



# THE SCRIBLERIAN

Spring 2005 Edition

A publication sponsored by the English Department and the Braithwaite Writing Center, the Scriblerian is a publication for students by students. Revived last fall after a two-year hiatus, this on-line journal is the result of a competition organized by Writing Center tutors for ENGL 1010 and 2010 students. The Spring Semester contest was planned and supervised by Chair Sara Nelson with the help of Andy Bahlmann, KalieRae Chamberlain, Kellie Jensen, Candice Kuhlmann, and Laura Spencer.

## Contents

Argumentative- English 1010.....	2
1st Place Winner: Jennifer Christiansen, “A Non-Traditional Student” .....	2
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Austin Anderson.....	4
Expressive- English 1010 .....	5
1 <sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Jennifer Marrott, “Salt and Pepper Memories” .....	5
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Casandra Woodward, “Falling Frogs” .....	7
Honorable Mention: William Gordon, “A Gangsta’s Rite of Passage” .....	9
Argumentative- English 2010.....	13
1 <sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Mag Eager, “A Whimsical Look at Stanley Kubrick’s Film <i>Dr. Strangelove</i> ” .....	13
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Jordan Bull, “American Values?” .....	16
Expressive- English 2010 .....	21
1 <sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Rachel J. Carter, “Bonnaroo: Summer of the Dead 2004” .....	21
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Jodi Croft, “Keep Going” .....	25

## Argumentative- English 1010

1st Place Winner: Jennifer Christiansen, "A Non-Traditional Student"

What do you think of when you hear the phrase traditional college student? Do you think of a young high-school graduate ready to make his/her mark on the world? Maybe you think of young passionate love and partying all night? Or do you think more of the devoted student tucked away immersed in his/her studies? However, not all college students fit into these categories. As a non-traditional college student, I find that my priorities often deviate from those of the traditional college student because of my life experiences.

A traditional college student generally has two major priorities, the first of which is academics. Most often a traditional college student is a recent high school graduate and/or between the ages of 18-25. At SUU, 12 credit hours a semester designates a student as full-time. However, many traditional students take up to 20 credits, which can add up to six or seven classes each semester. Indeed, a study load of that magnitude is enough to make anyone's mind blow. That being said, obviously a traditional student's number one priority should be school. Some students may have a part-time job to help with the bills, but the majority of their time is spent going to class, agonizing about class, or studying for class.

The second priority of most college students is the social aspect of the college campus. Many students are single and on the prowl. Not only are they going to class to get a degree, but they are also on the look-out for their next date and maybe even their future soul mate. My brother is a perfect example. He met his wife in a class they had together. They talked a few times in class and that led to a few dates and, eventually, a marriage. Other gregarious students participate in sororities, fraternities, athletics, sport events, dances, and a whole range of university sponsored activities. All in all, the whole social scene is very important to most college students.

In contrast, being a non-traditional student can mean a variety of things. It might mean that students take on-line or continuing education courses and do not actually physically frequent the university campus. Many teachers take on-line courses to update their credentials and never set a foot on the college campus. A non-traditional student may be a part-time student who takes fewer than 12 credit hours per semester. Often, a non-traditional student is simply a student taking courses for fun and not working towards a degree. A colleague of my father-in-law has spent years taking classes he enjoys, but he has never gotten his degree. Generally, non-traditional students are older than the average college student and may be parents who, after spending time raising a family, are returning to school to give it a second try.

I believe that my experience of being a mother of four beautiful children indeed qualifies me as a non-traditional student. Being a mom is a full-time job. When I say full-time, I don't mean 40 hours a week; I mean 24/7. There are mountains of laundry, hungry mouths to feed, and always a trip to the emergency room. I have soccer games, dance lessons, school activities, sleepovers, and play dates, and, what's more, I am responsible for making sure everyone gets there on time and is raring to go. Having a family means putting their needs first. If my son is sick, then I stay home with him. If my daughter has an awards assembly, I am there so she can look across the room and see me in the crowd. Their accomplishments are my accomplishments. I am their security blanket, and I wouldn't trade it for

anything. Being a mom and student can sometimes be very complicated, and I often struggle trying to balance my major responsibility as a mother and my responsibilities as a student.

Having a family is also sometimes difficult on a campus where everyone assumes that getting a degree is the number one priority. Often, other students, as well as professors, have a hard time understanding the specific circumstances that come with being a mom and student. In an education class I was taking a few semesters ago, we had a group project to work on that required us to spend time outside of class. Everyone in the group, including two married individuals, could meet at about any time. They were frustrated when I had to always make sure that I had a babysitter before I could commit to a study time. They just didn't seem to get the fact that I couldn't just up and leave when I wanted and that I had other responsibilities. Another problem I have is my cell phone. I think it is very disrespectful to have your phone on during class, and I don't blame professors for getting frustrated about it. Nevertheless, I need to have my phone on in class. I always turn the ringer to silent, but when I get a call, I have to check it because if it is from my kids, their school, or the babysitter, I have to take it. Most professors usually understand my situation, but some just don't seem to care. I am a serious student, and I don't mean any disrespect, but nonetheless my first commitment is to my family.

Because I have such a commitment to my family and the stress of going to school full-time was just too much, I decided to only attend school part-time. It sometimes feels as if I will never finish school. I am studying to be an elementary teacher, and in the education department, it seems that everyone's so close to doing their student teaching, getting their degree, and receiving their teaching license. In every class I take, the teacher asks us when we will be doing our student teaching and I always tell them, "If I actually take the time to figure it out, I will surely get depressed and drop out." Everyone usually laughs, but sometimes I really feel that way. Going to school only part-time also complicates things because many of the courses are set up to take in a certain order, within a certain time frame. It is distressing to try to figure out exactly what my academic plan is. For now, I guess it is just this: "Someday I will graduate," and anything more definite than that is just not feasible at this point.

Although I only go to school part-time, the time I spend at school is important to me. I am also older and possess a different mentality than many college students. I turned 30 this past year and thought I was going to have a mental breakdown worrying about my birthday. I survived the "Big 3-0" and resolved that being middle-aged isn't as bad as I thought it was going to be. I have found that with age often there comes insight, and my reasoning is often different than that of younger students. I frequently notice in talking to fellow students that they may feel that a class is a waste of time. They don't seem to care if they acquire any knowledge or even if they will perform well in class. Now that I am more mature I despise wasting my time. If I have to take a class, I am determined that I take something useful away from it, and what's more, I always try to do my best.

I know that not all college students are the same. Some are math majors, others English majors, some are there for the athletics, and others aspire to be famous actors, but most college students, when asked to describe themselves, would say, "I am a student." Being a student is their main focus and priority. However, my answer would be very different, for I would say, "I am a mom." My priorities definitely deviate from that of the traditional college student because of my life experiences and because I am primarily a mother. Nonetheless, it seems in this ever-changing world, technology as well as changing life styles may well change what we view as a traditional college student.

2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Austin Anderson  
Withheld by student's request

## Expressive- English 1010

1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Jennifer Marrott, "Salt and Pepper Memories"

In a beat-up cedar chest, I keep items that are significant to me. Many of these items, at first glance, appear ordinary and meaningless, but after further explanation it is easily seen how this collection of trinkets forms a patchwork of my life. One of these objects crosses my mind often. It is a salt and pepper shaker set given to me by my grandmother. It serves as a reminder of the remarkable relationship I have with my grandparents.

The very first job I had was working for my grandma on Saturday mornings. It was a tradition all the granddaughters before me took part in. At five dollars an hour, that was more money than an eleven-year-old could dream of, and so I didn't mind giving up my Saturdays. Plus, there was always a mid-morning run to the gas station for Cokes and lunch at noon. My parents would drop me off at 9 a.m., and I was put to work always cleaning one of two things: the windows or the kitchen cabinets. The windows were a painstaking task as my grandmother insisted on cleaning them in an old fashioned method: vinegar, wipe, water, wipe, towel dry. Also, I was bound to run into a number of spiders along the way.

