

Spring 2025

# The Writers' Block



Free Copy

The **Writers' Block** is published quarterly  
and  
Submissions are accepted throughout the year.

**2025 Quarterly Submission Deadlines** are:

**July 15th** for the **Summer 2025 Issue**

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Spring 2025

## The Writers' Block

*The Writers' Block* is a literary journal published by the Inside Out Alliance, the student-alumni organization of Saint Louis University's Prison Education Program. The content in this issue is composed by residents of Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center.

The editors of *The Writers' Block* invite submissions of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, essays, artwork, cartoon editorials, speeches, humorous stories, jokes, memoirs, trivia, comic strips, cover art, and anything not listed that's printable of general interest! Prose submissions should be no longer than 5,000 words and poetry submissions no more than 100 lines. Submissions may be submitted at The Learning Center in the gym.

### Content Guidelines:

- No graphic sexual content
- No gratuitous foul language
- No gang signs or symbols in art work
- No glorifying of personal past crime(s), illegal drug use, etc.
- No rants against the DOC/Justice system
- However, issues may be presented with a proposed resolution.
- Essays must be fact-based
- Essays must be solutions oriented
- Page limits: 10 pages handwritten, 8 pages typed
- No anonymous work.
  - Submissions must have a title, the author's name, housing unit address, and a pen name, if the writer wishes to be published under a pen name.
  - Failure to provide this information will delay or prevent the submission from being published.

**Editor's notice:** *Author's submission(s) are subject to edits, by the Writers' Block editorial board, to make grammatical and minor wording edits as necessary, and they willingly approve any and all edits by the editors. Authors may request in writing on or with their submission to have final approval on any and all edits, and if the author is unavailable or cannot be contacted for final approval, the submission will not be published, until approved.*

Cover art: Kevin Miner

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## **Your Turn**

*The “**Your Turn**” section is for Opinion Editorials (Op-Ed) where ERDCC residents can voice inspiration, observations, or critiques with a solution.*

### **Looking the Other Way**

*By William Ray Chamness*

There is nothing more terrifying than ignorance in action, when truth is left to stand alone. As my wisdom cries and my knowledge puts forth a voice, telling everyone that the only thing necessary for evil to prevail is for good people to sit idle and do nothing. Understand the wisdom of these words, now that my race has been run, and my greatest trials having only now begun. My time passed, my goals shattered, everything I love gone, and all I’ve lived for vanished. I’m now being forced to face the unknown, what destiny lies ahead I know not. I’ve always ran through empty space, moving rapidly toward where I could best serve, knowing that my humanity was always being tempted with reality. I have been dispatched on that road of death, as are we all.

To die is not the question, as dying is inevitable. The journey however is what counts, and what one has done along the way. Over time, I have learned to be wise with my words and wiser still in my deeds. I learned at an early age to walk with honor, integrity, and dignity by sharing compassion and understanding. I have come a long way from where I originally started and no one ever told me the road would be easy. I know hope will never disappoint me, because I acquired comfort and patience, realizing everyone has seen it. Sure, I’m out of my league and in way over my head, learning that the true colors of deception come in many forms of the truth being revealed just for what it is - deception! Be wary with your investments in people because often you will be let down and left disappointed. Always be confident and secure with yourself as this world continues changing and becoming less forgiving. All men, women, and children are nothing more than a person of circumstance with the government and corporate society as our puppeteers, manipulating us, giving representations of themselves in order to suggest the story they want us to perceive and believe. Giving them their advantages and power over us. Should we look beneath the surface, we would realize that greed is

their only creed. Ask yourself how blind and ignorant can we truly be as we sit idly by and watch our government and corporate society rape, murder, and pillage the poor, domestically as well as globally? We must remember unity is the ultimate achievement of God's expectation of us, as humans, as His children. Enrich your lives with compassion. Allow humanity to fill your heart daily with the understanding that true freedom comes with a heavy price. Are you willing to pay the price, to step up and do the right thing? Or will you continue sitting on the side, looking the other way?

*\* Hangers Of Life@YouTube.com*

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### ***Life in These Times***

My husband placed a perfectly good set of used tires outside his garage with a sign that read "Free." After a few weeks with no takers, he changed the sign to "\$20." The next day they were stolen.

-Jeannie Cabigting

I just got a GPS for my car, and my first trip with it was to a drugstore. Since the manual said not to leave it in the car unattended, I brought it with me into the store. While there, the GPS came alive, and a voice stated, "Lost satellite contact."

I wasn't embarrassed until a woman turned to me and said, "Your ankle bracelet monitor is talking to you."

-David McAfee

# **Looking Out Tha Window**

*By Sabir Amir Abduce Basir (aka. Dale Horton)*

Lookin' out tha window...  
Wondering what's wrong with me...

Lookin' out tha window...  
Wondering when my body will be set free...

Lookin' out tha window...  
Praying He favors me...

Lookin' out tha window...  
Praying I still have loyalty from she...

Lookin' out tha window...  
Hoping my kids don't turn out like me...

Lookin' out tha window...  
Hoping Iblis will just let them be...

Lookin' out tha window...  
Sayin' it's time for a change in me...

Lookin' out tha window...  
Sayin' I'm the one that holds the key...

Lookin' out tha window...  
Knowin' the way things must be...

Lookin' out tha window...  
Knowin' Allah loves me...

