

si ne cera

a
Di verseCi ty Wri ti ng Seri es
Anthol ogy

Unl ocki ng My New
Doors

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This edition of *si ne cera* was compiled and edited by the DWS Coordinator Joanna Sewall. Cover art created by Joanna Sewall.

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INTRODUCTION

“We, at the Community Writing Center, believe that writing has the power to unite communities and build bridges over social chasms such as economic disparity and racial intolerance. Because of this belief, we have created the DiverseCity Writing Series, which provides a way to develop small writing communities, and to disperse the thoughts and emotions of people whose stories may otherwise remain untold.”

This is the mission statement of the DiverseCity Writing Series (DWS)—the SLCC Community Writing Center’s writing group program. Our efforts to start this program began in August 2000, when we worked with writers from local organizations in two-month writing workshops, each culminating in a publication and a public reading. During the first two years, we worked with four groups: Justice, Economic Independence and Dignity for Women; the Liberty Senior Center; The Road Home shelter; and Cancer Wellness House.

In the Summer of 2002, we decided to expand the DWS into a multi-group, year-round writing program. In March of 2003, we began training volunteer mentors in collaborative writing group strategies. In April of that year, the first writing groups met. Six months later, we published *Si ne Cera: People Are Strange*, the first anthology of DWS writing; and hosted a public reading to celebrate the participants’ work and the publication. Within the past two years, the DiverseCity Writing Series has grown into a program with multiple writing groups, trained volunteer writing group mentors, and over 40 community writers who write and share their work within the series.

Overall, 2004 has been a busy year for the DiverseCity Writing Series. We have welcomed several new writing groups into the program and celebrated the publication of the second anthology, *Si ne Cera: Awake*. Currently, the DWS has eight writing groups that meet bi-weekly: two Community Writing Center groups; the Salt Lake City Public Library group; the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center of Utah group; the Literacy Action Center group; the Liberty Senior Center group; the

Pathways to Recovery group, and the REI environmental writing group. Some of these groups have been meeting for more than a year, while others have just started. Sometimes attendance is full, other times sporadic. But what matters is that the groups are meeting. People are writing and sharing it with others.

December will mark the end of the year and the publication of the third anthology, *Si ne Cera: Unlocking My New Doors*. And, come January, the DWS will continue with writing group meetings, dedicated volunteer writing group mentors, and the addition of a new writing group, Centro Civico Mexicano. In six months, there will be more writing and another *Si ne Cera* publication to enjoy.

We are pleased with our series and with the efforts of our writers and volunteers. We hope that, over time, the DWS will continue to grow and that our writers will continue to write. And as long as people keep writing, we will keep publishing their work because the Salt Lake community needs to hear these stories.

If you are interested in becoming a part of the DiverseCity Writing Series, either as a writer, a mentor, or a writer/mentor, contact the Community Writing Center at (801) 957-4992 or cwc@slcc.edu.

PREFACE

Who takes the time to write and rewrite a poem? Who stares at a page looking for the perfect words to describe *autumn* or *love* or the *color purple*? Who asks for feedback from other community members as they develop ideas and works in progress? Who supports other writers in their efforts to turn their thoughts into writing?

Although there are never enough hours in the day, DiverseCity Writing Series (DWS) volunteer mentors and writers take time each month to share their opinions and emotions through poems, letters, essays and narratives. And, in turn, they make the publication of the DWS anthology possible by submitting honest, expressive pieces for others to read.

sine cera: Unlocking My New Doors is the title of the third anthology of the DiverseCity Writing Series. In this anthology, DWS writers continue to explore their voices with new purposes and new perspectives. Whether writing is the “new door” or the key that opens that door, the contributing writers have used it to communicate their awareness of self and others. Each piece is unique, a signature of the writers’ diversities of style and inspiration, yet I think you will find that each piece also has elements that speak to all readers.

sine cera: Unlocking My New Doors is a reflection of the depth and wealth of the experiences of our friends and neighbors as well as the people we pass on the street. And so I invite you to read this anthology, to take time to engage and appreciate the opinions, images and emotions that your fellow community members have crafted with their words.

Joanna Sewall
DiverseCity Writing Series Coordinator
SLCC Community Writing Center

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REFLECTIONS ON THE SUPREME STATE OF BEING WRONG

by Anne Chapman

Whenever poet and essayist Sherman Alexie comes to town, I clear my schedule to go see him. It's a pleasure/pain thing. Pleasure, because he has a talent for framing the conflict and suffering of the world in way that makes it all seem so absurd. When I watch the Presidential Debates, read the news about the war in Iraq, or listen to the State of the Union Address, I tend to cause myself supreme suffering by chewing, tasting, and finally swallowing a full range of tension, frustration, and despair. Alexie, on the other hand, takes a stand-up comedy approach to these very stimuli. When I listen to him speak, his searing humor injects some needed distance between me and my way of seeing the world, allowing me to let go of my cynicism for the moment and relax. In short, it's a pleasure thing because he makes me laugh at times and at things that make me want to cry.

So where does the pain come in? In short, the guy is an equal-opportunity critic. When he's lancing barbs of fiery wit at real-life examples of folly, idiocy and hypocrisy, he doesn't exclude me from the targets. A self-described liberal, Alexie is as likely to raise the hair on the backs of those who identify as democrats or vegans as he is to provoke compassionate conservatives. His sometimes-stinging assessment of white, liberal, middle-class privilege, for instance, stops me in my mental tracks, cracks me open and leaves me feeling vulnerable, yet somehow lighter. To put it simply, he challenges me in a way that is distressing and refreshing at the same time. Pain. Pleasure.

I will never forget the thought with which he left the audience the last time I heard him speak. Pointing to the personal values and beliefs to which we all cling so dearly, Alexie challenged us to make a habit of asking ourselves the question, "What if I'm wrong?" It sounds easy at first, but it is not. Try it. Pick out your most cherished belief about the world. Now ask yourself, "What if I'm wrong about that?" Painful, isn't it? I know. I've tried it, and I am as guilty as anyone of becoming attached to my point of view – of carefully crafting it as if it were a work of art and then guarding it and defending it against any and all intruders. But after

the pain comes relief. Asking the question soothes and relaxes the exhausting effort of standing your ground.

In effect, “What if I’m wrong?” is the ultimate question. It puts everything we think, say, and do into a state of uncertainty. It leaves us feeling disarmed. But the sense of vulnerability it evokes is full of potential. On one hand, it carries the risk that we will, out of a feeling of defenselessness, preemptively attack those who hold views that challenge our own or our way of life. On the other hand, it cradles the possibility of reconciliation and release. In stripping us of the armor of our personal dogmas and ideals, the question gives us permission to just let go. It then opens us up to real dialogue. It creates rare and precious possibilities to reach an understanding of the conflicts and ambiguities within ourselves, our families, our communities.

How much spiritual, cultural and physical violence could we avert in our every-day interactions if each of us made it a habit to repeat this question to ourselves? The exercise would open the door to a host of other questions: What would it mean if the person with whom I so adamantly disagree is right? What if we’re both right? Both wrong? What if we both hold a piece of the truth? The list could go on. And each question would lead to another opportunity to truly listen to each other and to truly be heard.

In asking these kinds of questions, I have revisited and let go of much of the despair I have felt in the way conflicts are being addressed in the world since September 11th. One of the thoughts that surfaces again and again is this: the people who pass as terrorists are people desperately trying to be heard, but who are failing, and who have thus turned to desperate measures to achieve that end. I come back to a variation of the “wrong” question, “What if *they* (i.e. those who offend, hurt, or threaten me) have a valid point?” It’s scary to ask the question. But in asking it, I notice the despair begin to evaporate. In its place, a quiet, soft-spoken hopefulness begins to emerge.

But, if there is so much to be gained by letting go and allowing ourselves to be wrong, then why are we so afraid to do so? What do we have to lose by listening to each other? Perhaps we’re afraid of finding an image of ourselves. I have heard it said

that that which is despicable to us in others, is that which we despise in ourselves. When we feel sympathy for those who are oppressed, it seems to me we are tapping into our connection with them. And so it follows that when we feel anger toward those we see as oppressors or aggressors, perhaps it is because we see the oppressor and aggressors in ourselves. Nothing could be more threatening to our sense of security and morality than finding out that we are inescapably connected to those we view with horror. And yet, nothing could provide a brighter beacon of hope – shining on the ever-present possibility that we will finally see and value the relationship we share with every other human being, and seeing this, take a mental or physical leap to protect that connection. If being wrong can get you all this, why, oh why, be right? Thanks for the pain, Sherman. It's always a pleasure.

UNTITLED

by Ann S.

Peace comes after the ever
present noise... of Voices Rising
over each other.

Can I really take a deep
Breath & rest Before another
day of repetitious Bother.

A chance to live, a will is why
I'm here today after Death
attempts a plenty.

The skills I'm learning
are helping to teach me to
learn to live without an ending

PRECIOUS MOMENTS IN EACH SEASON

by Virlee

Forest trees all in colors with crimson and gold,
deep red and priceless brown, where it seems
only yesterday was green.

Bird echos in the trees bid fond farewell
to their departure, As Creatures scurrying
everywhere hoping to find a place before
winter covers our Land with pure white.

Autumn's magic wand is seen, This
wondrous peace seems somehow parted
as the Last Leaf drop its colors, spinning
to the ground each, so fragile and Light
comes off the trees 'til they are bare.

Rainbow colors seen in the mirror
steams after a good rain, soon the
Steam will be pure ice.

Nature full of music, whispers and dreams.

Becoms a warm bright smile before
it seals other seasons away,
Praise well being with God's Plan of Love.