It was one of my luckier days. Over the years, I had grown to love the kitchen. My grandma is an amazing cook, and the kitchen had been my classroom to learn the art of cookies, brownies, chocolates, and so many other things I crave. In my memory, it is always a sunny room. The sun would pour through the east window and cast rainbows on the floor through the little humming bird prism stuck to the glass.

As I looked up at the heavy oak cabinets, I knew I had a task ahead of me. I knew they would exhaust me, but if my grandma wanted them cleaned, I would do it. Years of use had left their corners chipped, and the creaky brass hinges yelped as I pulled the doors open. The lazy-susan ran deep into the wall so my fingers couldn't reach the back. The cupboards stood as rickety stacked cargo boxes waiting to be burned.

My grandma supplied me with a rag and bucket; I got to work. I sifted through flour barrels, sticky molasses jars, oily cracker boxes, and small bottles of strange spices. I took note of expiration dates and laughed. When I came to Grandma's old cookbooks, I paused. Old paper reminded me of treasure maps, and I couldn't help but investigate. I wasted time flipping through yellow musty smelling books that hadn't been opened for years. My grandma knew them all by heart. I snapped out of my mystified moment and continued on. My efforts felt futile as things that have been dirty for a long time seemed to have become permanently dirty. Still I honored the request and kept digging. Kipper snacks, candies, dusty teacups, and stray recipe cards all littered the counter-top. At last I came to my final cabinet, a tiny seemingly inaccessible square squished between the ceiling and fridge-the final unexplored treasure chest.

I opened the small door, and to my dismay, everything was caked in dust. I started to remove tiny champagne glasses that had been packed tightly inside. The air became thick and I choked as flecks of dust particles danced in the morning sun. As the cabinet emptied, I noticed something hiding in a dark corner. A spark of adventure caught me as I have always had a fascination with strange old things that lurk in forgotten places of the world.

As I pulled it out, it rattled in my hands. It stood on a tarnished base of silver. A small pillar engraved with ivy stretched up with two arms. On each arm, a small deep red glass strawberry hung with a silver leaf top. Upon closer examination, I found the whole thing to be a salt and pepper shaker set. It must have been quite beautiful back in its day. My grandma noticed my fascination with the set as I quickly became more motivated in polishing the base than cleaning her cabinets. She smiled and told me I could have it. That day I made out with much more than twenty dollars and free lunch.

A couple years later it was Christmas Eve and my whole family was gathered back at my grandparents' house. The air was restless as all the grandchildren had only one thing on their minds. The climax of the evening finally came, and it was time to open presents. I sat with anticipation at what I could possibly receive this year. Soon, I was handed a solid cherry wood box, with a note attached to the top that read:

Put these salt and pepper shakers on your kitchen table, use them everyday, and they will not lose their shine. As you hold them let them remind you of how much we love you. You are the spice of our lives, we savor your love, you put pepper into our steps, and a burning desire to see you more often. You are the salt of the earth, and life would have no seasoning without you.  
Love you, Grandma and Grandpa Marrott.

I opened the box and was struck with awe at what I saw. Inside there lay a pair of new silver and gold salt and pepper shakers. They rested in a padding made of green velvet. A strange present, but it meant the world to me.

Now the new box sits in my parent's home in a display case. I'll leave it there until I have a home of my own. The old set I found while cleaning will stay in my box of keepsakes. Although they are not made of gold or silver, this set means the most to me. The time of my life they stand for is priceless, and the dense memory of my grandparents hangs around them.

It's funny how objects can recall such vivid memories and meanings. As I enter friends' homes and see their salt and pepper shakers sitting on their dinner tables, or every time I go out to eat, I can't help but think of the gift I received from my grandparents. Even when I hear the words, "pass the salt and pepper," I am always reminded of my young summer days spent cleaning cupboards with loving grandparents.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Casandra Woodward, "Falling Frogs"

I have received some pretty obscure gifts in my time. The red-fringed night light shaped like a lamp with yellow monkeys on it is hiding in a box. The multi-colored Indian sandals, made so poorly I can't even walk in them, are under my bed. Hanging in the closet, there are knitted, tie-dyed, flared leggings that I would never wear, but don't have the heart to throw away. I have also gotten some amazing and truly wonderful gifts over the years. One particular gift I received from my sister for my nineteenth birthday had a most influential effect on my life. The gift was amazing to me for two reasons. First, it reminded me of the night of falling frogs. Second, it showed sisterly love like no other object could.

It began on a cool spring evening, and I was eight years old. Spring was my favorite time of year with the cozy days wrapping around me like a warm blanket and the soothing nights lulling me to let everything go. It was late and all the work for the day had been done. My family and I were sitting in front of the TV, enjoying Monty Python's Flying Circus. We had the windows and the sliding glass door open to let in the cool breeze. The fantastic smells of wildflowers and new life were in the spring air. A light rain had started to drizzle its way down from the evening sky. It made a wonderful light background noise as we were enjoying the evening.

Suddenly, we realized that the noise coming from outside was no longer a gentle tap of droplets landing on the ground, but a heavier sound, something more solid. We looked out the screen into the dark evening, trying to see what the noise could be. It was dark outside and with the glare from the indoor lights, it was hard to see into the night. My mom got up to turn on the porch light. We immediately gasped in wonder and amazement. The screen door was covered in minuscule frogs the size of silver dollars. Hundreds of them in blues, greens, reds, and other colors clung to the screen, all in fear of falling. The screen looked like a moving, brightly colored patchwork quilt. We all jumped up in amazement and crowded around the door. The frogs were making light chirping noises as if they were saying, "How did we end up here?" As we looked past the quilt of frogs we realized that the whole yard was covered in them. It looked like the ground had turned into a rainbow ocean creating small ripples of waves a long the yard. My brother glanced up and said "Look they're coming from the sky!" We gazed up and realized he was right; it was actually raining frogs.

My siblings and I got this bright idea to try and let one or two in, so we could get a closer look at them. We had decided to gently and slowly crack the screen door and let a few hop in. As we all hovered around the edge of the door my brother cautiously cracked it open. In an instant frogs were hopping all over the living room. The floor was moving with these little slippery multicolored creatures. It looked as though pieces of the quilt were ripping apart and bouncing along the floor. We were scurrying all over the room trying to catch them. If one of us actually managed to catch one, the slick texture of the frog would make it impossible to hold on. My mom got a container with a lid and we were scooping and tossing them into it. Once we caught them, we went to the kitchen window to put them back outside. To our amazement the kitchen screen was covered in frogs. With emotions surging through our bodies, laughing vigorously, we fell onto the floor. The events of the evening overwhelmed us. The night seemed magical beyond all human belief. After a good long hearty laugh, frogs in tow, tears on our faces, we collected ourselves and pulled ourselves from the floor. We ended up letting them loose in the garage, for fear that if we opened any doors or windows, more frogs would come in than we threw out. I

went to sleep that night with the excitement only an eight-year-old can have and dreamed of dancing frogs all evening. My love of frogs started that moment and has continued ever since.

I never found out why it rained frogs, but know that it has happened throughout time. Strong winds pick up frogs, fish, or other small creatures and carry them up to the clouds. The animals stay stuck in the clouds and move with the storm. When the creatures get too heavy for the clouds to hold, they start falling down from the sky. It is a rare and unique occurrence and has a lot of myths and speculation linked to it. A number of people fear falling amphibians, because they think it's a biblical sign that the world is ending. Scientists believe that raining amphibians may be linked to the spreading of plagues. To me it was pure beauty and showed the distinct power of Mother Earth. From that night on I knew that anything was possible.

It was eleven years later when my sister handed me the small box for my birthday. I wondered what could possibly be inside it. When I opened it, I saw the most amazing ring I had ever seen. It was plain silver, no stones or anything flashy about it. The ring was shaped like a frog, not a cute, pretty frog, but just a slender realistic looking frog. It had small bumps all over its body. The eyes were slightly raised and beady, just what a true frog looks like. It immediately reminded me of the frogs that were hopping all over our living room. I fell in love with the look of it and how the legs wrapped around my finger to create the band. I slipped it on, and it fit perfectly on my middle finger. I loved how it looked and knew at that moment I would wear it forever.