# Opportunity

By Anijuian "Twizzo" Bohlen

Within this unique realm,  
some are given, some are created,  
but never shall any be taken for granted.  
The wise and vigilant recognize,  
Acknowledge, and take advantage  
Do not miss yours.

~~~~~

## Gift Shop Indian

By Steven Maupin

**(Tourists):** "Oh, let us get a picture with this injun!"

**(White Oak):** "These days are so different from long ago. These white glances staring deep into my grooves. Their pale skin embracing my rough and scarred grain. Where are the days of Soaring Eagle and the paddles of the beaver tail? They would sing to my youthful leaves all through the day. The people of that time were dark, long hair, and spoke softly to my roots. Their homes matched the peaks of the Grand Tetons of the great white north. Then came the day of my birth when loud chops were echoing through the canyon, and I was laid down. Then I was taken up, shaved, and cut into those beautiful people that loved me all them years. This was the greatest gift of the WASHITUS! The thing I've been fashioned into is nothing I care to know, but the image of those beautiful people I reflect is a comfort to my end."

Editor's note: This is a reprint from the Winter 2024 issue, with corrections made.





*"Rose Reflection"*

*By: Kevin Miner*

# ***Recovery Radio: Recovering Your Cents***

*By Jamie Cochran*

Good morning America. You're listening to Scrappy James here at Recovery Radio--a broadcast from the heart. Where our lessons may become your blessings. Where history may predict your future. Where sour truth turns into sweetest medicine.

Check this out. Do you or your loved ones use Securus to call from prison? If so, you have been wrongly getting your money taken for dropped calls ever since they installed Wi-Fi.

We have a generation that has never used a pay phone in which you deposit change for service. Let's look at the process closely. You would pick up the receiver and put it to your ear to hear a dial tone. You would put 25¢ into the coin slot, where it is temporarily housed as you dial the number you are calling. You hear the call ringing on the other end, and when the receiver gets picked up on the other end, the call is considered to be transmitted. Once the transmission is successful, the money in the pay phone drops into the coin box for the phone company to collect. On the other hand, if you are calling a number and the receiving end does not pick up the phone, the money you deposited is returned BECAUSE NO SERVICE HAS BEEN RENDERED.

We are using wireless tablets to call our friends and family. I have dialed the number, pressed SEND, and the calls gets dropped before I hear the receiver answer the call. Securus has been charging me 5¢ for one minute of service that never happened. We are not supposed to be getting charged for dialing numbers. We are not supposed to be charged for attempted calls that fail because of the unsatisfactory quality of the equipment being used for our service.

I wrote the Securus trouble ticket center about this issue. I explained that I wanted my phone money back for all calls for which they incorrectly charged the unused one minute, dating back to January 2022 when Wi-Fi was installed. They wrote back and told me to be more precise on detail: date, time and equipment used. My access to these details was limited to the one month of calls listed in the phone log on the kiosk. I found five calls

on the list, recorded the details of the transactions, and provided Securus with that information. Securus honored my request to have a total of 25¢ refunded to my account.

One may think this 25¢ is no big deal. I only recorded a few days of my dropped calls that were wrongly charged to me. I am quite sure it is happening to every inmate using his or her tablet to call their families. That adds up to a lot of money in Missouri prisons that is being incorrectly charged to my fellow inmates who are unaware of this practice. How much money does Securus owe you? Tell your friends. Get your money.

Thank you for taking the time to let ole Scrappy James tickle your ears here at Recovery Radio--a broadcast from the heart. Where our lessons may become your blessings. Where history may predict your future. Where sour truth turns into sweetest medicine.

*This article comes from "Recovery Radio," a monthly column published in FCC's newsletter, The Farmington Torch.*

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## **G R A V I T Y**

*By Jacob Hilbert*

**Overthrown by emotion, surrounded by ending's near**

**Soft hearts crushed by invisible anchors resisted by cornered smiles**

**Complete lonesome in depths of faux happiness and shallow vocalizations**

**Days lost next as mourned brevity takes mini forced steps**

**Dark-sided moons always seem to return so soon**

**Perhaps gravity will lose one day**

**But... not today.**

# On Meditation

By Keith Meiners

Meditation helps us break free of habitual patterns and unleashes the power of thought.

Before we are able to see this we must first suffer.

Often it takes a huge risk or trauma to crack the dead shell that has grown ever more solid around us. (Like the trauma of being incarcerated.) Painful as it is, it does resurrect the longing which is in all of our souls. The suffering makes a clearance, so we can properly see our future for the first time.

To properly plan for a successful future you must first free yourself from the chains you have heaped onto yourself, and the chains others have placed on you. Doing so provides one with true freedom.

True freedom is impossible without a mind made free by discipline.

When you sit with your eyes closed meditating, pay attention to the thoughts that your mind generates. Instead of entertaining their existence, clear your mind with a breath in and a breath out. Eventually you will be able to destroy the random thoughts which invade your peace and nurture the positive thoughts which will create a better future for you.

Your thoughts control your future. Once you understand this, you will control your reality.

Begin again the story of your life.

~~~~~

## *Family & Friends humor*

I was thrilled to see a beautiful bouquet of flowers awaiting me at the teacher's lounge. But I was mystified by the card, which read, "With love from A.C. Credmire."

That evening I told my husband about A.C. Credmire.

"That's me," he said, laughing. "When I called it in, I'd asked the florist to sign it, 'With love from a secret admirer.'"

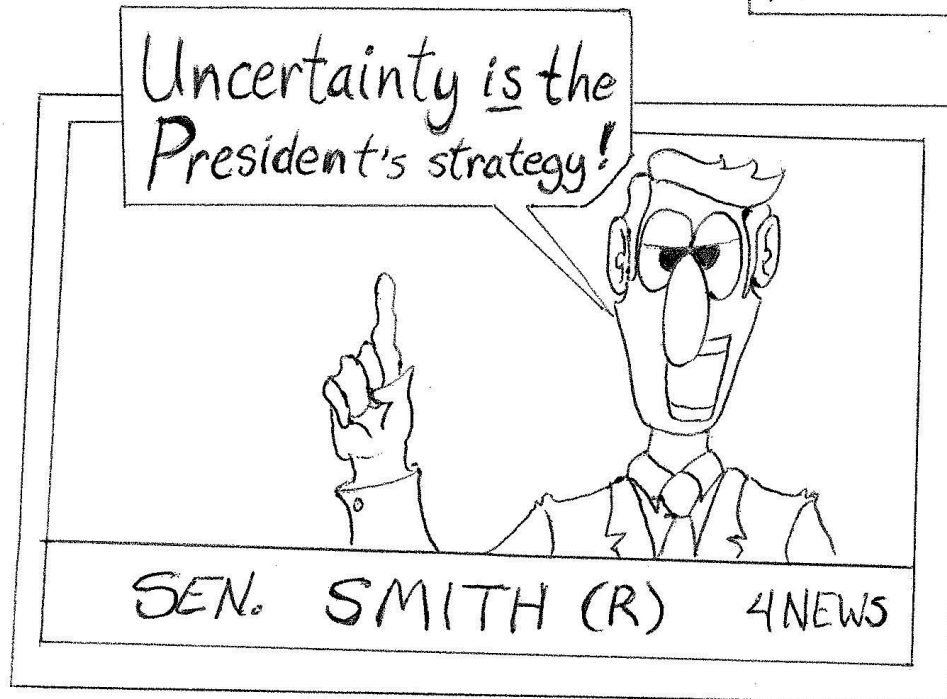
-Geri Willes

# **S c o r e**

*By Horst Sabla*

For ever more  
we try to keep score  
of all the good things we do,  
but God in heaven has the real  
Tally book,  
and he can tell just with a  
cursory look,  
who is really been good.  
So, worry no more.  
Don't try to keep score.  
He will be merciful in the end,  
when we in humble form, and with our knees bent,  
ask him forgiveness for our sins.  
Repent, not resent, is the  
appropriate word  
to receive his heavenly  
Blessing

BREAK ROOM



*Cartoon Editorial*

*By: Fletcher Pryor*

# S a b r

## (patience)

*By Sabir Amir Abduce Basir (aka. Dale Horton)*

To lose patience is to lose the battle...

Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet...

Have patience with all, but first with yourself...

Patience is the road to wisdom...

Patience is the key that solves all problems...

Patience is not just the ability to wait, it's the ability to stay positive while waiting...

One minute of patience equals ten years of patience...

With patience & love nothing is impossible...

Patience & perseverance have a magical effect where difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish...