CLOEY

by Joseph Jimenez

My first granddaughter was born on July 8, 2003. She is called Cloey but I call her Bubbles. She is my daughter Nicole's baby. She weighed 7 pounds and 5 ounces when she was born. Her hair is light brown. Her eyes are brown like chocolate cake. She looks like a mix of her mom and dad.

Cloey is always smiling when I see her. She cheers me up. She runs to me and gives me hugs and kisses. She smiles when I pick her up. She tries to chat with me, but she can't talk yet. She might be a chatterbox when she grows up.

Sometimes Cloey gives mean faces. She likes getting her own way. She likes getting into my pictures and knick-knacks. She likes to play on the phone. She likes music and likes to dance and move her hands. She likes to eat mashed potatoes and scrambled eggs. She likes pop and drinking out of a straw. She likes going riding in the car. She likes being outside in her stroller. She does not like being in the house. She likes to turn the television off and on and smile.

I love my granddaughter Cloey and she'll always be in my heart.

HAIKU

by Brent White

I.

Electric rooster
Breaks the day at six o' clock
Snooze. 9 more minutes

II.

Ponders the poultry
Why traverse the hot asphalt?
The other side calls

III.

A priest and rabbi
Walk into a bar and converse
Punchline is coming

MIXED SIGNALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

by Gregory Tippetts

President Bush accused Senator Kerry of sending “mixed signals” with regard to the war in Iraq. Bush said, sending “mixed signals” is very dangerous to both our friends and enemies around the world. I may be wrong but I thought the term “mixed signals” had been replaced by the politically correct terms “waffling” and in extreme cases “flip flopping.”

To find out why the term “mixed signals” was used in place of “waffling” or “flip flopping,” I consulted with Professor Applesauce. He is the Dean of Political Science at Moon Rock University.

We sat in his office and I asked the Professor, “You’ve been studying Political Science for years. Why do you think Bush used the term ‘mixed signals’ instead of ‘waffling’ or ‘flip flopping’ when he referred to Senator Kerry’s stance on the war in Iraq?”

Applesauce said, “The reason Bush used such strong language is because of the rather large hole in the ozone layer. When too much ultraviolet radiation gets into the atmosphere, it can create all kinds of problems with political jargon. If Congress moves quickly and allocates funding to plug the hole with cardboard and duct tape, we should be OK. However, I’m sure nothing will happen until after the election.” Applesauce continued, “As the previous example illustrates, the environment can affect politicians, but at other times the opposite is true. Politicians can unknowingly affect the environment. For example, I’m afraid that with all the hot air being emitted into the atmosphere this election year, we could see a dramatic increase in global warming. This could quickly melt the polar ice caps and create wide spread flooding.”

“That’s a very serious problem,” I told him. “Are there any other connections between political activities and the environment?” I asked.

“Well, a politician should never talk about tax increases until after the election.”

“Why is that?”

You remember what happened to the dinosaurs, don’t you?” Applesauce asked.

“You’re not suggesting that the same thing could happen to us, are you?”

“I’m saying it’s a very good possibility. Kerry has already talked about the rich paying their fair share. That’s getting close, but just as long as he never utters the words ‘tax increase’ I think it will be OK.”

“Professor Applesauce, what do you think will happen to the environment and the weather if President Bush is re-elected?”

“If Bush wins we can expect colder than normal temperature and fog.”

“Why is that?” I asked.

“Dick Cheney seems frozen stiff. I know he is a good guy, but another four more years of him as the Vice-President could bring on another ice age. I also feel Bush is lost in the fog over in Iraq.”

“And what if Kerry and Edwards win?” I asked.

“This could send the environment into a wild, waffle flip flop. We could see massive snowstorms in Palm Springs and warm weather in Maine, eventually things would return to normal. But, I think we would still see fog in Iraq.”

“I know it’s a long shot but what would happen if Ralph Nader should win?” I asked.

“It’s very hard to say since we don’t have any experience with third party and independent candidates.”

“Are you flip flopping or waffling?” I asked.

“No, absolutely not!” he shouted in anger.

“My best guess is that the prolonged drought in the West would end. The fog in Iraq would continue. The East coast would remain cold and wet. Now, if you will excuse me, I am giving a lecture on how the debate over how health care affects the rain in Texas. Then, I need to shop for my wife’s birthday gift. I wonder if she would like a new waffle iron?”

UNTITLED

by Kristi

Obsessive ticking
Numbering each one
Then it starts over
Obsessive ticking
Flipping me off with its long fingers
Telling me that it's in Control
Then it starts over
Obsessive ticking
The world watches and Waits
Obsessive ticking
Its seconds making me Crazy
Obsessive ticking
Then it starts over
Obsessive ticking
Obsessive ticking
Obsessive ticking
Then it starts over
Numbering each one
It runs our lives
Marking beginnings and ends
Though it never started and hasn't ended
Then it starts over
Obsessive ticking
Obsessive ticking

A DREAM I HAVE

by Donna N. Nish

I want to serve thee
Lord I say
Today
Remember
Jesus said to me
Things will get better
You're O.K.
Today

You may feel rough
But stay
In the moment
Now
Today

COMMITMENT

by Dori Townsend

Commitment! Do we really know what that is anymore? Now days it seems we are hyper afraid of commitment. We have been taught that if you don't like what you are doing at present or where you are in life that you can just quit. Who cares about whom it will affect or responsibilities you have as long as you are happy. That's all that really matters!

Now I do agree that we are responsible for our own happiness and yes, change can be good. But what about responsibility for the choices we make?

Not everything is going to be good all of the time. But that in and of itself isn't a reason to ditch what we are doing. Or for that matter who we are with.

With so many marriages these days ending in divorce it makes me wonder. When did commitment get the boot in our vows? Where did commitment and responsibility go in our relationships and in our choices? We say, "Till death do us part," but we mean "until I'm no longer happy with you." How did we get to the point where we think it's easier to hit the road than to work it out? And for that matter, what makes one think that it's really going to be any different with somebody else? (New person, new problem.)

So, if you have an affair and leave your spouse to be with this lover, what assures you that they (or you) won't have an affair again? Remember...you were once so in love with your spouse that nothing could ever come between you. Until it did. The challenges of daily life got in the way. Jobs, kids, deadlines, you name it. And then this other person came along and "Voila" you were in love again. So what will happen when all the infatuation wears off and real life kicks in again? "Well that won't happen," you say. "Why?" "Because I'm committed."

Ah...there it is the "C" word. Well, unless you are willing to stick it out and stay when life gets hard or boring, or when you're not attracted to them anymore and you have nothing in common and it's just not fun anymore or the myriad of other complaints you will never know what commitment is or what it really brings to life.

Commitment is easy when things are good. Not so easy when you feel unappreciated, unattractive or unimportant. It's even harder to ask for what you need in your relationship. Easier to look for it elsewhere. Harder to address an issue when you first notice it. Easier to hold disappointment inside.

Until one day all the love and joy and perfectness that made you want to be together forever is forgotten. Then it really gets hard. Now there is pain and frustration and miles in-between.

Things might not have gone so far if they were dealt with at the beginning. Asked for instead of assuming the other should know.

Commitment is not about enduring, although sometimes it is required. It's about holding dear what once was true. Respect, honesty, asking for, and giving to. Considering the trade-offs.

Your mate may not be perfect. Who is? But what is the trade-off for all the good qualities they do have? Is it worth trading your mate to get other qualities from someone else who will also not be perfect? You may not like what the trade will be.

I think it's important to re-evaluate our definition of commitment. To look back to a time when it was considered valiant and noble. To consider the consequences of our actions beyond ourselves.

Like the song says, "Sometimes love just ain't enough!"
It takes commitment baby!

THE GEOMETRY OF INCIDENCE

by Betsy Ward

Incidence Axiom 1:

If $Y =$ you and $M =$ me
then for every point Y
and for every point M
there exists a unique line l
that passes through Y and M .

Here are the occurrences:

you graduated in a recession,
moved West like a myth. I came
home from a land of strange consonants,
gaunt, pale, my suitcase musty with leftover love.
My new landlord pointed out your door,
our shared sidewalk behind two
ramshackle houses. One night, walking
back with my groceries, I saw your light on.

Incidence Axiom 2:

For every line l , there exists at least
two distinct points incident with l –
except when these points
are stubborn and ambivalent,
refusing perpendicularity.

And so you moved, I moved, trailing
lines that didn't understand intersection.

Seven years and seven cities later,
it is autumn in New England. Next
to each other, we ride the causeway
on ancient bicycles, the lake on either side,
the Green Mountains at our back, the world
golden as foliage, crisp as Vermont apples.

That night in your childhood bedroom,
with flannel sheets and your body

warm around me, I open a textbook on geometry.
I imagine your grandfather, decades earlier, typing
this manuscript, a complex text with a simple dedication.
For Carolyn, it says.

Incidence Axiom 3:

There exist three distinct points
with the property that no line is incident
with all three of them
unless one point is Y and one point is M
and one point is Carolyn's ring,
nearly a century old and left to you
with a letter in a jewelry box.

To be honest, I was never good at math.
I still do not grasp incidence geometry
but I am learning to understand binary relations
and how two lines in a plane can finally meet.

EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

by Chris Wink

Every thought I have
when I'm trying to think of something else
leads back to her
So why do I try to escape it?
Perhaps I should instead
try to write about her
and get this energy
that is in me
out
Perhaps then
for at least a moment or two
I will be free of her
She is
the integration of all that is lustrous and fine
an illumination of Paul's admonition
if there is anything virtuous, lovely or of good report or praiseworthy
we seek after these things
She is
poised and graceful
thoughtful and kind
unselfish
not easily vexed
self contained
self assured
always seeking improvement
She is
taken
She plays folly for a man who could never love her as I do
If given the chance
I would discover
and put to memory
each curve of her body
I would anticipate her every want
preceding her own conscious knowledge
Her happiness
would become my own

What is all this ink put to paper
when it gets me no closer to my love?
It does not
allow me the pleasure of holding her in my arms
fails to express
the magic of her smile
and cannot
encase the feelings of my heart

YOU KNOW HER

by Ginger Phillips

Wisdom beyond her years
Huddled lonely in the bathroom
Wondering what is to become of me
Naked, Alone

No tears fill her eyes
Fear of the unknown
Cradled in darkness
Cornering herself again and again

Honoring what once was
But never again is

Filling the hearts everywhere she goes
Anger or Love
No one ever forgets her

Reassurance just enough
To keep her coming back
But why?

If you look real hard you'll see
Never enough for you and me
The void constant
Emotions raw and delicate

She draws you in enough to engulf you
Then has to spit you out
She's forced to give up all that is precious

She denies her nature
Giving of herself; vomiting the rest

Undeniable pressure to perform
Above and beyond
You know her
She begs not to let go.

NINE LIVES TO LOVE

by Ruth Mikkelsen

Several years ago I cleaned houses for a living. A cat named Puga lived at one of those houses. She was a very fat tabby with large gold eyes. Her belly hung down so far that when she walked or ran it would swing from side to side. She didn't need much attention, seemed only to need people around to give her food and water and to let her in and out of the house.

I cleaned this house twice a week, happy to see Puga that often. She allowed me to hold and stroke her sometimes, but that was all.

The owner of that house fell in love, sold the house and found a new home for Puga – my home, but Puga acted like she couldn't care less where she was – didn't want a whole lot to do with me. I tried day after day, week after week to get her to show some affection toward me. It didn't happen. All I could do was give her a good home.

One morning I woke up with a heavy warm something on my shoulder. I slept on my stomach so I couldn't see what was on my shoulder. At first, I panicked – thinking something wrong with my shoulder. While thinking about what I needed to do to be okay, I heard a soft steady sound- a purring. I couldn't believe it – Puga sitting on my shoulder and purring! I laid there for awhile until she hopped off the bed. When I got up to spend some time with her, she didn't want anything to do with me. I knew then that our entire relationship was going to be on her terms; but, she at least had acknowledged me as part of her life.

During the next eleven years that I had Puga, it seemed our relationship would glide along on a level for several months, dip into a deeper level. No one thing distinguished when or why the level changed – it just did.

At tea every morning after waking, Puga would jump in my lap to have her ears rubbed, stay about twenty minutes, then hop off. This ritual repeated when I returned from work.

When I went to bed, Puga would jump on the bed for an ear-rubbing for about fifteen minutes then go to her bed in the window.

One night after I had volunteered for an event where over two thousand people were in attendance, spending several hours at this

event and was completely peopled-out, I went home and crawled into bed. Puga jumped on the bed, laid very close to my chest and started purring. I put my arm around her and it wasn't long until I felt calm and renewed.

One day I went outside to shoo a dog off my front lawn, I was talking loudly and waving my arms around. Puga charged out the door, ran right up to the dog, arched her back and hissed for several seconds. The dog got the message and trotted away. I was surprised at Puga because she was afraid of dogs, but not of protecting me.

The last few months of her life I knew we had a very strong connection because when I would leave for work in the morning I'd stop at the door, turn around to look at her and get lost in her eyes. Sometimes I would not be able to drive immediately because I couldn't get my bearings.

This connection I had with Puga was very fulfilling for me, probably the deepest love I had ever experienced and I felt Puga returned that love.

At almost twenty-one years old, Puga didn't jump into my lap anymore for her morning ear-rub. One morning she walked across the living room, laid down so she was facing me and with her clouded eyes, just stared at me. I knew within an instant our time was limited.

I took her to the vet's clinic that morning. Dr. McCarron gave Puga a shot that made her unconscious. Her heavy listless body lay on my lap while I listened to her deep and peaceful breathing. Dr. McCarron came back into the room, asked me if I wanted to stay with Puga when she gave her the shot that stops the heart. I told her I did not want Puga to die alone so I would stay. The doctor explained to me that when the serum in the injection reached the heart, sometimes the animal may jerk or gasp right before dying, but the animal is not hurting.

I leaned over Puga's head as the injection was given. She did gasp, and as she did so, she raised her head, touched my nose with her nose.

I spent the next two or three days in shock, but knew I had done the right thing. I often see Puga in the pink and orange colors of the sunrise. Tears come, I smile and thank God for the time we had together.

FEELINGS

by Anonymous

You'll never know how I feel!!
These feelings won't go away
They seem so real
What can I say?
These feelings are bugging me!
When will I feel normal again?
Why can't I see?
How to comfort myself and get away
from this trend.
I'm not alone this I know
It seems that the TEST of Time can
go so slow.
When I'm Positive & doing Good
Life is Beautiful & my feelings
fill my mind as they
should.

THE TESTS

by David Gravelle

Last month, you completed a pile of forms
before enduring mildly irritating tests
performed by means of probes.

Not to mention stationary gamma cameras
and single photon emission
computed tomography devices.

And an intravenous administration
of a low dosage radioactive substance
used to liven up the data.

Now, an American physician has read the data.
He can be anywhere in the world,
you are told. But in your imagination

he is in a well appointed apartment
in a stylish European city.
Large, tall windows overlook a lovely park.

The physician gazes upon the view
during the several seconds
the telephone wires require to bring your test results to him.

Very wise, he sees the purposeful, physical or chemical stresses
you endured. And he determines
the adequacy of your cardiac blood flow and output.

Afterwards, the physician resumes
his gaze through the large, tall windows
of his stylishly appointed apartment, without concern or
precautions.

But, for now, you're listening to hold music,
a lovely Viennese waltz,
as you wait to speak with someone in Calcutta

about the bill for last month's tests.

THE WAITING ROOM

by Bonita Fletcher

The mood in the surgical waiting room matched the day outside, dull and gray. Even a television mounted to the wall sat black and silent as if in waiting too. Six of us, all women, sat quietly waiting, one with a small child, a girl. The girl was strapped into a specially made wheelchair and appeared to be inflicted with a severe neurological condition. One so severe, that it twisted her body into an unnatural position and then seemed to freeze it that way. I was disturbed by the obvious stiffness of her body and its inability to move. I felt for her a sense of confinement, one of entrapment maybe, or even seduction. I couldn't help but believe that she was not an agreeable partaker to the malady imprisoning her spirit and soul. The painful and resistive expression frozen on her tiny face seemed to say it all. It made me think about a mother's love, the kind of love that only a mother is capable of in the face of such torment, her torment. The girl began to moan. At first the moan was short and painful sounding then it escalated into a long sorrowful sounding moan. I felt helpless for her. We all looked in her direction as if our looks could help somehow, but they only served to make the mood in the room even grayer. We could only watch while the woman un-strapped the girl from the chair to pick her up. A sense of helpless wonder enveloped the waiting room as we all watched the woman try and comfort the child in her arms. The girl was inconsolable. She continued to moan and then to cry, a low guttural cry mixed with a higher sounding moan. The moaning I could endure, it was her crying that got to me, it was maddening to listen to. I tried to take on some of her pain; I felt wounded. Her helplessness and mine was heavy and sad. I couldn't explain the sense of this. It was unfathomable to think about her state of misery, or even what grievous acts could have earned her this hell to be paid. The girl quieted down to the soothing voice of the woman and looked to be staring up into the woman's eyes. Her look appeared to be held with such intensity as if to say help me or don't look away. Soon the girl and the woman left and although the room was quiet again, it was now heavy and full with the absence of visible pain.

MY MOM CAUGHT MY ILLNESS

by Honey Rachelle Graham

My mom caught my illness.

I was wrong

I thought I could not give my illness away.

I knew mental illness was hereditary.

I did not know I could give it away to my mom.

My mom caught my illness.

She knew

I was suffering.

I was in the hospital for three months.

I never knew she was suffering with me.

I did not even know she was my mother.

The night she took me to the hospital,

I ran away from her.

I believed she was an evil spirit.

After all, I had never seen her face so pale.

My mom caught my illness.

The first time in fifty years,

my mom went on antidepressants.

She had to have more time off work.

I was unable to work for years.

My mom caught my illness

I wish I had not inherited her depression gene.

I wish I had not activated hers.

My mom caught my illness.

My mom had huge bags under her eyes,

the week I was unable to sleep.

Every night,

I lay in the mental hospital in tears,

unable to hear her cries.

SPECIAL FRIENDS

by Marylee Carla Clarke

My friends, Mike and Rina Apple, went to Wendover with Eddie and me. We saw so many things, like a deer, the castle at Saltair, and boats on our trip.

We stopped for a break. They smoked and we ate the special egg sandwiches I made for the trip. We also had lots of snacks and drinks, like Dr. Pepper, Pepsi, coffee, hot chocolate, and peach nectar. After the break, Eddie saw a deer. We had to stop to see that wonderful animal. The castle at Saltair was so busy. There were so many people. There were so many boats of all sizes on the water. The water had whitecaps on the tips of the waves.

Our day was just so beautiful; it was the first day of spring. The sky was bright blue with fluffy clouds and we made animals out of the clouds. We all had such fun. We joked and walked a little. We laughed so much we lost track of time.