My sister saw the ring at a fair and immediately purchased it. This ring symbolized that through all ramblings of childhood my sister actually did pay attention and listen to me. She knew me well enough to pick a ring that wasn't gaudy, but really rather simplistic in style. She also knew its original design and intricate detail would appeal to me.

Now the ring is old and beat-up. Some of the bumps on the back of the frog are worn down and barely noticeable. It is faded, tarnished, and in desperate need of a good polish. The ring is no longer a round shape, but flat on one side from all the years of abuse it has endured from my hands' hard labor. My finger underneath is always dried and cracked from where the ring rubs against my skin. Dried lotion clogs the eyes and gets stuck in the cracks of the legs. In the summer sun I get a perfect shape of the frog on my finger. It is obvious the ring is well worn and loved.

Every now and then someone comments on the uniqueness of the ring. I fill up with pride and tell them my sister gave it to me for my nineteenth birthday. They are either enthralled by it and ask where she bought it and wonder how they might find one, or oddly curious as to why I would wear a frog on my finger. Regardless of their reasoning for drawing attention to the ring, every time someone does, my heart fills with warmth and love. The gift was perfect.

Honorable Mention: William Gordon, "A Gangsta's Rite of Passage"

I grew up in Salt Lake. It doesn't have the reputation of Queens or Compton, but shit goes down in the same way. It's funny how most people think everything's all to the good. They don't see things the way we do. They all go about their days and don't even realize that there's a war goin' on right in their backyards. Off to work in the mornin' and back home at night. Shit, then they act like life is so rough. I know what it's like to put in work too. Gang-bangin' is a full time job. You do what you're told, and you get your stripes. That was my life for ten years.

I want to talk to you about the choices I've made and where they have gotten me. I know what you guys are goin' through, and I know what it's like in this place. I've done my time, Playboys. I got my first charge at the age of ten, and my seventh conviction was a gun crime at the age of twelve. That's what landed me in this same juvenile detention center on those same benches you guys are sittin' on right now. Psychologists, priests, social workers, and all sorts of other so called "professionals" would come tell us how we needed to change and how there is a better way. I consider myself much more qualified, but I'm not here to tell you guys how to live or act. I'll save that bullshit for the birds.

I want to let you guys know that you can make it up out the 'hood. Your paths aren't written in stone. I started at the bottom tryin' to come up, made some choices, and now I have to live with what I've done; however, I don't have to watch my back no more. I don't have to worry about when, or how, I'm gonna' get my next meal. Most importantly, I have my freedom. I decided to quit. It wasn't some outside force pullin' me. It wasn't some "professional" that sold me some magical story and convinced me. It was me. Every one has to make that choice on their own, otherwise it won't last.

I reached into my pockets to make sure I had everything. Money, phone, keys, Chapstick, yup, it was all there. I put my strap in my waist band. I got this sudden rush. Funny what a chunk of steel will do to your ego. My fifteen year old sister had called me, and she asked if I'd come get her. I had to walk down to her best friend's house, so I could walk her home. It was a bad neighborhood not too far from our house. When I say bad, I mean it was full of straight G's from the other side. I tied my flag around my left elbow, and I made sure my other flag was hangin' out of my left pocket. I put my earring in my left ear and tilted my hat slightly to the left. I always made sure the hoodies knew my bang.

I opened my front door and looked around. It was dark. There was no moon out that night, and the breeze gave me chills as it rolled across my neck. I took in a deep breath. It seemed like a calm summer's night, but something didn't feel right. All the same, my fam-bam needed me. I put my left foot out, always how we start, and began to stroll. I played the shadows all the way down to the lower eastside. When you're walkin' through a concrete jungle, every move is a calculated step. Ya'll know if you let up, you get wet-up.

I got to the ol' girl's house and knocked on the door. My sister came out, and we started walkin' home. As we were truckin' up seventh, I heard some bass. I looked over my shoulder and saw the whip a block down.

"Com'on Din, quit fuckin' around," I told her.

She replied as she always does, "Whatever."

The car rolls by all slow like, doin' about fifteen miles per hour. I recognized that 'Lac. I recognized them chrome shoes too. "O s'it Cuz. That's that nigga from the other side Cu'. Here, switch me sides," I whispered. I pulled out my heat. No need to cock it, we always roll wit' one in the chamber. Ol' boy turned right at the next street. I let out a sigh. My pace quickened, and I kept my hand on my heat under the shirt. He saw my flags, I know he did. I kept lookin' over my shoulder as we continued home.

A few blocks up, I was beginning to think we were gonna make it. Before I even finished that thought, I heard the screech of tires behind me. "Run Din run!" I yelled as I took off like my kicks was on fire. I heard her scream, and I jumped behind a car that was parked in a driveway. As I expected, the shots rang out and echoed loud. I could hear the bullets ricocheting as they hit the car I was behind and the house I was crouched up against. My heart was beating fast. As soon as the shots ceased, I grinned. My turn partna. I jumped up and started slappin' flames at 'im.

As he sped off, I stopped shootin'. I laughed out loud and mumbled, "Better luck next time, Cu'." I turned around and my body stopped. There, in the middle of the lawn, lay my sister. I ran over to her and fell to my knees. She was covered in blood, and she wasn't moving. I put one hand under her head and kept the other one on my gun. She looked into my eyes with this distant expression on her face. The air didn't seem so calm anymore.

That night in the hospital I sat with my mom and my brother. I didn't really have any emotions as I sat there and waited for the doctor to come out. My mind was blank. After the cops finished sweatin' me, the doctor came out and told us that she was coo'. She got clapped twice, one in the shoulder and one under her right breast. As soon as the doctor left, my brother said, "Time to have lil meetin' Yungsta."

My brother and I went out to the parkin' lot and jacked a car so we could get home. The ride was startin' to get all cloudy. As we sat there smokin' that dank in silence, I knew what was about to come.

He finally broke the silence, "Time to get your stripes young Cuz." He went on to explain my mission. Gettin' scared wasn't an option. I let the hatred feed my confidence. I paid close attention as he rattled off on what was gonna go down. I was finally gonna rank. No more soldier status.

We went home and loaded up. I grabbed two heatas, the forty cal and the pistol grip shotty. I changed my gear to all black. I ain't gonna lie, this is when I started to get scared. This is when I really started to second guess what I was about to do. It's one thing to buck at someone. It's a whole 'nother thing to run up into someone's crib and execute the muthafucka. That's when I did what any thirteen-year-old would do. I reached out for some advice, some comfort.

My brother was the only one there, so naturally, "Laze, man, you sure about this? I mean, she lived. What's the worry?" I asked without lookin' at him.

"Putchyo fuckin' chin up and get your mind right, young Cuz." He hissed. "This nigga's tryin' to play the fam like a bitch."

"It ain't that, I'm just sayin'."

"Sayin' what?" He replied.

I thought for a second, and then kept my mouth shut. He's right, right? I love my sister, and somebody thought they were just gonna take that from me. Never that. I'm gonna run up into that ol' boy's house, put my heat to his left temple, and push his mind right.

How that night ended doesn't matter. What matters is where I am now. We all know that pressure can be a bitch, and we all know how it feels to go against our heart. I chose a path when I was younger. How much I had to do with the actual choice is still unclear to me. There was cognitive dissonance, and there was also a lot of pressure. My brother's a straight 'hood nigga. He's seven years and one day older than me. My brother first went to prison when he was seventeen. I wanted to be just like him. He had the respect of every gangsta in the Lake. He was a leader. There wasn't a dude in the entire 'hood that could fuck wit' Laze. The writer Nathan McCall and I shared a similar decision: "I decided that this was the kind of respect I wanted to command" (239). I thought if I followed exactly in his footsteps, it would all come together for me too. He got out about a week before this took place. When I was seventeen, I got my third gun charge, and the state tried me as an adult. Finally, I got to be just like my brother.

