to an agreement. I never spoke about the peace marches I took part in, we went to special church services together, and we prayed for lives to be spared. We came to a common ground that rested within his paternal instincts of fearing for his son's life and I came to understand why he was compelled to honor his career, for he was being counted on to uphold his twenty-three years of loyalty in the service at a time when he was most needed. My father did finally apologize for his painful accusations and explained that he could not be a part of the activities I was taking a part in but was willing to try to see my point of view when he realized that the marches were mainly for the support of the soldiers and their families.

This conflict between my father the soldier, and me, his daughter, in a sense brought us closer. It forced us for the first time to see each other as separate individuals as well as part of a family together. He saw me in a new light: someone like him, who was not afraid to take a stand for what I believed in.