I had a hard time with the side wind both ways, but it didn't stop us from having a wonderful time going to Wendover. I drove both ways in our new used car. It only took a ½ tank of gas to Wendover, and another ½ tank gas and 1 can of oil coming home.

After we got to Wendover, Mike and Rina went to the Peppermill. Eddie and I went to the Red Garter. Eddie liked the 25-cent machines. I liked the 5-cent machines, but they didn't like me very much that day. (Ha, Ha.)

We checked on each other all day. Eddie liked how I often checked on him, reminded him to take his meds, and helped him change his oxygen tank. He only used 2½ tanks going and coming home. He was tired, but he said he was having too much fun to rest. He rested on the way home.

We had a dinner date at 6:00 pm. I got Mike and Rina and we all ate at the Red Garter. They have very good food. The special of the day was a big steak dinner. All 3 of my friends had that special dinner and water. I had french fries with cheese melted on top with a glass of milk.

When it was time to come home, I asked for three to-go plates. The waiter said no because it was the special of the day. I asked to talk to the boss. He told the waiter to give me the plates. Everyone was happy because they could have the rest for breakfast

the next day.

We gassed up and on our way home. Eddie went to sleep. I wasn't able to wake him until we stopped at the rest stop. We needed to change to his last tank of oxygen. Mike rested on the way home, too. Rina, and sometimes Mike, talked with me to keep me awake on the way home. The stars were so bright and seemed so close we thought we could reach out and touch them. It was still warm when we left Wendover. At the last rest stop a breeze came up and we needed sweaters or light jackets.

When we got home, we talked about our trip. We saw lots of businesses. I didn't know what they were, but Eddie had a special way of explaining things to me so I could understand. This trip had a lot of firsts because it was the first day of spring, our first deer, the first time I'd ever seen the castle so busy, and so many boats.

Three days later Eddie went to heaven to see the rest of his family he had been missing for a long time. He'd been wanting to go to Wendover for a long time but his sister had been too busy to take him. The family and all of us were so happy that we got to go to Wendover.

DRYER LINT

by the Pathways to Recovery Writing Group

Lint black and blue cling to you.
I took the dryer lint and stuffed it into a red velvet heart I sewed
to make a pin cushion and then hung it
on my wall with joy.
Warm full of the past wearing of the week, clean and smelling
inviting, with an invitation to wear its
contents.
It's been a central question for a long time.
Should lint get dryer?
I'm afraid of the particles that float through the air upon cleaning.
Endless molecules gather to oneness.
I wish renters would clean after using my dryer.
The trash can no longer has room for you.

AMY AND HER SISTER

by Dexter McNeil

Back in the year 1980, in the summertime on a Saturday morning, around nine o'clock, there were two girls walking down a pathway in the park. Their names were Amy and Tracy. They were around eleven years old. They came to the tallest pine tree in the park and under it were some flowers. There were red ones, yellow ones, white ones, and blue ones under the tree.

The girls went to look at the flowers and saw a little puppy. Amy went to the puppy and then the ground gave way. She and the puppy fell down twenty feet into a hole. Amy fell feet first into the water below and the puppy fell on some rocks.

Tracy shouted, "Amy, Amy, are you alright?"

Amy swam to a log in the hole to try to pull herself out of the water. She found the puppy on the rocks and then she looked up and saw the sky and then she saw Tracy looking down at her. She said, "I am alright, but I think the puppy is dead."

Tracy said, "I will go for some help. I will be back soon."

Amy answered, "I am not going anywhere."

Tracy went to get some help for her. She was running down the walkway to a big tree and under it were four men. The men looked up and saw Tracy running and shouting out, "Help, help! My sister is down a big deep hole. Would you help me get her out please?"

One of the men walked over to her and said, "I am Roy. The rest of them are my brothers." He pointed at them and said, "He is Bill and that one is Jerry. The little one is Lee. We will all help you."

Bill asked, "What is your name and who is your father? I will call him to tell him to meet us here."

Tracy said, "I am Tracy Brown. My father is Dave Brown."

Bill said, "I know a Dave Brown. Does he work at the hospital?"

Tracy answered, "Yes, he does."

Bill said, "I will call him there." And he took out his cell phone.

When Tracy and the men came to the hole, Tracy shouted out, "Amy, are you alright?"

Amy answered stuttering, "Yes, I'm alright."

Bill said, "I will throw in a rope and come down to you."

When he came to the bottom of the hole, he saw Amy. Amy said, "I want to show you where the puppy is. He is here on the rocks. I think he is dead."

Bill went to the puppy to see if it was alive. He was looking the puppy over. He said, "The puppy is alive, but it is hurt. I will take it to a man who works with animals to see what he will say." Then Bill picked up the puppy and gave it to Amy and said, "It is time to go. My brothers will pull us to the top of the hole."

The three brothers pulled Amy and Bill up from the hole. When the two got to the top, Amy saw her mother, father and three sisters. She said, "Look Tracy, I am okay and the puppy is alive! He is hurt, but I think he will live."

Mother said, "Are you alright, Amy?"

Amy ran to her mother and kissed and hugged her.

Bill said, "I called your father in town and had him come here to see you. Your father and I went to school together. We were in the same classes."

Tracy said to Amy, "It is good to have you out of that hole. Don't do it again!"

Amy said, "Hey Mom and Dad, it was fun, but I don't want to do it again. The water was cold! Hey Bill, I would like to thank you and your brothers for getting me out."

Bill said, "I will see the animal doctor with the puppy and see what he says." And everyone said goodbye and left.

That weekend, Amy's dad invited them all over for lunch. Bill brought the puppy and he gave it to Amy and said, "He is okay now."

Amy asked, "Can I have it, Mother?"

Mother said, "No, it will be the *family's* pet." And everyone laughed.

A DOG FOR ALL SEASONS

by Raymond G. Briscoe

Tuffy was not an ordinary dog, although he was a mongrel. He must have weighed a little more than one hundred pounds, but he looked a lot larger because his unkempt long black hair rounded him out a few sizes larger. In the winter time, his hair and his habits caused him problems. I'm getting ahead of myself. This is not a story about Tuffy being man's best friend. We loved him, I believe in part because as we watched him it was so easy to feel superior.

Nobody knows where he came from. When you live on a farm in the outskirts of town you acquire dogs. People, who did not want to keep a pet and did not want to destroy them, dropped them off at night near a farmer's home. I guess Tuffy wasn't too dumb, for at least he could tell there was more to keep him alive around the farm than out along the canal banks.

A spring experience indicating a real lack was when "Tuffy confronted the seagulls." When the soil is turned for planting, seagulls spend the whole day collecting exposed worms. As the tractor makes its way down the furrow the seagulls spread their wings, arise and circle in the back of the tractor and plow for the newest opportunity for wiggling food. This goes on all day. Our newly adopted dog thought he should be part of the sport.

Tuffy charged the seagulls in the furrow in wondering hope that one of them would become his catch. For the first half-hour the seagulls scattered and eventually made their way back to the furrow. Our pet never gave up the chase. When he tired, he would take a break up on the ditch bank with his long red tongue hanging on one side of his mouth and then the other as he pondered this rich opportunity for catching a bird for dinner. After a short rest, Tuffy charged down the newly plowed furrow, barking away with his panzer division approach to capturing his prey. The birds got smart, Tuffy didn't. The black and white birds would hear or see him coming, flap their wings enough to let him pass under, then gently lower themselves to the smorgasbord beneath. Wherever the dog went in the field there would be a small bubble of birds arise from the earth and settle in again after he had passed under. He never ever caught a bird.

Summer stupidity, I believe, was more difficult on his health. We lived about one and a half miles down the road from my grandparent's farm. Tuffy smelled too much to let him in the car, but he wanted to be a part of everything going on, and whenever we drove over to Grandma's, he ran behind the car as fast as he could and he would arrive at our destination three or four minutes after we got there. Remember now, summer temperatures are in the mid-to-high nineties. He was wearing his ever present fur coat. When we arrived at Grandma's, he would move through the cows and horses and literally get right into the watering trough. That, in itself was smart. It probably saved his life. But to do it again when we drove home? And the next time we went to Grandma's? Experience is supposed to be a teacher.

Next to our place was the Whitaker Farm and a road which divided our property. The Whitakers had a German Shepherd who had territorial ideas about their farm. If the German Shepherd was seen by Tuffy in one of our fields, it was trouble as he charged across the field to protect our farm from this vagrancy. Likewise, Tuffy would occasionally drift onto the Whitaker Farm. Their dog would see that Tuffy removed himself or faced dire consequences. There was a problem. The road between the farms seemed to belong to both of them. It was no-man's land, or rather, no-dog's land. Whenever Mr. Whitaker left his farmyard in his one-ton truck, the German Shepherd ran along for the first half-mile or so. According to Tuffy, the truck had rights, but the dog did not. You could hear the truck start, Tuffy was alerted and he charged through the field and the dogs argued out their case as the old truck made its way down the gravel road. It was a daily ritual!

One day things got out of hand. The dogs usually ran in front of the truck. They both got so engrossed in the debate that they forgot about the truck. On this particular day, the truck ran over both dogs. Luckily, the wheels missed both dogs. Neither of the hounds suffered major body damage. They were just rolled up together and passed out the back wondering what happened. The dogs ran home yapping their heads off, acting like a truck had run over them, which it had. Maybe Tuffy and his canine neighbor were not so stupid, as there never again was an argument between

them as to who owned the gravel road. It officially became no-man's land, excuse me, no-dog's land.