I went to the county jail and realized how fuckin' lame it was. There were people older than my dad doin' time for all sorts of dumb shit. By the grace of whoever, I didn't go Federal and only did about eleven months. That was the last charge I ever got. I was sick of havin' to watch my back. I was sick of O.G.s tellin' me what to do. I was sick of worryin' about how I was gonna eat. I was sick of it all, really. I decided I needed to educate myself and be done with all the shit that really didn't hold much ground in the real world. I don't know one O.G. over thirty and still slingin'. How was I gonna put my G status on a resume? Tell 'em I'm good with numbers because I used to sell crack? Yeah, right. I knew that in order for me to turn it 'round, I would have to leave the Lake.

I knew I couldn't just run. Huh uh. Penalty for that violation is death, and the 'hood'll find ya. Go up to the General and tell 'im I want out? Fuck, what choice did I have? I had earned my stripes. I put in a gang o' work for the set. He wouldn't think I was turnin' snitch, would he? It was time to grow up. Like journalist Steven Stark says, "While an adolescent often looks at a change in direction and sees deceit, an adult realizes that life is usually more complex than that" (200). Turns out, I fit the latter description.

I'm now twenty-one with over seventy charges. I've been incarcerated for about five years in different group homes, institutions, and lock-ups. Eleven years after my first charge, I'm still on probation with the law on my back. I took it upon myself to make the change. I made it out of the 'hood, and now I'm on a whole new rite of passage. I currently attend Southern Utah University. Coming down to college wasn't easy. I didn't know anyone, I was overwhelmed by the thought of failure, and I felt like I was some sort of outsider that didn't deserve the opportunity. Gail Sheehy spoke to me when she wrote:

With each passage from one stage of human growth to the next we, too, must shed a protective structure. We are left exposed and vulnerable-but also yeasty and embryonic again, capable of stretching in ways we hadn't known before. These sheddings may take several years or more. Coming out of each passage, though, we enter a longer and more stable period in which we can expect relative tranquility and a sense of equilibrium regained. (206)

I took a heavy load in school this semester, seventeen credit hours, and I have straight A's. I have a wonderful girlfriend, a car, my own place, and a bullet bike (bought with clean money). My mother's so proud she cries when she talks about it. The police don't bother me any more. Life's good.

As for my brother, he's still in prison. He has done about 10 years total, 12 by the time he gets out in 2006. He doesn't have a girlfriend, no car, he lives in a cell, and the only bike he rides is an exercise bike in the yard (bought by the state). I came to the realization that "dreams are not enough" (Tweedie 282). You decide.

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## Argumentative- English 2010

1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Mag Eager, "A Whimsical Look at Stanley Kubrick's Film *Dr. Strangelove*"

"I can no longer sit back and allow communist infiltration, communist indoctrination, communist subversion and the international communist conspiracy to sap and impurify all of our precious bodily fluids." Those are the words spoken by General Ripper to Group Leader Mandrake in the seventh scene of *Dr. Strangelove*. Until that line of the film, I had no idea it was a comedy. That thread of nonsense is woven through the rest of the film in such a masterfully absurd way that someone would have to be a true conspiracy theorist to miss the humor in it. Fortunately, we live in a world that is filled with real life conspiracy theorists as well as mad scientists, paranoid political leaders, war hungry military leaders, etc... What would we have to laugh at if we didn't have them? Thank goodness there are filmmakers like Stanley Kubrick, who can pull back the façade and see the world for what it really is. *Dr. Strangelove* is an excellent film with a poignant message about the Cold War because it approaches the subject of catastrophic calamity in a ridiculous way and it provides a great example comedic hyperbole through wonderful execution of the script.

Stanley Kubrick's whimsical look into the realities of nuclear war exemplifies, better than any other film, the absurdity of the arms race. This absurdity is demonstrated in the film by the ineptness with which the political and military leaders handle the problem that they themselves created. It also makes light of the Cold War by characterizing them through innuendos alluding to the inappropriate personal lives they lead as military and political leaders. The perfect example of this from the film comes in a scene where the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff are gathered together in the war room of the Pentagon discussing the imminent bombardment of the Soviet Union. General Turgidson is explaining to the President why the order was issued to bomb the Soviet Union without the President's knowledge and why the planes could not abort their mission. In the middle of their conversation, General Turgidson receives a call from his secretary/girlfriend who wants to discuss their relationship. First of all there's the irony that the one person expected to know what's going on, the President, has no idea what has happened. Then the audience finds out that he has no power to stop it. That's funny in itself, but what makes it even more funny is General Turgidson's demeanor through the whole scene. His pouting chuckles, the twinkle in his eye, and his condescending voice towards the President all make it seem like General Turgidson has no grasp of the gravity of the situation. The scene is done in such a clever way, too, that it's almost convincing that it could actually happen. There's also General Turgidson's humdrum, matter-of-fact way of presenting the information as though he's not even remotely alarmed. This presentation is coupled with his insistence that we shouldn't judge General Ripper "until all the facts are in." Then just when the audience thinks General Turgidson's cool indifference to the situation can't possibly be characterized anymore, he gets a call from his love interest. They're in the War Room after all, but during the whole telephone conversation he refers to himself as "Bucky," and when he's done with the call he just sits there with a vacant expression on his face as though he's hoping no one noticed what was going on. The sum of the whole scene and its culminating exaggeration is just hilarious. It truly demonstrates how absurd the arms race was.

Another way *Dr. Strangelove* satirizes the Cold War is through the use of black humor to downplay the severity of catastrophic civilian casualty. There's probably not a better film out there when it comes to using black humor to sarcastically demonstrate the gravity and morbidity of nuclear holocaust. The best

example of this black humor in the film is General Turgidson's "unofficial study" into the possibility of nuclear war. Here the General refers to civilian casualties in the millions as "modest and acceptable." What's funny about that is that the General shares his figures not only without any reservation, but with a shaking excitement that is alarming. Just the fact that it's an "unofficial study" is funny, as though the war is the General's own personal project. The black humor is presented with lines such as "ten to twenty million (casualties) tops" and "I'm not saying we won't get our hair mussed." The study seems to lack any kind of realistic reaction to the severity of such staggering stats. There's a feeling almost as though the audience member is in a football huddle as Turgidson looks side to side to make sure everyone got the play called and winks at the President. Also, the way the General keeps referring to the Russians as "Ruskies" really makes the audience feel as though he's just playing a game with the competition's mascot on the sideline. I half expected him to break into a chorus of "rah-rah, sis-boom-bah, goooo AMERICA!" The way this scene satirizes the Cold War as some kind of trivial game is outstanding use of black humor.

As has already been demonstrated briefly, what really makes this film funny is the comedic hyperbole in the speeches and reactions of the military leaders. Here the execution of the script is phenomenal. The dramatic flare with which the lines are read is hysterically funny. This is all magnified by incredible cinematography. A great example of comedic hyperbole from the film is the scene where General Ripper is leaning back in his chair chewing on a stogie talking to Group Leader Mandrake and explaining to him why he ordered an attack on the Soviet Union. The harsh lighting in this scene and the angle that General Ripper is shown at make his speech to Mandrake seem almost inspiring. Then at the very end when the audience is getting ready for the General to ram the point home, he says "bodily fluids" and all the dramatic tension is released like the film's a whoopee cushion. It's just pure nonsense, but it's sustained through the whole film using such powerful hyperbole that the psychotic nature of General Ripper is really believable.