Patience is the best remedy for every trouble...

~~~~~

### ***Life in These Times***

His new hybrid car was my friend's pride and joy. He was always bragging about it and boring his buddies to death.

As he was giving us a ride one day, he pontificated, "They should have a special lane for people who care about the environment."

"They already do," came a voice from the backseat. "It's called a sidewalk."

-James Sewell

### ***Law & Order humor***

As I pulled into a crowded parking lot, I asked the cop standing there, "Is it all right to park here?"

"No," he said. "Can't you see that 'No Parking sign'?"

"Then, why are all these cars parked here!?"

He shrugged, "They didn't ask."

-Arthur Clum



## **You I Long to Know**

*by Antonio Perez Garcia-Green*

There is gold, there are rubies, but your lips I long to know,  
your mind I long to know, your body I long to know.

I am a scented rose to your nose, that blooms from a concrete road.

The woman's heart I long to know is like deep waters that runneth over  
with emotional past pains.

A dishonest, prideful man has nothing to gain from playing games,  
but a man, who has understanding, can bring out the best in himself, and  
his woman.

Whispering sweet nothings in her ear, "Baby without you there is no me."

I run your bath water, I will cleanse your temple, I'll rub your feet,

I long a search for a wife, a Queen. I your King.

See you shall remember, that a King's anger is like a lion's roar.

Anyone who makes him angry may lose his life for disrespecting thy long  
lost love, Queen wife.

With that said, for now, bless me with your grace.

Big, tall, short, small, my heart for you, beautiful, shall have a place.

Yes? No? Maybe not, or maybe so...

You're the Queen I long to know...

My Oriel...forgive me, but forget me not.



# L I G H T

*by Kenneth Bell,  
(circa 1/7/2021)*

This world is polluted, and it tends to pollute everyone who remains in it for long. But strive to be like Children, who enter the world, not yet affected by its pervasive corruption, not yet physically, mentally, or emotionally fatigued.

Maintain true humility, which is simply the ability to see yourself as you truly are, without embellishments, and without false pride or false modesty. Too many people have been blinded by flattery, shaming, or self deception.

Know yourself intimately. Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses, the bent of your thinking, your tendencies, and the condition of your heart. And submit to God, who is the life in every being, the power fueling every star, and the Infinite Life and Intelligence pervading the universe. God's name is not spoken in English, Arabic, or Hebrew. It consists of the two syllables sounded when we inhale and exhale. In this way, all creatures constantly speak The Name while they live, and when they cease to speak it, they perish.

Don't speak every thought that enters your mind. Don't eat simply for the taste of food, but rather for its nutrition. Don't be moved by every urge and inclination. Captain your own vessel.

Too many adults continue to live by erroneous ideas given to them as children without pausing to consider whether or not those thoughts are wise. So, each life should have a turning point ... a point at which an adult reevaluates every childhood teaching to assess its wisdom, through the prism of adult judgment.

Don't confuse fear and respect because they are unlike. You fear another due to some sense of danger. You respect another due to their goodness and virtue. Too many people are unable to form healthy friendships because they cannot distinguish between fear and respect.

Money is important, but it isn't God. It's needed for daily expenses, but it is no substitute for love, courage, family, or friendship. Always bear in mind that money is a tool for your use, you're not its tool. Having it can improve your access to better healthcare, education, housing, and more. So gain financial literacy. Learn how to earn, save, invest, and grow wealth. But also remember that the development of your heart, mind and health (not money) is what makes you the best version of you.

Be politically engaged. Don't sit idly by and let others run the institutions and make all the decisions that govern your life. That usually leads to abuses of power to your detriment.

As much as possible, from where you are at this moment in time, seek to preserve, protect, and improve your rights, standing, and credibility. They will determine the course of your life.

Don't seek to dominate or bully others because this will inevitably lead to an embarrassing defeat. However, if you are under serious threat, defend yourself vigorously.

Take the time to master an art, craft, or science. This is a valuable possession that will earn money for you while you live, and one that you can pass on to posterity.

Everyone makes bad decisions, especially during youth, and there are no shortage of people trying to cover up their bad decisions by magnifying yours. Don't be defined by a bad decision or by a low moment in life. Learn from your mistakes, and keep living and laughing because no one is perfect.

The most valuable things in life are the good relationships that we make. If you're blessed with love, value it. If you have a friend, be a friend.

Racial prejudice is a form of insanity. It's essential to recognize it, to work against it, and to avoid adopting it.

Life is a long trek made of highs and lows, twists and turns, turmoil and ease. If you don't learn when to rest, when to work, how to find peace, and how to pace yourself you will wear down and age more rapidly than you should.

It is senseless to worry and brood about things beyond your ability to control. This only creates stress in the mind and illness in the body. Above all, never give up. Never allow current difficulties to overwhelm you. But know that if you hold fast for a while, your current difficulties will fade away.

Liars CLAIM to have no fear, and some, who are emotionally retarded, ACTUALLY have no fear, but all normal people experience fear. It is an internal alarm that keeps us alive. It tells us not to walk off of a cliff or not to do any other detrimental thing. It is healthy as long as it does not devolve into cowardice.

One true principle in life is that, " You reap what you sow." So if you take time to show kindness to the people around you, many of them will show kindness to you. But in being kind, don't be blind to those who take kindness for weakness, and those who only seek to exploit you. The world has its fair share of users.

Remember that LIFE means activity and DEATH means inactivity. So be physically and mentally active, daily. And everyday take time to stop and notice how blue the sky is, how bright the moon, how clear your vision or hearing, and be grateful for the quiet gifts.

~~~~~

### ***Family & Friends humor***

A man hails a passing taxi.

"Perfect timing," he tells the driver. "You're just like Frank."

"Who?" asks the cabbie.

"Frank Fielding. He did everything right. Great tennis player, wonderful golfer, sang like Pavarotti. Not only that, he remembered everyone's birthday, was a wine connoisseur, and could fix anything. And his wardrobe? Immaculate. He was the perfect man. No one could ever measure up to Frank."

"Amazing, how did you meet him?"

"Oh, I never met Frank."

"How do you know so much about him?"

"I married his widow."

-Stephanie Caplen.

# **D e f e a t e d**

*By S. Scott*

Mental Health...

Mental Health doesn't discriminate.

The issue is you, and only you  
are able to do something about your status.

Mental Health affects your everyday life activities.

One furious act could and can become many small issues,  
and become a gigantic confrontation.

Mental Health is like a symphony  
that plays various music in one's mind.

Once you think it, you achieve it.

The melody is sweet and complex,  
like an orchestra, who plays his last concert

¶Done¶ ¶Done¶ ¶Done¶ ¶Done¶ ¶Dooooone...¶

# Walk with Jesus

*By Horst Sabla*

Joy and sorrow is what  
we borrow,  
every day we walk this  
Earth.