Fall stupidity maybe came closer to costing him his life. Dogs must have angel dogs to protect them. He can thank the Lord for the soft Idaho soil which makes for great potatoes. As a boy, my job was to steer the truck between the picked sacks of potatoes as men walked alongside the truck and lifted sacks onto the truck bed to be stacked by another worker. Tuffy was a part of the crew. His job was to get in the road of those doing their duty. He should have known his job was to look out for the truck! I saw him come by the door and around the front of the truck. He wasn't watching and all of a sudden I heard a howling dog. I stopped the truck while the tire was right on top of Tuffy. My older brother jumped in and backed the truck up to get it off the howling dog. He moaned and looked sheepishly stupid, which for him, was not a very large jump. A quick examination found no broken bones. The soft, freshly dug soil was as soft as butter and the truck just pressed him into the mix. He wasn't seriously hurt and for a while appeared a little more attentive to his surroundings.

I said for a while, not an hour later I ran over him a second time! They say experience is the best teacher, but is very hard on those who do not or cannot learn.

I believe that fall stupidity was topped by winter stupidity! Cows need a lot of salt. In the summertime I have seen cows eat dirt just to get salt. This was even when Dad had several salt licks in the corral. In the wintertime the problem is exacerbated, because there is nothing in the fields for the cows as the soil is frozen solid. Now Tuffy was another story. For the cows, he was a walking salt mine. Tuffy loved to let the cows lick him clean. Sorry – not clean, that was highly improbable, clean is a relative word. Cows salivate when they lick and Tuffy would lie in the corral and the cow with the most authority (all herds of cows have degrees of who has authority – where do they get the name bossy for a cow?) would lick him until tired and the next cow would take her turn.

After a warm winter afternoon of repeated tongue massages, Tuffy found his place in the barn to curl up and sleep. His nose was shoved close to his hind quarters in attempt to find warmth in

the night. One morning I heard some whimpering and scratching at our front door and cracked it enough to see Tuffy. My parents never allowed a pet into the house and with this dog it was a unanimous family decision. His face was frozen to his rear end, and he wanted to come in for relief. No way! It was impossible to pull his nose out of his rear flank as it was frozen solid. He made his way back to the barn, working to steady himself with four feet required by his circumstances to be very close together with his body bowed out on the other side. It was an interesting balancing act, but he made it.

That afternoon Tuffy was again under the meticulous saliva baths, which cows can give with great gusto. Once again experience is only the best teacher when you learn from it. Tuffy never did, as he froze together regularly though the cold Idaho winter nights. He was not void of intelligence as he did stop trying to persuade us that he ought to be a house dog.

Later that winter we lost Tuffy. Dad took him to Blackfoot in the back of the pickup to get sugar beet syrup to put on the hay. Tuffy did not come back. We pestered Dad about where Tuffy was. Dad's reply was, "I told him to stay in the pickup!" He turned his head so we could not see his smile. Well, Blackfoot was a community of dairy farmers and surely Tuffy integrated himself with another farm and became a valuable mobile salt lick for other salt starved cows.

FALL

by Anonymous

Leaves turning to gold and Red.

Wild grapes turn purple, as the morning becomes more nippy.

Fall's nature offers us many new changes.

Like hickory nuts and walnuts for squirrels to bury.

As wolves howl from far away.

Eagles soar and hawks fly high.

Birds get ready to fly south, making V's in the sky.

Deer skip by throughout the trees.

Lakes and rivers to ice looking like a mirror.

As the last flowers bloom for the last time this year.

Fruit and vegetables all need to be picked before winter comes.

Fall is a season for lots of color.

THE UINTA MOUNTAIN TRAIL

by Sandra Albertson

Me and my friends decided to take a ride on our horses at the Uinta Trail to see the golden grass and the fir trees that grow up in the mountains. Me and Andrew and my Grandpa and Ian and Jamie rode through the hills and through the mountains of the Uinta Trail. Grandpa carried Jodie, Ian's son, and showed him the mountains and the sky and the golden grass. As we climbed we looked at the eagle nest that Grandpa showed Ian's son, and he chanted to us a story about the eagle, how it flew through the sky with the big wings spread out wide, and how the eyes of an eagle can see far and far away, farther then the eyes and wings can spread. Me and Andrew got down off our horses and looked down far below and saw a river sparkling and a waterfall of rainbow colors, and the mountains with their shades of green and the sky so blue and the grass so gold. Let us thank God for beautiful Uinta Trails.

A MAN WITH A HAT AND A CANE

by Rulon Wagstaff

Once there was an old man. He wore a tall black hat. He also wore an old suit made of silk; it was black and antique looking and he carried an old cane that he loved indeed, though he did not need this cane to walk. But, this was no ordinary cane. It possessed great powers of healing. It had the shape of a golden bird's head with ruby eyes that appeared to glare at its prey, as it was attached to the top of the cane. He carried the cane because he thought it gave him great authority when he walked with it. This man loved to take long walks in the parks, to feed the birds and to hear them sing.

But today it was a gloomy day, a day no one really liked. And today he did not hear the sweet sounds of the birds signing, and it looked like it was going to rain, again. So he decided to go home. But that is when he saw a little baby bird by a tree, it looked like it had a hurt wing. He knew if he left it, it was going to perish for sure. So he carefully picked up the bird to take it home, to nurse it back to health.

On his way home he put the bird in his hat, to keep it warm and to protect it. And when he got home, he put the bird on the table. Then he pulled out his cane, with the golden bird's head with the ruby eyes, which began to glow so brightly until all you could see was the red glow. When that glow stopped, there was a perfectly healthy bird. He then fed and gave it water, with a smile. The next day he would return the bird to the park.

The next day the rain had stopped. He went to the park and returned the bird back to its nest. When he was about to leave, he saw a cat, but this cat was in critical condition and it was going to perish soon. As he gently picked up the cat's poor mangled body, he knew it was still alive so there is still time, not much. So he put the cat in his hat, and headed home.

He put the cat on the table and pulled out his cane, and with all his might he brought the poor cat from imminent death. When the glowing stopped, he fed and gave it some milk, with a smile. And the cat was pleased.

The next day he returned the cat to the park. Again, when he was about to leave, he saw a duck with a broken neck. He cannot

save this duck. And this made him very angry. Indeed it did. He was wondering what has been hurting all of these animals. So he decided to wait in the park to find out what had been going on at night.

It started to rain again, and it was coming down hard. So he decided to lie under a tree to wait. And slowly he fell asleep. Suddenly a slight crackling sound awakened him. He quickly looked around, but it was very dark and cold. He heard another sound and focused where the sound was, but at first he did not seem to see anything. Then he began to see a shadowy form moving around in the dark.

Then he saw red eyes and he began to be petrified with fear and he knew this couldn't be a good thing. And, with all of his fears, the bird with the ruby eyes began to glow brightly. This figure was instantly captured in the light.

He saw this figure looked a lot like a wolf, and this wolf growled and showed its teeth. So the old man lifted his cane high, and he focused his pure love and harmony. Then the cane started to get brighter than ever until that was all you could see. And the light startled the wolf, it started to howl and moan with fear. And the old man said, "Fear not for it is pure," and the wolf was instantly changed into a good wolf.

And when the light stopped, the old man went over and began to pet the wolf, and he knew he did a good job. Later the old man went home, with a smile on his face.

There were no more attacks on the park.

SAINT MARTHA'S DAY

by Whiting

Snap's Lyrics

Prison to her
Was her beauty enthroned
She was ugly
To her and her sister's regard

I stole her color then
But she could not see her
True love to me

It was not a war of armor or guns
It was not a show of freedom
Or slavery
It was something inbetween
What she could not be

There was the way of the witless to me
People disagreed and called her
The queen.
She and her sister knew beauty unseen
He could not paint her in colors impressed.

She could not be lost
When she had grey hair
It was the turn of her cheek
To the very thin air
It was lost in the talk she had
With her mother in the poor summer dress

Her love was no fairer than mine
We let it go for the theatre.

War time came then
Over her or her like
She turned her cheek

To the first impress
It was sisters and loss
And cold grief shared

The rest of her was found in the burning of soldiers

I sold her color as cause
To the markets of soldiers
Their law could sometimes impress
The truth of beauty and its men

Her to her might have been the first thing
Prone to maladies were her futures unshaded,
He looked at her as if the truth was not in her
It came to be of the eyes unrest.

We burned for each other on madness enthroned
It could be called lust at a stretch
Women for men
And men for a king all wifeless

We lost when we called it no more a malady
It was found to be ourselves to a cross
How can we make them
When time is for choosing

Whatever it was it was not love
At a stretch.

In wars time came soldiers
To the king's fatal malady
All day they lay in the sun
Impressed.

Duty by her was the queen's new man
One to fight against the queen's complaint
All outside beauty the law

It was the birth of the two
Wherein both passed away
Everything was color then
Because it and not line gave boundary

The lust for the painted queen had
Passed diary and faerie
The demand for the man
Came through twice a day

He killed all the suitors
In close adultery all slain.

It broke all on beauty
Her sex to have cared

So it was greed on the throne
The man killed for the queen's complaint
It bought all the silence of the king on the throne
Still the fire burned of what was kept inside.

A prince came then, beauty
Then duty's unrest.
On the throne it burned until God came away
Beauty is temptation burned
The message all crosswise.

He when grew older
Brought shades unsaid
Of people and politics and things to unwaste
By altruism the cause of death was revealed;
The temptation to incest was in one
And not the other

I sold her color to get the truth
Laid bare. She thought she was
For working, and that's all we
Could share. Her mask
Brought murder and knights and country unrode.

It's gone all day long,
Said the country on Sunday.
Save the baby they said and laughed it all away.
Innocence and evil, left to one another
Did scapegoat decree.