Another effective example of comedic hyperbole in the film is General Turgidson's reaction to the President's invitation of the Russian ambassador to the War Room. Here we see the film's best example of the kind of paranoia that really did exist during the Cold War. It is so overemphasized and George C. Scott does such a wonderful job hamming up the role with such expression that it would make anyone ashamed to be a conspiracy theorist, and maybe even a little uncomfortable if they were just a gung ho military man. In the scene General Turgidson is shown with his documents clutched tightly in his hands, he's pointing at the "big board," his eyes are wide open in disbelief, and his jaw keeps dropping in between the incoherent stammering that is coming out of his mouth. To me this is the funniest scene in the whole movie. By now General Turgidson's character is well-developed, and to see him throwing a frantic fit about the Russian ambassador is on the verge of slapstick. In fact, it soon turns out that way as the ambassador enters the room and the next thing the audience knows General Turgidson is rolling around on the ground with the ambassador claiming that he has got a camera taking pictures of the big board. Then, in the middle of the slapstick, the President in his serious tone says "Gentlemen, you can't fight in here: this is the War Room." This is a great example of verbal irony and is the perfect kind of one-liner to accompany slapstick. It also has a great message about the nonsensical thinking that was going on during the Cold War. Through the rest of the scene General Turgidson is seen jumping and rolling around in frantic excitement. Here I think Kubrick is trying to warn us against the aggressive nature that military leaders absorb through their training by portraying them in such a boisterous way. This is done very effectively by the end of the film as Kubrick has painted a picture of two generals, one

characterized as a psychotic, and the other one characterized as a warmonger. It's done so skillfully that you can see glimpses of General Ripper and General Turgidson in real life.

In the end what really makes this film funny and the execution of the various techniques of satire successful is the fact that there really was a feeling of paranoia about the communists in America during the Cold War. People really were building bomb shelters in the hope that they could outlast nuclear fallout. There really were mad scientists like Dr. Strangelove building weapons for the government. And, as the film shows, this paranoia really was fueled by political leaders like McCarthy. The film is funny because it hits so close to home, but it's also meaningful for this same reason. Dr. Strangelove provides a way to step back and look at ourselves and realize how silly we were.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Jordan Bull, "American Values?"

"We confide in our strength, without boasting of it; we respect that of others, without fearing it" –  
Thomas Jefferson

Evidently, we are a nation besieged. The word "terror" is becoming a byline prerequisite in newspapers and magazines. In the land of the free, when things are not going our way, we become a nation of "Little Red Hens." "Not I," said the Conservatives. "Not I," said the Liberals. "Not I," said everyone in between. It becomes not a question of who will fix, but who is to blame. Discover the culprit, make him culpable, and somehow that will clean up the mess. Pointing the finger occupies the hands and keeps them from working, rebuilding, or finding a solution. Samuel Huntington, Victor Hanson, and Edward Abbey, like latter-day Redcoats, have been to see Macbeth's weird sisters and foreseen their downfall, a second American revolution. They are minutemen sounding the call, for America's sake, they claim, before it is too late. They look ahead and see a proverbial toppling of their literal ivory tower. Greed is not a popular excuse, and elitism will not win you friends; thus the finger is pointed at the encroaching "other." Huntington, Hanson, and Abbey, like harbingers of doom or the horsemen of the apocalypse, add a new threat to keep Americans up at night. According to them, the new threat is not bombs but bodies. The invading Hispanic immigrants are the reason for the unraveling of America's "creed" and the Anglo-Protestant values upon which this nation was built. Citing lack of assimilation and the discordant values of the Hispanic Culture, they foretell a bifurcation that will assuredly lead to the end of the America's golden tabula rosa.

However, the values of the Hispanic culture not only have a fraternal twin in American values, but also the divergence may be just what this nation needs.

### *American Values vs. Hispanic Values?*

Samuel Huntington, the well-known Harvard scholar, identifies what he perceives as the threat in his opening paragraph of "The Hispanic Challenge": "The persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages" (1). I wonder if we, as Americans and individuals, were ever one, and if now divided, if only into two? Will it be Caucasian against Latino, and will all other minorities have to pick a side? Thomas Jefferson, one of the original "Anglo-Protestant Americans," also saw a division:

Men by their constitutions are naturally divided into two parties:

1. Those that fear and distrust the people, and wish to draw all powers from them into the hands of the higher classes.
2. Those that identify themselves with the people, have confidence in them cherish and consider them as the most honest. (345)

Huntington's own words indicate that he would be of the former opinion. He claims these new immigrants are "rejecting the Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream" and that the United States is ignoring this at "its peril" (1). If the fear is a corruption of American values, let us examine the values at stake. What are the values of America? So what are the endangered American values? Jefferson identified them as the "inalienable rights" of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The word "inalienable" becomes a pun as many Hispanic immigrants enter this country

seeking those very things. Furthermore, Huntington identifies the American “creed” in terms of these keys elements: the English language, Christianity and a religious commitment, English concepts of the rule of law, Protestant values of individualism, and a Protestant work ethic (1).

According to the Educational Resources Information Center, and a study done on Hispanic American Students and Learning Style:

Hispanic-Americans are united by customs, language, religion and values. One characteristic that is of paramount importance in most Hispanic cultures is family commitment . . . Spirituality, the dignity of the individual, and respect for authority are valued throughout Hispanic culture.  
(Baron)

Again, it appears less like a tug of war and more like a two-legged race. A leg from each side tied to each other moving towards the same end.

### *English Language and Assimilation*

Huntington has identified the English language as a key element of American values. Leaving your identity behind in the Motherland has never been a prerequisite for entering America. Were it so, our forbearers would never have come. There is little room in Huntington’s America for bilingualism. What he sees as a lack of assimilation or a “rejection” is as dangerous to him as if the immigrants were refusing to be vaccinated and purposely contaminating the nation. Huntington is worried that “massive Hispanic immigration” will result in the whole nation becoming “bilingual and bicultural” (8). Again, where is the grave danger here? Carlos Fuentes, a Mexican novelist and critic, answers with the observation that “to speak a second or third or fourth language is a sign of culture throughout the world” (Fuentes 6). Some may argue successfully, notwithstanding Huntington, that Canada with its French Quebec has not degenerated due to its inclusion of a second language, so why are we to assume that a second language in America would lead to an extinction of the first? Juleyka Lantigua is the managing editor of Urban Latino Magazine in New York. The bi-monthly magazine targets young, English-speaking Hispanics who have not relinquished their cultural roots. Lantigua notes, “We live in English, but we enjoy our lives in Spanish. I come to work every day, and I speak in English to my fellow Latinos, but I think when we each go home, we speak to our parents and to our, you know, extended families in Spanish” (2).

According to the Hispanic Ministry, Hispanics consider language as the most important element to be preserved. Many Hispanics are fearful that their children will forget their native language (HMC 3). Huntington seems to feel similarly about his own language. If there are two predominant languages, and neither group wants to part with a language invariably tied to their cultural identity, is not the American thing to do, to be to make room? Would not that even be the Christian thing as well? Huntington retorts, “There is no Americano dream. There is only the American dream created by an Anglo-Protestant society. Mexican Americans will share in that dream and in that society only if they dream in English” (12). Does Huntington have a hierarchy for accents as well? What did the first Anglo Protestants sound like when they came here? So if your dialect retains some of the crisp British, are you more an American than someone from the South, or what of the Eastern States where so much of our nation was shaped?

What does Huntington fear? Does he lack the aptitude for efficient language acquisition? Is he truly concerned about the disruption in educational curriculum and the confusion over highway road signs that may occur were America to become a bilingual nation?

Huntington answers, "They could also eventually undertake to do what no previous immigrant group could have dreamed of doing: challenge the existing cultural systems" (8). Hispanic Immigrants could challenge the existing system. Here again we have the element of fear. Perhaps Huntington is worried about becoming a minority, and he does not want his system challenged. It is the same system he credits our white Anglo progenitors with creating and perfecting.

The reality is that these people are simply trying to be themselves, to cling to their cultural identity. Huntington seems to take this personally. He argues, "If they choose they can preserve their distinctive culture indefinitely" (8). The Hispanic immigrants could enjoy the opportunity of being both Hispanic and American. They could "preserve" their culture "indefinitely," unlike the indigenous tribes that are now extinct or the Navajo language that is slowly dying with the elders. Had patriots been as zealous as Huntington in the push for assimilation, America would not have had the upper hand by employing the "code talkers" during World War II.