But tell us now, how do we follow  
in his footsteps  
up the hill  
with the cross?  
A bitter burden  
made so heavy  
with our sins,  
and a crown to show us  
He is always our King.  
Let us follow in his footsteps.  
Live the life without the  
sorrow  
that will follow our sins.

~~~~~

## ***Workplace humor***

When I overheard one of my cashiers tell a customer, "We haven't had it for a while and I doubt we'll be getting it soon." I quickly assured the customer that we would have whatever it was she wanted by next week. After she left, I read the cashier the riot act.

"Never tell the customer that we're out of anything. Tell them we'll have it next week," I instructed her. "Now, what did she want?"

"Rain."

-Margaret Arthurs

## **Sammy from Bernie**

*By Lee Rodriguez*

Over the years, Sammy told me different stories of what it was like growing up in the southeast Missouri town of Bernie in the mid-1950s. Five, six and seven days a week were spent doing labor on the farm where he lived with who he thought was his father, until he was eleven. When he was eleven, he found out his father was actually his great uncle. His father, who he always called Dee and not Dad, or anything like that, made Sammy work from before dawn until after dusk, since Sammy was five years old.

Life on the farm was not easy, but Dee was not a poor man. Sammy said Dee was one of the hardest working men, and one of the richest people in town. He owned a lot of land and had sharecroppers working most of it. Sammy said he was driving a tractor from the age of seven with wooden blocks made so he could reach the pedals from the tractor seat. Hard to imagine starting life out like that.

He learned how to shoot when he was six and there were all kinds of animals and vermin he would shoot, from a distance. He said he was a crackshot pretty early on, and I believed him. This was long before those thick glasses he needed after working for years as a tool and die man, under a bright table lamp, making tools to fine specifications.

That's how it was in the small town of Bernie where he started. Doing hard work on the farm, hunting, fishing. He had a lot of happy memories since then, but he said the best years of his life were when he was a little boy growing up in Bernie, Missouri. A tiny town that only had a diner, a gas station and a store. He had many adventures with his childhood friends in the woods, in town, or on other people's property. Sometimes, he went fishing in ponds he was told not to, or in streams that takes an eight-year old boy one hour to get to through the woods. For which he would often get into trouble with Dee, because there was always something to do around the farm. A couple of times he turned the tractor on its side, after joyriding and taking a turn too fast. One of those times he had to get Dee to help him get it back upright. I try to imagine a seven or eight-year-old brown-haired Sammy on the side of an old dirt country road, tractor in the

ditch, and him standing next to it. Sammy's been bald-headed and old the whole time I've known him. He's been Old Man Sammy to just about everybody the 20 years I've known him.

He spent just as much time on childish adventures with his friends as working. The way he described small-town life in southeast Missouri reminded me of small town life described by Harper Lee in "To Kill A Mockingbird". His choice of words and phrases and the simple things in life that made living in the country a bliss. The way he talked about his childhood, little boy Sammy was a countrified version of Scout.

Before eleven, when Dee kicked him out for stealing \$200 and he moved to Tennessee and back to Missouri and eventually to a juvenile detention center at the age of 15 (which was something in 1962), it was a good and happy life.

An easy childhood, with close friends, childhood adventures, familiar forest, good hunting, good fishing. That was Sammy's slice of paradise. He always had a smile on his face talking about those years. Those five or six years were the best years of his life. He remembered those days clearly. It gave him great comfort throughout his long life (77 years) to reminisce about those few short years.

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### ***Workplace humor***

My brother delivered prescriptions to people too ill to go out. Since the neighborhoods he visited were often unsafe, he decided to get some protection.

"Why do you need a pistol?" asked the clerk at the gun shop.

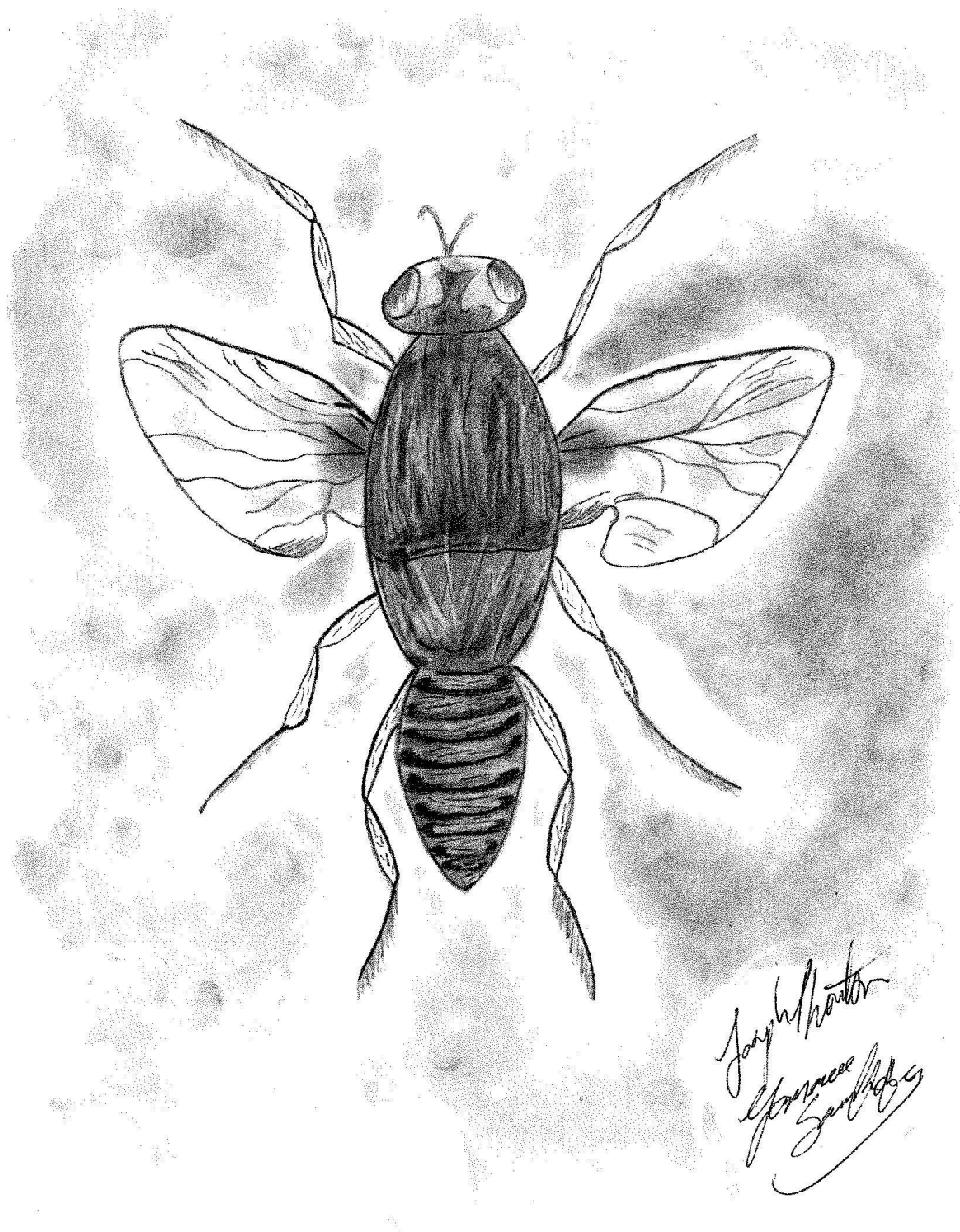
My brother had to explain, "I deliver drugs at night and carry a lot of money."

-Laura Loftis

### ***Quotable quotes***

Well, at least there's one good thing about high gas prices. Whenever I fill the tank, I double the value of my car.

-Elizabeth Hamilton



"Hornet"

By: Joseph Thornton



# One Flesh

*By Thomas Braden*

If you only had 5 minutes left, and it was time to make a choice  
to be content with all my memories, or to chase after my fading voice.  
Is it possible you would sit aside, and accept it as our destiny,  
or would Mama Bear come out in full. Would you fight to keep the rest for  
of me?  
Would tears fall with quiet acceptance, as one last time your lips touch  
mine,  
or would you scream and scratch and bite the world, refusing the fact were  
out of time?  
I can't imagine me finding peace, if it was you I laid to rest.  
So, God placed these word's upon my heart, and sent me off on an  
important quest  
to witness to all his precious children, not just you, but to ALL with love,  
bringing goodness to every lost soul, preaching the gospel sent from above  
cause He doesn't tell us when He'll get here, but the good book says He's  
coming soon.  
That could mean the year 3000, or He just might pop up this afternoon.  
One thing we know without a doubt, not gonna lie, HIS words are heavy.  
Get your house in order now, cause when He comes you best be ready.  
So I'm off on a journey to do his work. Finally, a purpose I have in life,  
and where else would I ever start, than with my beautiful and lovely wife.  
It's true, He calls us one by one. So no, I can't take no one with me,  
but you and I, He made us one flesh. So, you would never have to miss me.  
So, I get on my knees each and every night, beg and plead for god's  
consideration  
to breathe his spirit inside your heart, allowing you to feel that familiar  
shiver,  
but He alone cannot achieve this, He gave us a promise of our won free will.  
All knowing, all powerful and omnipotent, but your okay, He needs it still.  
So, now I'm begging you my love, the other half of a happy soul,  
get in his word and find that spirit, give him some time to get to know  
the most beautiful creature in his kingdom, the one He sent that's just for  
me.  
And to the death, my prayers will fight to be one flesh in eternity.

## University of Home

*By Jacob Hilbert*

Wounded and lost, I crawled towards ruin unaware;  
Hopeless and broken, I begged for unshackled salvation;  
Subtle and quiet, I found a new path clad in ancient virtue;  
Curious and bewildered, I feel new strength with fresh purpose;  
Humble and thankful, I indulge drops of gratuitous healing;  
Hopeful and mindful, I sit home on life's battlefield.  
A field I see, full of years-old battle scars still burning.  
But, peace envelops mangled chaos leaving one veteran grown-up.  
Finally free anew to be youthful for tomorrow's simple battles.