We named it then,
The fire of god on his altar,
The prisons of beauty and idols
To carry. They abandoned their true
Love to weep on the altar.

UNLOCKING MY NEW DOORS WITH MY NEW KEYS

by Dave Horman with Amy Salas

Opening doors with keys allows us to enter new worlds in our lives. I have been blessed in my life to know and to learn so many things. But there is one door that I have been unable to open.

The Literacy Action Center is helping me to open a door I could not open on my own. They are walking down paths I have never walked before – the paths of reading, writing and spelling.

With their guidance, I can now spell words, write sentences, and read things that I never could before.

With their help, and my own hard work, I now have a key to a door that I thought I could never open!!!

STORY OF MY LIVE

by Bryan Rich

As I entered my tiny 500 sq. ft. apt., I kicked off my shoes, and flung myself onto my bed. It had been another long day of walking up and down the street with two big, heavy pieces of wood strapped together and hanging around my shoulders. It was hot today and I sweated like a stuffed pig at a Hawaiian luau. I hit my answering machine and checked to see if there were any messages from the three jobs that I had applied for yesterday. The machine clicked twice and then began to rewind itself with a sickening sound that let me know that my answering machine was on its last legs. A woman's voice that has a slight southern twang to it began to speak. "Mr. Wrong, this is Luella from the Twissler Candy Co. I am sorry to let ya'll know but we cannot use you at this time. Our quota for the janitorial service was just filled yesterday mornin.' We will however keep your application on file just in case our new man does not work out. Good luck honey. Hope you find something soon." The machine then clicked again but nothing else came out.

I crawled off the bed, popped open a can of chicken noodle soup and threw it into a pan. I grabbed a beer from the fridge and turned on the TV. I had to play with the antenna for a couple of minutes, but I finally was able to get a picture that was clear enough to watch. I popped open my little dinner tray, grabbed my pot of soup and sat back down on the bed. Reruns of Mission Impossible were on. As I settled in, I thought to myself, "At least this show will have a happy ending."

FRUSTRATION

by LaRayne R.

Frustration

Is when you think you have everything you need to do a job and then come to find out something is missing and you don't have time or you're in the wrong place to get it

Frustration is being told you're either too qualified or not qualified for the job you apply for

It's also feeling that the medicine you take for your illness isn't doing its job right or dealing with the side effect of the drug

Frustration is waiting for a bus that never comes

Frustration is stopping to smell the flowers and getting stung by a bee

Frustration is a big pain in the neck but without it how would we learn to survive it

UNPUNISHED

by John Wilkes

PREFACE

Since September 11, 2001, many freedoms and civil rights have been severely restricted, limited, or discarded in the name of Homeland Security and patriotism. The glaring injustices at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq are but the tip of the iceberg.

There has been increased abuse of power at grassroots levels. Dee Dee Corradini and Nancy Workman are recent local examples. During these crises, we always looked to higher officials and our justice system to ensure fair and equitable treatment. This can no longer be assured since the capture of the last presidential election, the proposed (and adopted) discriminatory amendments to state and federal constitutions, the unjust wars being waged by our government and its corporate collaborators, and the corruption, lies and avarice they breed. This is a shameful tragedy.

Everyday, right here on our streets, people are singled out because of their skin color, appearance or perceived socioeconomic status. They are harassed, ticketed, subject to illegal search, and incarcerated. Men and women are roused in the middle of the night while they are trying to do nothing but sleep. They are talked down to and ejected from public areas such as malls, where they are merely trying to avoid inclement weather. They are written citations for various infractions (trespassing, obstructing the sidewalk, jaywalking, loitering) for which the majority will not appear in court, and for which they are unable to pay the fine. When bench warrants are issued, these people go to overcrowded jails.

This seems to be a very inefficient use of public safety personnel. As Maynard Bailey asks in "Unpunished," "Why is your Law so inequitable, inaccurate and devoid of common sense and compassion?" Yes, if a transient person commits a crime, they should be arrested. But aren't there bigger fish to fry than a group of people just trying to survive? Think of the Elizabeth Smart fiasco. A man, wrongly detained, died in jail. The truth of how and why Elizabeth was missing for nine months will most likely remain hidden behind status and wealth. After all, who's

listening to a “homeless nut?” How many death row inmates have been freed this past year, exonerated by new evidence?

This story is a work of fiction, with basis in events that I experienced, had recounted to me, or witnessed in three years on the streets of Salt Lake City. No names of actual victims or law enforcement officials have been used.

Maybe they should have been.

John Wilkes

September 11, 2004

Maynard Bailey awakes and squints into the desert sun, the heat of which boils steam from the wet blanket in which the homeless man is wrapped. Puddles of water in the alley behind Pierpont Hotel evaporate rapidly, adding damp to the chilly air. He sleeps here when it rains because the balconies offer some shelter. Maynard ties his greyed hair back in a frizzy ponytail, gathers up his sodden bedding, swings his pack over his shoulders and heads toward downtown to fly his sign. His joints protest painfully. *When had everything started hurting?* He doesn't recall. He does recall that this time of year in Utah is normally hot and arid. *It'll be an early icy winter. Barely survived the last one. If I don't conquer this year's, who will care?* Everyone with whom he had laughed and cried, drank and dined, worked, played and laid are phantoms. He recognizes someone passing; he looks through Maynard like he's transparent. Fifty grand a year buys friends, but nothing can guarantee their loyalty or empathy.

Maynard knows nobody believes he ever made \$50,000 a year. *I was the best damn medical supply distributor in The West. How does such a successful man become such a failure?* In response, the visions that haunt Maynard intrude:

Maynard stands over the bodies of Amanda his wife and Morgan his little girl. He holds a bloody hammer in his hands. His clothes and hair are slathered in viscera; it drips down his face, off his fingertips. Two police enter the room. They throw him down, wrench his arms behind his back and tighten the handcuffs. They beat him mercilessly with their batons. Maynard loses consciousness.

Suddenly, he's strapped into an electric chair. A sponge is squeezed over his head. The water that drips onto his lips tastes like vinegar. The executioner tightens the skullcap and asks Maynard does he have any last words. Maynard looks through the observation window, which should be one-way glass, and sees his wife and child, decayed, emaciated, present to witness his execution.

"I didn't do it!" Maynard bellows. He struggles against his bonds, tries to face the man who holds the power of death over him. He looks again at his family. "I wasn't there," Maynard whispers. "I'm not responsible." *But I am, Maynard thinks. I failed to protect them.*

The executioner slips the hood over Maynard's head, walks to the wall and raises the switch. Raw current courses through him. As he jerks and flails and bites his tongue, Maynard hears voices.

"Hey, fella!"

Maynard returns, free of his bonds. A lingering tingle escapes his body. He sees two policemen on bicycles. One dismounts, approaches Maynard lying in the walkway, and gives him a kick. "C'mon, get up."

The other officer saunters over. "You drinking?"

"No."

"Using or abusing drugs or medications?"

"No, sir."

"Against the wall. Spread 'em." Maynard knows the routine. He'll simply endure and they'll let him go. "Any weapons?"

"Nothing," Maynard replies as the bigger cop pats him down, squeezing his genitals much too hard. Bailey represses the urge to complain.

"Let's see some I.D., pal." The shorter cop reaches one hand toward Maynard and unstraps the radio on his belt with the other.

"Haven't any, and I'm not your *pal*."

The cops wrestle Maynard to the grass. "You just bought some time, buddy." Maynard kicks and punches; the cuffs again cut into his wrists and he slips back into his fugue. The officers draw their batons. One blow batters Bailey's head. Unconscious, Maynard dreams of his lost love, his lost life.

Maynard and Amanda fell in love the day they met, when her family moved from Tooele to Layton, his childhood home. They were both six, about to start first grade. They played together every recess, ate together every lunch period. In high school, they had the same homeroom, and took many of the same classes. Both played French Horn, participated in the same sports – soccer and tennis. Their graduating class crowned them Homecoming King and Queen. They applied and were both accepted to Weber State University. He majored in Business Management, she in Accounting. They wed right after graduation, honeymooned in Paris, courtesy of his parents, and returned to a perfect house, courtesy of hers. They planned their own business, but the job at MEDCorp came up as they made preparations for a new arrival. Morgan Amanda Bailey arrived St. Valentine's Day, 1998. They moved to Salt Lake after Thanksgiving so Maynard would have a shorter commute. The mortgage was worth the veritable manse they acquired in the subdivision of Holladay. Amanda became a homemaker. Maynard climbed the corporate ladder. They were living their happily ever after.

Until August 23rd, 2002: At a trade convention in Illinois, Maynard pitched the biggest presentation of his career. He would have surely made vice-president of sales. He was just about to wow 'em when a policeman entered the room. He walked up to Maynard, cupped a hand around his ear and whispered, "Mr. Bailey, you have an urgent call."

"Excuse me, gentlemen," Maynard mumbled to the staring group of his associates. He followed the cop to an office with a telephone. The officer pushed the flashing red button on its console, handed Maynard the receiver, then walked out and closed the door.

"Maynard Bailey? This is Sergeant Chainey of the Salt Lake Police. We need you to return from Chicago immediately. There's been an incident." Maynard noticed Chainey hadn't said "accident."

"What's happened?"

"I'd rather not explain on the phone. You should get back immediately. I'm sorry." The line went silent.

Maynard hung up, left the room and walked out of the building into the parking lot. He fumbled in his jacket pocket for his car keys, dropped them twice, then managed to open the door of his Lexus. He got into the driver's seat and stuck the key in the ignition. Maynard's hands dropped to his lap before he could start the car. Although Sergeant Chainey hadn't said so, Maynard knew Mandy and Morgie were lost to him.