To his fears concerning a bilingual nation, Huntington adds concerns about assimilation. He claims, "Many Mexican immigrants and their offspring simply do not appear to identify primarily with the United States" (8). It is the "they don't really fit in here anyway" argument that follows such adages as, "it's for your own good" or, "this will hurt me more than it hurts you." One invariably wonders; how is it that they "appear not to identify?" What does identifying dress like, talk like, act like? Instead of the nameless voiceless "many," Jeff Valdez, who is a television producer for Nickelodeon, offers his perspective: "The media, the industry, always go, 'Oh well, you're Latino. You do things differently.' No, I don't ride a Latino car, I don't use Latino pencils, and I don't have a Latino shirt on. You know, I'm an American like anybody else" (Valdez 1). Lantigua is another name and voice that refutes the assumption that Hispanic immigrants do not want to assimilate. He writes, "I think we definitely want to assimilate. I just think that we're not willing to give up everything the way that, you know, other immigrants had to" (Lehrer 6).

Considering assimilation and a uniform nation, Thomas Jefferson wondered:

Is uniformity attainable? Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half the world fools, and the other half hypocrites (Jefferson 344).

Isn't it a little late for "the city on the hill" to institute a secret handshake and a cultural dress code? American pride, being based in the richness and variety of its original "melting pot," it seems, would lose by eradicating diversity.

*"Little use for education"* (Huntington 11)

Huntington, Sosa, and Abbey have all claimed that Hispanic Immigrants do not set education as a priority. But according to the Hispanic Ministry:

Education is a priority on the agenda for Hispanics. Educational opportunities are one reason Hispanics come to the United States. Many parents do not have a good education. Realizing that education can lead them out of poverty and enhance their family's earning power; they are willing to sacrifice to give their children a good education (HMC 5).

These values would appear to fall in line with the American tradition except perhaps for the word "sacrifice." America esteems education ideologically, but when it comes to the allotment of funds, some lawmakers are hesitant to "sacrifice." In this light, the verdict of "ignorant" does not coincide. Hispanic cultural values seem to align with pilgrim and Puritan purposes. Huntington employs statistics to support his claim, showing the number of high school graduates to be below the average. However, just because something is not achieved does not mean it isn't necessarily valued. There are children who go hungry every night, but it is not because they do not value food.

### *Poverty as a Virtue*

It seems a little Marie Antoinette-ish to assume that people are poor because they embrace it as a virtue. It is as though the only thing standing between poverty and prosperity is ideology. Sosa claims that Hispanics embrace "poverty as a virtue." We have but to hold up his opinion to the millions of Hispanic immigrants that risk their lives to come across the border in the hopes of a better life, a better life that can be earned and purchased. According to the Hispanic Ministry, "The need and desire for basic items, as well as luxuries, bring many Hispanics to the United States. Here they can earn better salaries and can afford many typical American possessions. They work, save, and sacrifice to purchase homes, cars, and other items familiar to the American lifestyle" (HMC 5). This is a point conceded by many sides in this issue. Why is it that these people risk time and time again, crawling through sewage tunnels, walking through the desert and crossing oceans on makeshift boats? Does it follow that a people who were committed to a life of poverty would work harder than many American teens in pursuit of something better?

### *Hispanic culture*

Individualism, religious commitment, a hard work ethic- these values are not disparate, but coincide precisely with what Huntington claims are key elements in America's creed. It is difficult to see how a people espousing these values could challenge the fabric of American culture, much less unravel it.

There are Hispanic values that are unique from the Anglo-Protestant canon. For instance, the Hispanic attitude toward time called the "manana syndrome," seen in a negative light by Sosa and Huntington, may be just what this nation needs.

An individual's relationship to time is offered as a value that differs some in American and Hispanic minds. The Hispanic Ministry offers the attitude toward time as an example:

Time is life. Many Hispanics find it difficult to adjust to the American-scheduled life. A man's life is not crowded with a hundred-and-one thing to do. The Hispanic nature is not to follow the clock. To the Anglo 'time is money' and the clock 'runs,' but to the Hispanic 'time is life' and the clock 'walks.' (UMC)

In a nation where our meals consist of "fast food" and we look to self-help books and diet fads to give us identity and meaning, would it not benefit us all to take some time?

*The State of America/The American dream*

And what of the America Huntington claims these immigrants threaten? Are we a perfect nation? Abbey recognizes the problems in American society when he writes, "The United States remains burdened with mass unemployment, permanent poverty, an overloaded welfare system, violent crime, and clogged courts . . ." (42). There are problems that exist in this great nation, but they did not just arrive with the immigrants.

Abbey claims, "These uninvited bring with them an alien mode of life which let us be honest about this, is not appealing to the Americans" (43). This American does not wish Abbey to be her mouthpiece. Neither is it evident by examining American and Hispanic values how "alien" or "undesirable" inclusion of this culture would be. The Hispanic values of religion, education, and family as top priorities as well as a willingness to work hard and the ability to celebrate, something many Americans have forgotten, do not foreshadow America's demise.

Perhaps then it is time for something different. Jefferson himself admitted that it was necessary for our nation to undergo rebellions and revolutions when he wrote, "I hold it, that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms to the physical" (343). This does not have to mean civil war or genocide. Surely in this civilized age the world superpower can find a way to include the most beautiful parts of Hispanic culture and better itself.

There are indeed problems besetting this great nation, but they were not brought across the border, they are not the sole invention of one ethnic group, and neither will they vanish by extradition or exclusion. Perhaps it is time for America to take responsibility for what we, including the best Anglo-Protestants among us, have done to ourselves. Perhaps it is time to add a language, and to add to our values, in our pursuit of happiness. Perhaps it is time for America to do what it was christened to do: evolve, expand, and dare we say, improve?

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## Expressive- English 2010

1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner: Rachel J. Carter, "Bonnaroo: Summer of the Dead 2004"

*Then take me disappearin' through the smoke rings of my mind  
Down the foggy ruins of time, far past the frozen leaves  
The haunted, frightened trees, out to the windy beach  
Far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow  
Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky with one hand waving free  
Silhouetted by the sea, circled by the circus sands  
With all memory and fate driven deep beneath the waves  
Let me forget about today until tomorrow  
"Tambourine Man"  
Bob Dylan Lyrics 1962-2001  
Bob Dylan*

"Here is my dilemma-Primus and Ween in the same time slot, man. Now, that is one righteous dilemma," slurred a middle-aged man with "LIBERTY" tattooed across his bare protruding belly into my open car window. He is wandering barefoot along the 10-mile standstill of cars snaking through the Tennessee swampland trying to sell his "e-pills"; he is also open to trade-ins. He tells us he traded seven "e-pills" for a \$200 Bonnaroo admittance bracelet at the local Wal-Mart. He is looking for hash, pharmaceuticals, and headies in exchange for his remaining "e-pill" stash. As he pulls his ratty deadlock head from my car window he gets distracted by the stars and he starts spinning and yelling for everyone to get out and "check out the cosmos." Crazy hippies start pouring out of cars and dancing in the middle of the street. My friend, Luke, turns up Jimi Hendrix on the radio and, similar to Richard Grant's observation in his book *American Nomads*, "the girls make a lot of sinuous, serpentine hand and arm movements, the kind that leave cool tracer lines when you're on acid, and the boys do a lot of head-bobbing and elbow-wagging, with occasional hopping twirls and tai chi moves" (218). Bonnaroo: Summer of the Dead 2004 has begun.

Ninety thousand hippies warm the head-drenched fields of Manchester, Tennessee, for Bonnaroo, a Bluegrass festival, for four days every June. People pack into Volkswagen buses with Grateful Dead banners waving, spray painted beater cars with teepees strapped to the roof and, in our case, an overcrowded Kia Optima from a car rental business in Georgia to spend the week camping and going to "sweet" shows.

My traveling companions were my three best friends from home, Luke, Gundy, and Chris. Luke is twenty-three, hilarious, and sweet. I had been his closest female friend for years, until he met Shelley, his then-girlfriend, now his wife. Gundy, my best friend, is the only person who never expects apologies or excuses and who has seen every horrible aspect of my personality and loves me despite. It was Gundy's charm alone that convinced my parents to let their oldest child travel across the country with three guys to a drugged-out hippie fest. Chris is my age and my love. I have always been drawn to his beautiful genius and his troubled, brooding tendencies. We all knew that Bonnaroo would be one of our last opportunities to be together, as Chris and I were going to college in the fall and Gundy was

preparing to serve an LDS mission. As I look back on this experience, I realize that I was torn between my fear of letting go and my need for constant change. I was terrified that I would never find the loyalty and love I had with these wonderful people, but I knew that it was time to go out on my own and find my identity.