~~~~~

## T i m e l e s s

*By Rontese L. Miller*

This is where we meet everyday, a place near special,  
Forgotten by fear, and lost in understanding.  
Forever seems so far away, and now has broken into  
The reality of endless, where are we? HERE.  
I'm so stuck in this Timelessness, I try to avoid this void-a.  
Wishlist of nothing, but it means everything...to who?  
You look through me, just to see all life has to offer.  
Then I follow our eyes hoping for a brief glimpse into your future or  
I'm trying to confirm there is a we.  
Everyday I come back. Or is it forth, and to this place, and  
I nearly forget what I can't understand. So I lay down all I have...

# Stories Go Deep

## *Part 4 of 5*

*By Dr. Katherine Mathews*

Before going to trial in April, 2007, at the Thomas Eagleton Federal Courthouse, there was the dreaded deposition. Nick Llewellyn liked to call the plaintiff's attorney, James Guirl, "the Girly Man," a reference to a Saturday Night Live sketch that made fun of Arnold Schwarzenegger. The Girly Man had gone to Burroughs for high school, but he didn't fit my image of a Burroughs grad. His hair was orangey-yellow, slicked back from his forehead. His skin was also a little orangey. Did he use a spray on tan? When we went to his office for the deposition, he was wearing one of those yellow plastic bracelets, maybe for a cancer fundraiser or something.

I thought the deposition went fine. I was on my game. I answered the questions as asked. At one point, he asked me what my "gospel" was.

"My gospel?" I responded.

"Yes," he said. "What do you consider to be the absolute truth that guides your clinical practice." I pushed back hard.

"As a person of faith, there is nothing in medicine that comes close to that kind of absolute truth," I said.

I went on to explain the concept of "evidence-based medicine" where we use the best available research to develop our guidelines for care. For Ob/gyn, it is the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, ACOG, that puts out updated guidelines every month.

I know guidelines inside and out, and even though it was 2007, I was well aware the guidelines in place in 2000 made one thing clear: when delivering the baby, the outcomes *for* that baby are equivalent when you compare forceps deliveries to vacuum deliveries to c/sections. In other words, if you care about the baby's health, it makes no difference how you get the baby out. You pick your best option based on where the mother is in her course of labor.

C/sections make sense if the baby is in trouble and the cervix is not fully dilated. Forceps or vacuum make sense when the baby is in trouble and the head is nearly out. (We NEVER used vacuums at Northwestern; we

considered them beneath us because using forceps took more training and technical skill.) The only situation where babies were statistically more likely to have bad outcomes was when an attempt at a forceps or vacuum delivery failed, and you had to do a c/section AFTER that failed attempt.

For the mom, the outcomes are worse with c/sections.

In my deposition, I explained all this and went on to explain that these findings came from vast amounts of California delivery data. The conclusions were *not* based on small research studies or the mere opinions of experts.

“You drove him nuts,” said Nick Llewellyn, by way of compliment, as we left the deposition.

So back to that Monday morning in April, 2007, I was braced for an ordeal, but felt pretty good about things as a whole. Dr. Jack Klein, a well-respected St. Louis Ob/gyn (whom I did NOT know), would serve as my expert witness. I was both confident in the care I had provided and exhausted still from the week before between the start of my MBA and my son’s stay at a Children’s Hospital, but I was ready to get the trial over with.

I took the 11<sup>th</sup> Street exit off of Eastbound Highway 40. I liked the fact that it was a left sided exit. It reminded me of a similar exit in Boston from the years before, the “BIG DIG,” when those Massachusetts people moved all that highway tangle underground. From the 11<sup>th</sup> Street exit, I looped back and around to a parking lot under Highway 40, then went upstairs to the courtroom.

Boy was I in for a shock.

In fact, I was in for a couple of shocks. The scars on the now seven-year-old girl were deeply disturbing. And when it was my turn to sit in the witness box and be interrogated, the Girly Man nearly got me.

His first move was an aggressive offensive verbal strike.<sup>1</sup> “You directly admitted that the forceps caused these scars on this young girl!”

***?!DO WHAT?!***

“I don’t understand,” I said.

“You directly admitted that the forceps caused these scars on this young girl,” he repeated.

“When?” I asked.

He pulled up the deposition transcript on a screen in front of me, and there were a few lines highlighted in yellow:

Mr Guirl: But for the forceps, did anything cause these injuries?

Dr Mathews: No.

“I don’t understand.” I looked up at him from the witness box in confusion.

“Right there, you admitted it,” he said.

“I’m still confused. I find the phrasing ‘but for’ confusing. Could you ask the question again?” I replied.

“But for the forceps, did anything cause these injuries?” asked Girly Man.

“I find that phrasing confusing. Can you ask me this question in another way?” I insisted.

“Did the forceps cause these injuries?” He asked, perhaps expressing a bit of frustration in his tone of voice.

“NO,” I replied with firmness.

Beyond that, their expert witness was like a wicked clown from a scary circus. He spoke with an angry authority, but the words that came out of his mouth had nothing to do with the practice of Ob/gyn.

He accused me of all manner of evil deeds. As he scaled up his voice into near hysterics, he even accused me of using the forceps as a weapon to deliver blunt force trauma. To demonstrate my malfeasance, he

---

<sup>1</sup> I am recounting this exchange and the whole ordeal from memory. I’m sure there is a court transcript somewhere, and for many years I kept the judge’s 50-page decision in my files. At some point, though, I decided to let the past be the past, and I threw that document away.

aggressively banged a pair of metal forceps on the beautiful wooden furniture of the courtroom.

The judge was irate. He yelled at the expert witness, "This furniture is expensive! If you do anything like that again, you will be barred from this courtroom and held in contempt!"

Other parts of the trial are hazy in my memory. I vaguely recall Dr. Jack Klein testifying I did everything right, and I also remember some kind of testimony from a pediatrician.

In preparation for the trial, Nick Llewellyn and I had combed through those pediatric records, and I basically had them memorized since they were my best defense. Immediately after delivery, when I handed the infant over to the pediatric team in the delivery room, they documented that there were forceps marks on either side of the infant's face. The marks were not on her forehead nor the back of her head. The marks were neither on or adjacent to her eyes. The marks were on the sides of her head, where they were supposed to be. This detail was crucial since it supported my claim I placed the forceps correctly.

Beyond that, the pediatricians documented NO other marks on the baby's head during her few days in the hospital. And, when the infant was seen by her regular pediatrician two weeks after being born, the documented exam reported NOTHING about marks on her forehead or back of her head. The first time her scars get mentioned was in a follow-up office visit note some four to six months after the delivery.

I do remember my patient taking the stand. She also spoke with angry authority.

Finally, I remember the judge asking her daughter to stand up in the court room. He had her face him and then turn around so that he could see the scar on the back of her head.

"You are a very attractive little girl," he told her.

To the best of my recollection, I was called to the stand both days. Perhaps I was both the first and last witness? During my final time on the stand, the Girly Man asked me a slightly different question:

“But for the forceps, do we know what caused these injuries?” asked Girly Man

“No,” I replied.

The Girly Man just looked at me.

I then continued.

“What we do know is that there were forceps marks noted on either side of the baby’s face immediately after delivery meaning that the forceps were applied correctly.”

“What we do know is that there was no other documentation of any scars or injuries on the baby’s head during her time in the hospital.”

“What we do know is that there was no documentation of any scars or injuries at her two-week follow-up visit with her pediatrician.”

“What we do know is that the first documentation of the scars on the forehead and back of her head does not appear until months after the actual delivery.”

That was it. It was as though the Girly Man let me do my own closing. I left the Thomas Eagleton Federal Courthouse that Tuesday afternoon in April, 2007, exhausted, but relieved.