Someone pounded on the driver's-side window. Maynard noticed his associate; fists clenched, face red, peering through the glass. "What in hell, Bailey? What do you mean walking out? You're through at MEDCorp. You hear me? Get out here so I can kick your ass!" Maynard started the Lexus and peeled out of the parking lot, leaving Vasquez agape. At the street, Maynard turned toward O'Hare and punched the accelerator.

Traffic to the airport was heavy, and a long line of vehicles awaited rental return. Maynard left the car at the terminal curb and dropped the keys in the skycap's hand. He continued to the Delta counter. There he stood, no bags, immobile. "May I help you?" The singsong voice jarred Maynard back to reality.

"Salt Lake. My family. Emergency."

"May I see your ticket?"

"I think I've lost it," Maynard checked and re-checked all his pockets. The desk agent motioned to a security guard, who sidled over, holster open.

"Are you OK, sir?" Maynard wanted to tell the guard and agent the urgency of his quest, but his throat was dry, tongue swollen, mind numb. The room quivered. Maynard felt as if every eye in O'Hare was upon him. His knees buckled as brown swirls blocked his vision. The guard and agent were unable to catch him before he hit the floor.

He awoke on a cot in a small room without windows. Hot, incandescent light forced him to squint. Another guard sat at a desk, filling out paperwork, and a woman announced, "He's coming to." Maynard tried to sit up, but the woman told him, "Just relax."

The security officer came over to the bed to speak with Maynard. "Mr. Bailey, this is Joanna, our nurse. She's taken good care of you. You're not seriously hurt but I'm afraid we'll have to

keep you here just long enough to answer a few questions.” Maynard tried to shake the cobwebs from his head, but the room was too hot, too bright. And his head hurt. He nevertheless realized the sooner he cooperated, the sooner he’d be on his way.

“OK.”

“Great. Coffee or anything to drink?”

“Nothing.”

“I’m Officer Grant,” the guard explained. He smiled and offered his hand, but Maynard failed to take it. “Since The Towers went down, we all know security’s been beefed up. You arrived acting oddly, no luggage, no ticket...” Grant’s voice trailed off as he rubbed his chin, “...well you can understand our concern. Do you take any medications, or use any drugs, Mr. Bailey?”

Maynard had never been asked such a question. Grant’s audacity cut through his haze. “I’m not some terrorist or smuggler. My wife and little girl – something’s happened and I need to get back to Salt Lake. I have I.D. Credit cards.” Maynard searched his inside coat pocket for his wallet.

“You had no identification, cash, or ticket with you when you were searched.” The officer gave him a “nice try” look. “You sped up to the curb and abandoned a rental vehicle in which were several unmarked packages.”

“Gifts for my wife and daughter.”

“That may be,” Grant continued. “The dogs didn’t detect any weapons, drugs or explosives. Still, this whole spectacle is highly unorthodox. Until the FBI talks to you and the bomb squad double-checks, you are considered suspicious.”

An orange-red glow tinted Maynard’s vision. His fists clenched. He rose from the cot, against the protests of Nurse Joanna. “Now look here, Grant. I just received a call from the police. Something’s happened to my family. I have to get back home. There’s no time for this.” He stepped toward the door, but Grant blocked his path.

“We’re corroborating your story. If it checks out, you’ll be free to go.”

“Please step aside.” Grant failed to comply. Maynard shoved him.

“Mr. Bailey,” Joanna chimed, “You’re in shock. Please lie back down.” Maynard reached for the doorknob. Grant pinned him from behind. Maynard shrugged him off. Grant drew his weapon, and targeted Maynard’s retreating back.

“Halt or I’ll shoot!”

“You do what you think you have to and I’ll do what I must,” Maynard hollered without turning back. Grant squeezed the trigger. The bullet entered Maynard’s lower back. He lurched forward as it exited through his abdomen. Bailey put his hands to his gut, held them before his eyes and stared at the blood that covered them. Then he hit the floor of O’Hare International Airport for the second time that afternoon.

Maynard was six months in the hospital healing, re-learning the simplest tasks. He underwent ten surgeries to repair his spine, intestines and stomach. He refused visitors, and after a while they stopped calling. Except for the police. He couldn’t answer their questions. They showed him graphic photos of Amanda and Morgan, and he identified them, but nothing more. Maynard followed the reports on television. His family had been brutally murdered by unknown assailants, who had broken into their home. The cops had no leads, no suspects, no clues. After 90 days, the case was closed, unsolved.

From St. Mark’s, Maynard was transferred to the Utah State Hospital. He rarely ate. He spoke to no one. He pretended to take his medications, then flushed them. When he could walk again, he left that forbidding, gothic mental institution and disappeared into the streets of Salt Lake, still wishing, as he had since Chicago, that Grant’s bullet had ended his anguish.

Maynard awakes in a jail cell, on a hard bench next to a stainless steel sink and toilet. It’s cold. He has no blanket. The bump on his throbbing head keeps him prone, aching for death. An announcement over the loudspeaker dissipates his mental fog somewhat. “Bailey! Beckstead! Chavez! Cosby! Frazer! McIntosh! Mortensen! Peterson! Tuero!” A loud buzz sounds and Maynard’s cell door flies open. “Stand outside your cells and wait for the bailiff,” the voice commands. Footsteps echo through the corridor and enter his cell.

A different voice brays, “C’mon, Sleeping Beauty. You’ve been out for three days.” Maynard does not move. A hand grips his arm and yanks him upright. “Time to see the judge.” The bailiff pushes Maynard through the door to join the others. “Let’s move, ladies. Stay single-file and no talking.”

The prisoners follow the bailiff to a room with benches along the wall, where they’re instructed to be seated until their name is called. In the room adjacent, Maynard spies a dais with a microphone. A camera focuses upon them. A nearby monitor shows the first accused, with a public defender, approaching the stand. Maynard checks a clock on the wall: 11:15 AM. His eyes close momentarily. A cross voice jars him, “Bailey! Get in here or you’re back to your cell.” The clock now reads 1:00.

Maynard steps into the adjoining chamber. The PD is seated at a table and motions for Maynard to sit in the folding chair opposite. “Is your full name Maynard Morgan Bailey?” Maynard nods. “Today you will plead before Judge Simmons on the charges of disturbing the peace, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct and failure to cooperate. Do you understand these charges?” Maynard nods again and the attorney rises, beckoning him to follow to the podium. Another TV shows a kindly looking, plump woman in a judicial robe.

“Mr. Bailey,” Her Honor looks at him through lunettes, which lend her an appearance of authority. “I’m informed you understand the charges. How do you plead?”

“Guilty. I killed them.”

The public defender grimaces and pulls Maynard away from the mike. “A moment to consult with the accused.” He turns and hisses at Maynard, “Mr. Bailey, please cooperate with the court.” Maynard stands looking at his feet. “Just answer to the charges against you. I don’t see anything on my agenda to indicate murder.”

Maynard nods and steps back up to the stand. “Guilty, Your Honor, of negligent homicide in the deaths of Amanda and Morgan Bailey.” The PD shakes his head while Judge Simmons looks perplexed.

“If this is some bizarre attempt to confuse the court, you’re wasting your time.” The judge makes a notation in the file before her. “I’ll enter a no contest plea on your behalf –”

“My wife and baby are gone,” Maynard interjects. “I couldn’t help them. The police didn’t protect them. No one’s paid. Someone has to be punished.”

Mr. Public Defender keeps shaking his head and shuffling his papers. The bailiff stands by, hand on his weapon. Judge Simmons peruses the documents on her bench, then peers at Maynard over her reading glasses, her eyes more compassionate. “I’m informed by this file about the matter involving your family three years ago. I am sorry. In the absence of other charges, I can address only current matters. Do you have anything to say before I pass sentence?”

Maynard spits out, “I’ve died every day for the last 1,095. Nobody can resurrect my family. No one found out who hurt them.” He weeps freely as he continues. “There is nothing you – he glares at Judge Simmons, “...or you – Maynard turns to the attorney, “...or he can do...” Bailey points at the bailiff. “...to hurt me.” Judge Simmons bangs her gavel. In his agitation Maynard imagines gunfire, covers his head and dives beneath the podium.

“Mr. Bailey, get up!” Her Honor commands. “If there’s nothing further...”

Maynard stands up behind the dais, bows to the microphone. His look of purpose and his staunch posture cast calm over the proceedings. Maynard doesn’t ask to be heard, he insists. His voice carries, unwavering. “I have nothing to lose in saying what I’m about to. My life is tedious.” Maynard looks at the ceiling. “God is dead to me. I wish to be left alone to die.” He looks Judge Simmons straight in the eyes. “But you won’t let me be. I had no criminal record before I became homeless. Your system exacerbates my condition and multiplies my frustrations. Why is your Law so inequitable and inaccurate, devoid of common sense and compassion?” The judge attempts to interrupt. Maynard holds up his hand.

“For every jaywalker you ticket, for every person of color you profile, for each homeless person you harass, for every alcoholic

you incarcerate and every pot smoker you bust: There's someone across town battering their spouse or children. A car is stolen while you cite someone for fare evasion. Over there's somebody planning a murder, rape, kidnapping or armed robbery, perhaps even committing one of these crimes. Hardened criminals know you focus on the small stuff. Serious offenders enjoy impunity for their felonies. You *always* go unpunished for yours."

Maynard slumps in the chair behind the podium, puts his head in his hands, and awaits the court's decision.