On that burning July morning, I found myself transported into a world of blatant drug use, wild music, and “freedom” that was completely foreign to my sheltered LDS existence. As I walked from booth to booth in the open market, I was puzzled by the hundreds of colored glass “straws” that littered every table. When I attempted to ask the hippie peddler what they were, Gundy clapped his hand over my mouth, pulled me aside, and laughingly explained to me that they were pipes used for smoking marijuana. I was so enthralled with watching people smoke marijuana for the first time that a strung-out twenty year-old man at the Damien Rice concert asked why I kept staring at him. I told him I’d never known anyone who did drugs; he told me he didn’t know anyone who didn’t.

The shows were breathtaking, thousands of people twirling and rocking, laughing and hugging, everyone sharing and loving each other and the music experience. I was surrounded by people who had dreadlocks in their nose hair and kept trying to force marijuana pipes into my mouth. Eddie Blue, an avid Stringcheese Incident fan asked me several times if I had tried the “silver-laced chocolate covered mushrooms” he had created in Hawaii only weeks before. He assured me that it would be the purest high that I’d ever experience, all the while dancing crazily and occasionally rolling on the grass in hysterical laughter. I couldn’t help but smile as I watched a nude older couple doing sun salutations in the midst of thousands of people and an older man wandering shamelessly while the back flap of his tie-dyed long johns waved in the breeze.

Halfway through the Stringcheese concert, I quit watching others and allowed the rich droopy smells, psychedelic music, and bright colors swirl around me like the patchwork skirt of a beautiful girl gently dancing bare-breasted in the small opening in front of me. She embodied all glory and perfection. I watched her, mesmerized by her freedom, and I wondered for a brief moment what it would be to feel like her and the thousands of others rising and falling with the same glazed, distant look in their eyes. It was similar to Grant’s experience at Rainbow Gathering:

I feel a stab of jealousy for Medicine Wing and Hawk Feather. I gave up LSD many years ago, but I know how this must sound to them, and how it feels when a group of dancing, tripping people peak on the music at the same time. I can see the mind-blown, bliss-drenched expressions on their faces. (218)

I couldn’t help but wonder what it would be like to experience that freedom of mind. I knew that I would never fully understand these beautiful, magical people, their music, or their way of life.

The next morning I awoke from a heavy sleep to the sound of light rain on our tent and voices shouting for more shampoo. The men camping next to us had constructed a giant slip-n-slide from tarps and using rain as their water source and shampoo to make it slimy. It was hilarious watching old men and women playing like children, giggling and screaming, as they hurled their bodies down the tarps. I watched and participated in the festivities until it was time for the Bob Dylan concert. It was raining pretty steadily, but it was a relief from the woolen blanket air that had smothered us days prior.

As I stood listening to Bob Dylan sing in the pouring rain, I was overcome with sadness. I was staring at this literary god, listening to his voice that was never good to begin with, singing lyrics that will never be as good as they were, and for the first time realizing mortality. I felt all alone in a sea of thousands. I was noticing for the first time the children all around. I choked on hot anger as I watched a mother breast-feeding her infant in the shade of a giant tree while trying desperately to sell acid. I couldn't understand why anyone would expose their children to this life of filth, cheap drugs, and strangers. I glanced around at the old Deadheads. I noticed the emptiness and the far-off look in their eyes as they seeped into the mud infested with cigarette butts. I noticed their sad, old bodies, but above all I noticed they were alone. As I look back, the words of Bobby McGregor from the Robert James Waller novel, *Border Music*, seem to ring true: "Older and alone, part of some other world that was dying and wouldn't come again. Good ol' boys, listening to the fading sound of distant trains, like passengers left at the station" (236). These lonely souls had spent their entire lives traveling from concert to concert searching for that last perfect show, only to become lost in their mortal shell.

I was up to my knees in mud and my rain-drenched dress was clinging to my shivering body. I was tired and freezing. I was sick of loud, crazy music and people passing out in my lap. I was sick of smelling marijuana and cigarettes in my hair. I was sick of sleeping in a tent with guys who kept asking to touch my bra and having to wake them every time I needed to pee. I was sick of listening to Luke complain to Shelley every night about how much he missed her. I was sick of children being born to dirty mothers on bad acid trips, and I was sick of Bonnaroo. I didn't care that I was leaving before the Grateful Dead show, because what is Grateful Dead without Jerry Garcia anyway?

We headed back to camp only to find our sleeping bags and clothes floating in the bottom of our tent. As I changed into my soaking wet pajamas in ankle-deep water, I could feel my face reddening in frustration. I was absolutely miserable and I wanted to go home. I pouted as I walked back to our car with every intention of ignoring my friends and going right to sleep. When I reached our small Kia Optima, I found Luke, Gundy, and Chris making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and laughing about how horrible Bonnaroo had turned out.

I remember looking at their smiling faces knowing that everything was perfect for the last time. We all knew that Luke loved Shelley and would marry her eventually, that Gundy would be leaving for Mexico in a few months for two years, and that Chris would be going to Utah State—400 miles away from Southern Utah University where I would be attending in the fall. There was finality in that night, I could sense the change and understood that nothing would be the same again. I was no longer mad or sick of Bonnaroo. I realized that I was able to spend time with people I love that are now gone. I was exposed to a life so different from my own that had opened my mind to many different ways of thinking. I experienced something in that place that changed how I viewed the outside world and my place within it.

Nothing was ever the same after that mud-filled, stuffy night in the backwoods of Tennessee. As I unpacked pictures of my friends, all alone in my apartment here in Cedar City, I thought back to Bonnaroo, and I sympathized with Joyce Johnson in *Door Wide Open* when she writes to Jack Kerouac, "It's always hard for me to get used to people suddenly being absent. There's something sad and disconcerting about the eternal stability of furniture and objects when someone's gone" (162). I often find myself staring at the pictures of my friends that cover the walls of a room they will never see and longing for those comfortable nights of endless laughter. I am now surrounded by a bevy of people who

don't need my friendship, and the loneliness is great. And yet, in my struggle of starting over, I realize that the perfect moments experienced at Bonnaroo with those dearest to me can be found even in this sleepy windy city with people I've met and come to love. I am hopeful that if I continue to love, I will grow and eventually find what I am looking for here.

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2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner: Jodi Croft, "Keep Going"

Life is a priceless privilege. Each breath inhaled provides another precious and invaluable moment. Every gasp for air holds the uncertain fate of being the last. Life's continuance relies not only in the air we breathe, but also in the forces creating our world. The crumbling and serrated pillars of sandstone sculpting Zion Canyon's Narrows stand testifying that awesome powers drive nature. Sometimes nature's power molds exquisite landscapes, while other times her strength destroys human life. Even among the beauties of Zion Canyon, I fear the forces that shake and mold the earth. One pull or tug of her crust can potentially wipe out hundreds of thousands of people. Even the combining forces of all human nature hold no great significance against the unconquerable forces within the earth. However, amid the hopeless moments of natural disasters, communities of people can conjoin to create the forces that support and aid the weary through the world's uncertainties.

How do we choose to spend every breath of air that is granted to us? Today, I spend my invaluable moments hiking deep within the Narrows Canyon's sacred magnificence. Beginning our descent at Chamberlain's Ranch, nine frigid hikers set out with sunrise's bitter chill. Leaves whisper overhead as we silently trudge toward the canyon's mouth. I liven my pace, pushing my way to the head of the group, determined to finish quickly. As I march alone, I laugh to myself; perhaps, it is we, the American people, who inhale every breath ungratefully. So many of us spend each moment marching along as self-centered individuals cursing the air we breathe. Disease infests countries and starvation murders thousands, yet we agonize over minor headaches and complain about eating our vegetables.