I would have to wait ten more months to learn just how precarious my situation actually was in the eyes of the judge.

To be continued...

# **Bride of Frankenstein**

*By San Diego*

Graze your skin with my tender lips,  
Cold as ice under my finger tips,  
Threshold for pain confounding the senses,  
Dug up bones, mismatched appendages,  
A mad scientist alone atop his hill.  
By new moon light, Egor plies his trade.  
Is it mad to seek the cure for kill?  
Or is it genius to look inside the grave?  
Sequestered dungeon with hidden creations,  
Bolts in neck hasten the awaken,  
Sending 'lectricity straight to the brain,  
With e'ry breath, I am God born again.  
Blood curdling scream, then the fire goes out,  
As she rises, the monster gives shout,  
A fevered dream of a love so true  
Masticating inside of me, and you  
Graze your skin with my tender lips  
Cold as ice under my finger tips.  
I give witness to a love so true,  
A love that'll be, the death of me and you.





"Rembrandt - Sea of Galilee"  
By: Kevin Miner

# **A Touch of Beauty**

*By Martin Shaw*

We as Students form a diverse and vibrant university community. We do not enter into this community by proximity, but by virtue of a shared Jesuit vision - to pursue higher truths, obtain greater knowledge, and strive for a better world. In this endeavor, we do not succeed by our individual ambitions, but by our discovery of each other. We find higher truths when we seek to understand the complexity of our neighbors' identities, we obtain greater knowledge when we consider the perspectives of our fellow Students, and we begin to strive for a better world when we build a stronger community. (Saint Louis University student oath)

Within the darkened world of this prison society a few shining stars have come forth to add color to our lives through the world of art. Art is not only about paper and pencil many mediums can be used along with a vast majority of tools. Over the past few weeks this has been proven true by 7 dedicated individuals who have worked to beautify to the white walls our friends and family see when coming for visits. As some of you may have noticed the “kids” wall in the ERDCC visiting room has been given a new face lift as a mural comes to life.

This project was first brought to the members of the Saint Louis University's Inside Out Alliance (a SLU student/alumni organization) by resident Brandon “Bo” McGuire. Some of you may know Mr. McGuire from the ERDCC Gavel Club, others from his work as a staff barber, or even from his athletic ability on the handball court. After months of attending the open art studio here at ERDCC, Mr. McGuire presented the idea of painting murals in various places here at ERDCC. SLU members along with members of the Inside Out Alliance and volunteers from within the ERDCC society quickly came on board to give life to the project. With the project having the support of deputy Warden Hughes and backed by Saint Louis University, the project was ready to move forward. As the project moved forward, Stan Chisolm, ERDCC open art studio instructor and freelance artist, stepped into the role of overseeing and guiding the project, giving not only of his time but also of his skill and ability as an instructor to help further the project. Dedicating his time and skills, Stan began driving from

Saint Louis University to ERDCC twice a week to assist in offenders learning new skills, while putting their already acquired skills to work, giving back to the community, while leaving their mark on the walls for all to see.

After weeks of hard work and dedication, what once seemed like a dream (the visiting room mural) is drawing near completion. Offenders and visitors can now look upon the wall at a number of recognizable characters such as Sponge Bob, Stitch, Paw Patrol puppies, and of course Tweety, along with others while on visits. As this session of the project draws near a close, the dedicated individuals, who have worked to complete this project, now prepare to move on to other locations within ERDCC, leaving their mark upon the walls. If you enjoy what you see in the visiting room, keep your eyes open to the coming art work in other locations within the compound.

A special word of thanks goes out to Stan for his hard work and dedication to ERDCC, Saint Louis University, we as offenders, and of course the world of art. Without his hard work and dedication this project would not been possible. A second special word of thanks goes to Saint Louis University for the donation of supplies and equipment in order to bring life to this project.

*For those who would like to learn and/or Improve your artistic skills, Saint Louis University holds an open art studio in the education building from 1:30pm to 3:30 pm on Thursdays (no sign up required all skill levels accepted).*

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### ***Law & Order humor***

Arrested on a robbery charge, our law firm's client denied the allegations. So, when the victim pointed him out in the lineup as one of four men who had attacked him, our client reacted vociferously.

"He's lying!" he yelled. "There were only three of us."

-Katherine Enslow

# **The Life of Victory**

*By Bill Brown*

IT IS A HOLY LIFE,  
IT IS AN HONEST LIFE,  
IT IS A SEPARATED LIFE,  
IT IS A SIN-DELIVERED LIFE,  
IT IS A SATAN-RESISTING LIFE,  
IT IS A WORLD-RENOUNCING LIFE,  
IT IS A CHRIST-WITNESSING LIFE,  
IT IS A THOUGHT CONTROLLED LIFE,  
IT IS A SELF-CONTROLLED LIFE,  
IT IS A LONGSUFFERING LIFE,  
IT IS A FLESH-DENYING LIFE,  
IT IS A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE,  
IT IS A NONRESISTANT LIFE,  
IT IS AN OVERCOMING LIFE,  
IT IS A CONSECRATED LIFE,  
IT IS AN OBEDIENT LIFE,  
IT IS A REWARDING LIFE,  
IT IS A PEACEFUL LIFE,  
IT IS A HOPEFUL LIFE,  
IT IS A GENTLE LIFE,  
IT IS A MEEK LIFE,  
IT IS VICTORY.

## **Two Faces in the Shadows: A Review**

*By James Earhart*

On April 17, 2025, Pair 'O 'Postles presented the play "Two Faces in the Shadows" at the Reentry Center at FCC. At first blush, one might be tempted to place this play by Paul D. Duke and Jeff Alea in the same box as The Rolling Stones' song, "Sympathy for the Devil." The rock-and-roll classic strikes a nerve with Christians through its title alone, then compels us to listen to the voice of Satan. "Two Faces" gives Judas, the most despised person in Western culture for centuries (until his relief by Adolf Hitler), a voice carrying the same weight as the Apostle Peter's.

Judas responds to Peer's damning question, "How could you?" by explaining his motive but offering little defense for the betrayal. Judas wanted Jesus to continue as a man of action, taking on the oppressive powers that be. He wanted a new, just kingdom, and he tried to force the God-Man's hand. When Jesus allows himself to be arrested, Judas is left without hope, consumed by guilt and remorse. Peter, under the scrutiny of Judas, must confront the depth of his own betrayal in denying Jesus. If Judas' actions were guided by conflicting emotions--hate because Jesus did not do what he wanted him to do and love (misguided) in trying to stir Jesus to action--Peter's actions were driven by fear and doubt. Simon Peter returns to the Upper Room for "proof that it didn't happen." But it is all too real. Both disciples must acknowledge the role they played in events leading to Jesus' trial.

Both the song and the play indict the listening audience. Mick Jagger sings, "You ask who killed the Kennedys, when after all, it was you and me." The play is more subtle. Early on Peter poses a question to Judas which, in effect, addresses everyone: "Was it [Jesus'] way or our way that put Him there?" In the end, Peter must accept, as all men of faith must accept, that he is a sinner the same as Judas. However, in the play, only Peter grasps the significance of "His way," acknowledging Jesus' mission and accepting His death as an atoning sacrifice, as prophesied in Isaiah. Judas, overcome by guilt, ends his life without hope. Peter, despite his guilt, overcomes his doubt, finding forgiveness in "His way," a possibility ignored by the Devil in The Rolling Stones' message.