IN THE EARLY MORNING HAZE

by Sara Jordan

She usually rises with the sun. But on this particular day she knew before opening her eyes that it wouldn't happen. For a long time Jeannie had wanted to be a writer. Whenever someone mentioned the topic or read a passage from a book, she found herself wondering how a person becomes one – *is there a formal process? How does one know all of the things that good writers seem to know: innate talent (where does that come from?); hard work (why are some people so disciplined?); connections (who are the crucial people to have for support – a mentor, a writing group or a rock solid lover, although maybe a fickle one might provide the fuel of passionate inspiration for the creative stove.)*

Anyway, Jeannie didn't have any of these in her life. Nor did she have a swift-flowing money current. She did, however, have a few gray hairs, increasingly aching joints, a few friends who seemed to stick by her in spite of various neurosis and a smaller group of anonymous fans who just believed in her in that abstract way that we believe in the people we see regularly at the grocery store, in yoga class or at social events.

Part of the reason Jeannie didn't rise with the sun on this morning was because she had had to sleep in her bedroom with the door closed. With a 90 degree outdoor daytime temperature, her bedroom was sweltering and without any air circulation, she did not sleep a wink all night. She had shut the door to create some privacy from her houseguests who typically didn't retire until long after Jeannie liked to be asleep. After almost a month of their visit, she was beginning to feel cranky and hard pressed to not act cranky. The lack of airflow in the night room combined with taut nerves and perhaps some hormonal stuff, was taking its toll on this particular morning.

Lying in her bed, eyes still closed, she vowed to get a massage, talk with someone and try to put a positive spin on whatever came her way. Her thoughts floated to last night.

Earlier in the evening, before climbing into bed, she attended a meeting that she felt obliged to attend. As the star of an upcoming community event, she wanted to know about the planning. When she learned that no one had done anything to publicize the event, she felt an urge to lash out at the group. Tired,

mad and sad, she just couldn't rouse her happy, laid-back self. Finally, she left the meeting feeling frustrated with the people she had been with and disappointed in herself. Despite being constantly aware of her feelings, Jeannie wasn't always so good at regulating them.

Later, climbing into bed, her awareness of her aggressive attitude pricked at her conscience. Basically a non-drinker, she took cough syrup with alcohol in it hoping to calm her nerves. She tried to relax as she waited for it to take effect and practiced smiling the smiles that had eluded her earlier in the evening. *Is it too late to salvage my reputation with the meeting folks?* she wondered. *For that matter is it too late to be the super woman I expect myself to be?* You know the one – friendly and cheery regardless of the weather, situation or one's inner state, punctual and prepared, in enviable physical shape – a result of disciplined daily workouts.

On top of everything else, Jeannie expected her innate creative genius to manifest itself at the appropriate times and places so that she could harvest its offerings with a minimum of stress and with confidence that the world would receive her gift of fruitful thought. Too bad she lived in an internal land of perpetual February – the land where the seeds she was sure were there never seemed to find their way above ground. At age 39, she was beginning to worry that the season of thaw and bloom would never arrive.

Early the next morning, she was sure of it. Not wanting to get up, despair threatened to overcome her. *Why not stay here in the warmth and comfort of covers and just let the world do what it will? Who cares what I do and even if anyone did, what difference would it make?* The longer she lay there, the more discouraged she became.

Just as she'd thought herself out of any productive action for the day, she heard an alarm go off. *Uggghhhhh*, she responded to herself. Jeannie hated the sound that was now coming through the wall. A few years prior, she had abandoned the use of alarms to wake up. Never, she reasoned, had she failed to do so, so what was the point of intentionally aggravating that sensitive time by adding a shrill, relentless, and/or monotone noise to the trauma. She felt her body tense and a tinge with resentment about being

cheated out of a few extra moments of external silence because of her neighbor's dependence on the obnoxious object.

As she lay there, the silent red letters on the digital clock face told her the day was passing. The sunlit room was another clue. With remote control in hand, she justified her lounge-in-bed-time by turning on the radio. In her ban on alarming noises, she included the news. She found that by minimizing her exposure to the maddening, horrifying, depressing acts that human creatures are capable of, she generally was a more positive person. Today, however, she wanted to check out of her uninspired life, so she checked into a nationally syndicated public radio talk show.

As she did, the newly famous author being interviewed declared, "Every act of writing is an act of trust – in yourself, that you have something to say, and in humanity, that somewhere someone is interested in what you have to say. You can change the world with your words, but first, you have to be willing to meet the world." These words fell on her heart, giving it a start. She felt her exhausted body rally and her mind race even faster than it had been.

A few hours after the sun had risen and with a renewed commitment to explore herself as a writer, she rose to meet the world. And, thus from an early morning haze to the promise of the clarity through action, Jeannie's day began.

CHILD INSIDE

by Ginger Phillips

may i justifiably despair
may i be alone with you...have you all to myself
is there reason in this world to care

am i here for a purpose unknown to me
do you see potential in my eyes
could i just meet the maker in the skies

innocence cries from my heart
yet gestures take that away
give of myself liberally

toleration of hurts
endurance is broken
run away find the skirts
buried and unchained

labeled...choose your name
too much here to avoid the flames
i claim nothing...mouth shut
child inside...clutched

indifference!

UNTITLED

by Ann S.

Role playing, fantasy, and make Believe,
all these make up my life. The
Stage I lived on for much of my life...

There's a different kind of stage,
that many children grow
up with...one that starts with
lots of strife.

Smiles are pasted on Small
trusting faces, But tears hide
Behind those eyes, and confusion
hides the happy child.

Sometimes it takes most of
our lives to finally know the
truth...then pain floods in,
stabs the heart, and sadness
causes Bile.

WATCHING

by David Gravelle

A physician enters an underground facility
passing through complex gates and locks
to sit at a specially designed table.

Watching monitors glowing with black and white images.

Seeing equal numbers of data screens display
red, green and amber light emitting diodes.

He picks up where another has ended her day.

Looking for a flicker of change
that indicates trouble or salvation

in a body, in a mind, so many miles away.

THE PRESIDENTIAL DUKE OUT

by Gregory Tippetts

LAS VEGAS – President George W. Bush and his Democratic challenger Senator John Kerry came to this city in the desert to settle the 2004 presidential election with a boxing match. For the first time in our nation’s history the voters were left out of this important race. My membership in the Sucker Punch Boxing Association of America gave me a ringside seat to this historic fight. The event was held at the Rock Hound Hotel and Convention Center on the Las Vegas Strip. The bombastic crowd seemed equally divided between the Democrats and the Republicans.

The ringside announcer began, “In the red trunks, representing the Republican Party is the world heavy weight President Mr. George W. Bush. The challenger, in the blue trunks, representing the Democratic Party is Senator John Kerry.”

The two touched gloves in the middle of the ring while Alps Youdlehorn, the impartial Swiss referee, told the two opponents, “OK, let’s have a good clean fight; no hitting below the belt; go to your respective corners and come out fighting.”

When the bell rang Bush and Kerry came out with fists flying. First, Kerry threw a few “Vietnam Veteran” jabs. He connected on two, but Bush ducked the others. Then, Bush connected on Kerry’s liberal Senate record. Both jabbed and sparred a little more; then Bush landed several military budget cuts on Kerry’s nose. Kerry responded with two good “no weapons of mass destruction found in Iraq” punches to Bush’s chin. The first round ended in a tie.

Between rounds, I visited each fighter’s corner. As Al Gore wiped hanging chads from Kerry’s forehead, former President Carter told Kerry, “Keep up your guard. Keep hitting him with the ‘Vietnam stuff.’ Hit him in the belly with the ‘budget deficit.’ Get him on the ‘trade deficit with China.’ ”

In the Bush corner, California Governor Schwarzenegger wiped blood from the President’s jaw and told him, “Remember, Kerry’s just a lily-livered liberal. He’s a girly man. Hit him again with his record on voting for ‘military spending cuts.’ ”

Soon the bell rang and the two fighters came out for the second round. Kerry threw a couple quick but solid “Vietnam Veteran” punches, but Bush ducked. Then Kerry landed a strong left budget deficit hook. This stunned Bush and put him against the ropes. The referee separated the two fighters and Bush went on the offensive. Before the second round ended, Bush landed several good “military spending cut” blows. The bell rang and the second round was over.

In the Kerry camp, Carter told Kerry, “ Keep your guard up and hit him with his ‘go it alone policy in Iraq.’ Get him with his ‘National Guard Duty.’ In the Bush corner, Schwarzenegger told the President to use the ‘Texas Twister Punch.’ ”

The third round began and each fighter punched and jabbed. The round ended and there was no clear winner. The crowd sat nervously waiting for the decision that would decide the country’s fate. Suddenly, a Supreme Court judge in a long black robe ran into the convention center. Independent candidate Ralph Nader was following just behind him. The judge rudely yanked the microphone out of the announcer’s hand and told the crowd, “Mr. Ralph Nader has just filed a civil law suit against the manufacture and sale of boxing gloves. Furthermore, Mr. Nader’s lawsuit contends that boxing represents a serious hazard to anyone stupid enough to participate in such a barbaric sport. During this match, both President Bush and Senator Kerry may have suffered serious, long-term brain damage. They may no longer be fit to hold public office. Therefore, I declare the outcome of this election to be postponed until Mr. Nader’s suit has been settled.”

The crowd booed wildly, threw tomatoes and sprayed beer at both Nader and the judge while they were escorted from the Rock Hound Hotel under tight security. Several months later, it was determined in court that boxing gloves and the sport of boxing were dangerous and both President Bush and Senator Kerry did indeed suffer serious, permanent brain damage from the fight

Ralph Nader was declared the next President of the United States.