"Slow down, honey," shouts my mom from behind.

An obedient rock catches me off-guard and I stumble to the ground. Unsympathetic chuckles roar from my group as I am left to peel myself off the pebble-scaled path. A few individuals from my group pass me as I limp discouragingly down the path. I understand that, although my group and I will share a similar experience, we are left alone to make the descent. If you are unable to hike the canyon, don't make the attempt; no one is willing to carry you down.

My little sister's image rips into my mind, tears flooding her face as my dad tells her, "I'm sorry, but you just can't come. Maybe next year you can make the hike."

An alarming squawk echoes across the canyon as a soaring peregrine falcon grabs back my attention. Separate and distinct colors mount the canyon's slabs of sandstone. Bluish-ash and tawny-copper go nearly unnoticed as lush billows of green protrude from the stone's crevices. Too bad my little sister isn't here to share this splendid experience.

The canyon ahead begins to narrow like so many that narrow their minds to the value of life. I notice the stream has quickened her pace to an impassioned roar. My heart races in anticipation, as I curiously wonder what I cannot predict. What adventures will lie around the next bend? My shadow grows heavy as the canyon darkens. Fear controls my every move as I realize the canyon's dangerous possibilities. However, I can't turn back now; I must keep going. I have no choice but to face whatever nature thrusts upon me within the deep caverns of the Earth.

Slipping on slick and shifting rocks resting on the stream's floor, I am suddenly flung forward plunging into the water. Nearly consumed by the surging current, I horrifyingly peer into the channel's narrowing

throat. Exalted walls of stone seem to surge together, colliding as if to swallow me up. The canyon yanks at my fate as I kneel, desperately pleading to be home again. Instantly, my emotions carry me to the moments when nature's tsunami erupted the Indian Ocean drowning hundreds of thousands of people. Imagining the scene, I hear the screaming as they run from the coast after a sudden tremor in the earth. Monstrous tidal waves crash intensely against the port as sheer terror consumes the victims. The frightened voice of one young girl shatters my thoughts: "It was as if the sea was swallowing the land from every direction." I hear the wailing mothers as gruesome waves snatch children from their arms and toss them off to sea. Cities are flooded with death as the deadly tempests blast lifeless bodies into bushes and trees. Eventually, the waves die down and the survivors timidly peer out to assess the magnitude of destruction while they solemnly hunt for their relatives.

My focus brings me back to the present as I still sit drenched and shivering on the pebbled river bottom. Groaning with pain, while stiffly emerging from the water, I miserably discover fresh punctured skin mounting my arms and legs.

"Why me? What did I do to agitate this river?" I ask myself. "My only purpose was to enjoy a peaceful hike down the Narrows; now, I may not be physically able to reach the end." My group lies out of sight as I am left to hobble alone. "Why haven't they come back to help me?" I wonder. If only they understood how much pain burns within my limbs. Forced to press on to find help, my weariness is taken away in my own imagination.

I begin to ponder how the people of southeastern Asia survived their first days after the tsunami. Banda Aceh's famous reporter "cried her heart out" when she saw dead bodies and mangled debris scattered throughout the capital of Aceh. Another Indonesian told reporters, "People who are hungry tried to break in one grocery store only to find food covered in mud and water and bodies of people who couldn't escape at the time the tsunami hit." The survivors do what they are forced to do—keep going. Giving up only leads to death. Eventually, relief sneaks into a few cities; although, the aid is all but adequate. However, I suspect that even news of relief supplied the victims with ample hope to hang on to life a few days longer.

Just then, a sliver of light penetrates through the canyon's throat. I hear the roar of Duck Creek blasting into Virgin River and cascading downstream. With a new ray of hope, I quicken my pace until I step into the canyon's wide-open mouth. Scanning across the opening, I discover my concerned group waiting anxiously. Relieving my pains as best they can, my companions bandage my wounds and feed me lunch. After sufficient rest, we scurry off downstream to again find the canyon sealing herself up. However, our worries are somewhat alleviated as we discover that the canyon is less narrow than the earlier portion. As we slide over a slippery bed of slimy, smooth rocks, members of my crew begin to compassionately inquire about my injuries. After reaching the springs, our guide reluctantly informs us that our journey is only halfway over.

Desperate to break the monotony of the continuous canyon path, my mind again slips back to the hardships in southeastern Asia. The persistent troubles of the survivors escalated when fresh water supplies diminished and they realized the death and destruction had not yet ceased. Salt water, toxic waste, and asbestos contaminated their way of life. It became a race against time as hundreds of thousands of survivors now faced starvation, disease, and exposure. Over one billion dollars worth of aid swamps into southeastern Asia to help initiate the relief process. Unfortunately, destroyed road links and disorganization do not allow the aid to be of much use. Monsoon rains and flash floods impose

increased mayhem on Sri Lankan victims, as the outbreak of disease becomes a severe possibility. However, an even more painful scenario plays out before me as I envision childless mothers desperately fighting for an orphaned child. The image of nine women flocking and pleading for a rescued infant floods into my mind. The heart-wrenching screams from these mothers echo inside my head: one threatening to kill the doctor, while another promises to commit suicide if not given the child.

Pulling my attention, with a “whoosh” my mother slides off the riverbed and dives into the stream. Her eyes gush with tears, as she lies beaten on the floor of the racing river. I hear her sputter, “I can’t go on!”

My father reaches out to rescue her and sympathetically says, “Well, you can’t go back. You’ll be okay, though; I’ll help you the rest of the way.”

Mom lifts her hand from the water and grasps hold of dad’s. He draws her from the water, and together they trudge down the stream. The rest of the group follows in a single line warning one another of deep holes, giant rocks, or slippery stones beneath the river’s obscure face. Since danger has not completely escaped our grasp, we assist each other in our voyage downstream. I silently wonder when the canyon will reopen and our journey will end, although, I find the way easier in the midst of my group.

Slowly light soaks into the widening canyon as we welcome the admiring smiles of hikers freshly pounding up the stream. As the number of hikers increase, we know the end is nigh. My mother breaks free from my dad confident she can finish the journey. Chattering and roaring with laughter, my group’s spirits lighten for the first time on this trek.

The smile on my face grows as I recall the New Zealand clown that traveled to Indonesia to lighten the spirits of the tsunami victims. I picture him helping the grieving children to cope with their losses by teaching them to laugh again. The clown’s upbeat voice is heard in my ears, “One doctor told me he was having trouble holding back the tears as he watched the children he had been dealing with for the past two months suddenly laughing and playing.” I visualized those children remembering to be kids again by finding laughter to heal their wounds and by bringing light back into their lives. I imagine that in this situation, “laughter is,” no doubt, “the best medicine.” Concerned people from all over the world also sacrificed much of their time, money, and goods to donate to the largest relief operation that the world has, perhaps, ever known. Realizing that the aid must reach the millions affected by the disaster soon, world leaders met to resolve a quick relief. They also committed to rebuilding the shredded islands by working together. These chieftains believe that by building an early warning system in the Indian Ocean, they can prevent this scale of disaster from reoccurring. Although no community of people can prevent the vigorous and unpredictable forces of nature, together we can lift our neighbor’s burdens to survive and lend purpose to life.

A jubilant call from ahead confirms that our journey’s end has come. Crimson plasters the sandstone walls that glisten with excitement in the sun. The canyon radiates with vivacious people hiking, climbing, and splashing in the water. I laugh to myself; perhaps, I was wrong about humans. By nature, we are as compassionate and sociable species that relies heavily on one another. Our most gratifying moments can very well be when we are in the service of others.

How do we choose to spend every moment that is granted to us? We do exactly what we must do to survive—keep going. We pick up our pieces and realize that life continues on. The world may never be

the same, but we are stronger after trudging through its calamities. However, we need not face the world's obstacles alone. The words of a famous hymn remind us that, "We are all enlisted until the conflict is o'er, / Happy are we! Happy are we!" When the strength of cheerful attitudes combine with the power of a united people, it can create an incalculable force to help support and aid us all through the world's uncertainties.