Kudos to Leonard Kannapell as Judas and Mark Adolf as Simon Peter. The actors' professionalism came through in the performance and the light of their message shone through their passion. Many thanks for bringing something fresh, entertaining and meaningful.

~~~~~

## **O ' L O R D**

*By S. Scott*

When ways are so far away

And O'Lord when I feel so, so, alone

And Lord when the sun refuses to shine

O'Lord you and only you has called me by my biological name

And Lord you and only you are able to bring the old into the new

And Lord when the wind began a gust

In the beginning O'Lord it's you, not man I trust

God answers,

"Oh son, I'll never forsake you

And son, when you're no longer able to walk

Thus, when I carry you."

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## ACROSS

1. Rub against
6. Unconscious state
10. Most likely victor (hyph.)
11. Great amount
13. Cinammon-dusted sugar cookie
15. Writer for hire
16. Enrich

## ACROSS

33. Work

17. Actress Charlotte \_\_\_\_

18. Notable period

19. Fretful

20. Chicken chow \_\_\_\_

21. Licit

23. Like a slippery fish

25. Romp

27. Final contest

31. Part of speech

34. Peru's capital

37. Home of the Aloha Bowl

- 39. Gift for Dad
- 40. Chicken \_\_\_\_ king (2 wds.)
- 41. The \_\_\_\_ the merrier
- 42. \_\_\_\_ of the earth
- 43. Chocolate breakfast cereal  
(2 wds.)
- 46. Circumvent
- 47. "D.O.A." actor O'Brien
- 48. Flock females
- 49. Itemizes

### **DOWN**

- 1. TV's "\_\_\_\_ P.D."
- 2. Horses "ankle"
- 3. Perfect (hyph.)
- 4. "\_\_\_\_ of Dreams"
- 5. Fill with anger
- 6. Insensitive one
- 7. Goose eggs
- 8. Padre's spouse

### **DOWN**

- 9. Ike's opponent

- 10. Successful trap setter
- 12. Viewed
- 13. Book's resting place
- 14. Laundry appliance
- 19. "Night" author Wiesel
- 20. Kind of talking bird
- 22. Edison's middle name
- 24. Beaut
- 26. Robber
- 28. Acquires
- 29. "Curses \_\_\_\_ again!"
- 30. Guitars neck divisions
- 32. Pickle container
- 34. Irish export
- 35. "\_\_\_\_ a Parade" (2 wds.)
- 36. Showy parrot
- 38. Johanna Spyri classic
- 41. West and others
- 42. X marks the \_\_\_\_
- 44. Certain poem
- 45. Lgs.' opposites (abbr.)

### **CROSSWORD PUZZLE<sup>2</sup>**

solutions are on page 41



# ***We Love God More Than Anything***

*Song Lyrics by Bill Brown*

We love God more than anything  
We love God more than anything  
More than anything we want people to know  
We'd rather die than let Him go  
Can we love God more than anything

So, when we sing, sing His love  
It comes from our hearts, and there is no shame  
In His precious name  
So, don't give up on Him, because He won't give up on you  
And if you pray for His forgiveness, He will forgive you  
So, pray to the Lord and He will see you through

We love God more than anything  
We love God more than anything  
For He bled on the cross, and for our sins  
And God loves us more than anything

## *Chorus*

God loves more than anything  
God loves more than anything

# The Man I've Become

By Brian Stewart<sup>4</sup>

The man I've become didn't come overnight.  
The man I've become came when I applied what my adoptive father taught  
was right.  
And just because biological didn't care to bother, I'm still standing even  
taller.  
The man I've become declares the lessons taught that echo long ago, as  
exemplified in the way to grow:  
"Men don't argue, beg, or explain - no matter the hardship and pain;  
We observe , set standards, and walk away when respect is lost  
No matter what the cost;  
Ultimately, a man's silence isn't weakness, it's his final decision  
To a brighter vision and better livin' found only in humble meekness."  
The man I've become was due to a forever loving Father.

<sup>4</sup> "A H.O.P.E. Dealer" (Help One Person Everyday)

~~~~~

## **Workplace humor**

My real name is Wilton, but everyone calls me "Dub" at the factory. And that's where the confusion began. A woman from the front office came by with a form to fill out. But when she asked for my name, I wasn't sure which one to give.

Waiting patiently for me to make up my mind, she said,  
"I don't have any easier questions."

-Wilton Rose

# Pipe Dreams

*By F. Pryor*

I was a helicopter crew chief in an Army Reserve Aviation unit that only met one weekend a month and decided to go full time active duty, because we were struggling to make ends meet, trying to raise two daughters on minimum wage jobs. I planned on enlisting as a helicopter crew chief, but the Active Duty recruiter talked me into considering other Military Occupation Specialties (MOSS) with bonuses attached. The Personnel/Admin Clerk position with a \$3,000 bonus, for a four year enlistment, caught my eye. After completing MOS training to become an Admin Clerk, I received orders for my first overseas tour. It was a one-year hardship tour. So, I had to leave my family behind in the States for a year. I took 30 days leave before departing, and we found out my wife was pregnant just before I left.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Welcome to Osan Air Base, South Korea. Prepare to exit through the cabin door to your left," announced the American Airline flight attendant, gesturing towards the door.

When the door opened, there was an unusual odor to the air, but it was hard to make out what it was. It wasn't revolting, but it wasn't fresh either. It was tainted somehow. We climbed down the staircase to a dark blue Air Force bus that dropped us off at the terminal. After collecting our luggage, we were transported to the transition billets, a short-term motel. Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) can opt to do an accompanied tour and bring their family. However, if they do, they must serve a 3-year tour, instead of just one year. The lower enlisted, like myself, didn't have that option. Accompanied tours were billeted separately from the unaccompanied.

\*\*\*\*\*

I could gradually hear the familiar ringing of my wind up, pocket-sized travel clock getting louder, pulling me away from a dream I was forgetting, as I was waking. It was the following morning. The only thing familiar to me was the ringing. I didn't recognize the bed. I didn't recognize the room.

This wasn't even my country. I'm 8,000 miles away from my family, and I feel like a failure for not being there for my wife during her pregnancy. That enlistment bonus should have been bigger. I had 364 days left of this tour and counting.

We were given the day's agenda, which included an in-country orientation. We were told eligibility for mid-tour leave was between the 6th and 9th month of our tour, and we can take up to all 30 days of our annual leave, because no other leave days will be approved, while in-country. We were told about the Korean Augmentee to the U.S. Army (KATUSA), who are Korean soldiers assigned and work side-by-side with us in our units, and live with us in the barracks. We were warned to stay away from protest rallies, red light districts, and a list of banned establishments provided to us. We were to report anyone who solicited classified or personnel information. Then came the attention getter - we were told of the various types of STDs that existed and a warning about one called "Black Syphilis." Supposedly, catching it will quarantine you to South Korea the remainder of your life, and it destroys the circulatory system of your genitalia, which eventually turns black and rots off, or fall out of your body, hence its name. It eventually shuts down your entire circulatory system and has no cure. This was met with nervous laughter and glances around the room, questioning whether there was any truth to this. We were assured it was true, but I figured it was meant to ensure condom usage. From there, we were split into buses headed to each of our assigned military posts.

\*\*\*\*\*

I was dropped off at the 501st Military Intelligence (MI) Brigade's barracks at Yong-San Post, in Seoul.

"Craig's your roommate. He's cool, but he can be nerdy...but he's laid back," the barracks sergeant says, assigning me a room.

I unlock the door, and there is a Star Wars poster over his bed, open cans of beer on the night stand, an ashtray with butts that missed their target, the remnants of a clothes grenade having gone off at his bedside, and a Commodore PC on a shared desk, which I learn is his prized possession. I was still unpacking when Craig came in and we introduced ourselves.

"Sorry about the mess. I hadn't had a roommate the past two weeks. So, I kinda let things go." Craig explained.

"I'm cool with it. I'm not exactly a neat freak either. So, what's the *unofficial* orientation for this place?" I asked him.

"Normally they're kinda spread out, but in this barracks, the KATUSA are clustered at the end of the hall. Stay away from there, unless you're invited. You won't be working with any KATUSA at the 501st. There's a dish called "kegogi," don't get it confused with "bulgogi," which is beef with clear rice noodles. Supposedly, "kegogi" is dog meat. Are you married?" he asks.

"Yeah. Two daughters and one on the way," I reply.

"Married men and women starting their tours at the same time are pairing up and making pacts to only have sex with each other. You gotta move fast if you want to get in on one."

He could tell I was skeptical. So, he introduces me to a couple who were in a sex pact. They claimed this was a way to protect their spouses back home from STDs and that because they are returning to their spouses, they won't be falling for one another. Besides, it's written into their pact. Really?! Can't they see the writing on the wall? Perhaps masturbation classes should have been part of the orientation. Also, its 1989, who the hell is still eating dogs!? It's probably outlawed by now.

I was too depressed the first two months to do anything more than report to duty and curl up in bed. The phone calls were so expensive we had to limit our calls to 15 minutes a week. The Army would issue a pass code for one free thirty minute call per month.

\*\*\*\*\*

I reported for duty at the 501st MI Brigade, and my TS/SCI clearance was not completed yet. I already had a Secret clearance, so I was cleared for an interim Top Secret. Since my family traveled the world, with my dad in the Air Force, until I turned 18, I knew that it would take a while for them to contact everyone I had met or worked with in the past 26 years.

I worked directly for two captains, Captain Deutch (pronounced doych), and Captain Fischer. Captain Deutch was wimpy. If he were caught by the enemy, whatever classified information he had access to would immediately be deemed perishable. Captain Fischer was a manly woman.

If you were to offer any courtesy or kindness, she would take offense to it. She would prefer to be cursed at than be treated kindly, and she did so in kind. Then, there was the boss of all of us, which was our Brigade Commander, Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Wilson, who thought of himself as a reincarnation of General MacArthur. His machismo act was caricaturish. His office adjoined ours.

I don't know who was working as their clerk before me, but their poor performance made my performance shine by comparison, which eventually earned me some merit with both of my immediate supervisory Captains and even the Commander. This became evident when a security clearance investigator called me into the Commander's office for questioning. The investigator asked if I had ever used any illegal drugs. I admitted to trying marijuana in the 9th grade (*I smoked it heavily in high school - shh*). He said his documentation didn't indicate any drug use but appreciated my honesty. However, that also meant I had lied on my application. I was asked to step out. An eternity later, Brigade Commander, LTC Wilson, called me back in and told me it was up to him to determine if any action should be taken against me. A dishonorable discharge was hanging in the balance. Just to make me sweat, he purposely talked me through his thought process, flip-flopping over his decision, then finally deciding he'll recommend no action be taken. What an asshole of a saint. It was kinda like a father-son relationship. *Kinda*.

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I had signed up for a host nation family dinner program, where three U.S. soldiers and a KATUSA were chosen quarterly to go to the home of a Korean family for dinner. That was how I met KATUSA, Sun Pak, first name pronounced "Soon", who happened to be assigned to my barracks. We were all greeted warmly by the Lee family, who were our host. They were a couple in their late fifties with a son and daughter, who were college students, and they all spoke English fluently. The son had attended UCLA and was home between semesters. There was so much food on the table it was like Thanksgiving, Korean style. Kimchi, fermented cabbage, is the national dish, and they had 20+ varieties on the table. I sampled about half of them, but some were extremely spicy.

"My wife and I remember the war from when we were kids and we are grateful for the presence of U.S. Forces, but the younger generation doesn't understand we are still at war. That we are in a truce without a peace treaty," Mr Lee reminds us. His son and daughter shift in their seats uncomfortably. Mr Lee's son and Sun shared a knowing glance, then Sun quickly looked away, and put on a smile, betrayed by his eyes. Mr. Lee expressed they wanted their children to have a better life, education, and opportunities than they had, in a safe and secure world. I mention that regardless of geographic location, religion, or form of government, those sentiments are emulated by parents of children around the world, and it's too bad the parents of the world can't unite to attain global peace on those common grounds alone. Mr. Lee smiled and nodded in agreement, knowing this was just a pipe dream.

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Normally the KATUSA go home during the weekends, but some of them were waiting until Saturday to travel home and were hanging out in the barracks on a Friday night. Sun Pak invited me to join them. Sun and the three other KATUSA joining us preferred to drink a white rice wine called "maukley," which looked like milk and had a mild flavor, but packed a punch. I asked if Black Syphilis was real. They told me it was an issue in the 50s & 60s but has since been contained and rare. I asked if kegogi was dog meat. They wouldn't say what kind of meat it was, just that it wasn't beef and only the older generation eat kegogi. They asked me why I joined the Army and how I felt about serving in Korea. I told them I joined to have money for college, and I missed being away from my family, but if it kept South Korea a free democracy, it was worth it. There was a groan, eyes rolled, and heads shook.

"The U.S. is denying us freedom, by keeping Korea divided! You are *preventing* peace!" Sun stated emphatically. So, I asked, "When north and south are reunited will the government be run by the dictator of North Korea or by an elected South Korean President?" This is where their opinions splintered. They were clinging to a pipe dream of the U.S. leaving and that the leaders and people of the North and South would shake hands, break bread, and live happily ever after without firing a single shot. I

would like that myself. At least now, I understood what part of their regularly held protests were about.

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I took my mid-tour leave on the 8th month of my tour, when Susan was scheduled to deliver our daughter, Brandi. My dad and younger brother came to pick me up at the airport and took me straight to the hospital. Susan went into labor, and Brandi was born two days early. Susan was up and about, cradling Brandi. Crystal and Heather ran to me for a big hug. I was still in my dress greens. The next 30 days were a blur of love making, hugging my daughters endlessly, and planning for the future. We decided to not decide, for now, on whether to make the Army a career. Going back to South Korea was harder than the first time, even though I knew, I only had 120 days left on my tour. When we landed at Osan Air Base and the cabin door opened, the familiar tainted air rushed in. Those of us returning from mid-tour leave groaned at the smell of it. Someone in the back yelled out, "Welcome to the smells of Korea!" and everyone laughed. It was the smell of the street markets! I recognized it now.

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With only 120 days left of my tour, I needed to do some last minute souvenir buying and getting to know Korea better culturally. I often went to the street markets, during the day, to window shop. Copies and imitations of everything were available, Rolex, Louis Vuitton, Nike, perfumes, various movies and albums of all kinds, Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, etc. For some reason, brass beds and lacquered furniture were popular items with the soldiers. The sights and smells were pungent and jarring. There were cured pigs heads, with the eyes and mouth sewn shut, lined up in rows, mounds of insects of all kinds in straw baskets, large centipedes on sticks, all sorts of sea creatures I wouldn't think were edible, like sea cucumbers, sea urchins, starfish, jellyfish, all crawling, swimming, or floating around in steel or glass tanks, and piles of every kind of fish on beds of ice or caked in salt. Occasionally, you'd have to step aside to let a bicycle through that had a cage on the back stuffed with chickens, ducks, puppies, pigeons, or rabbits. A price tag is not the final price. So, the market is filled with the constant chatter of customers



haggling over the price of everything. I learned how to say "how much," "hello," "thank you," "where's the bathroom," and a few cuss words in Korean. I always carried a pocket translation book to point out words or phrases, and a notepad and pencil to haggle with by scribbling pictures and numbers. Then one day, I was walking past a butcher shop and saw the hind leg of a deer with the fur still on it from afar. As I got closer to see how big the leg was, I noticed that the fur was gray. As my eyes followed the leg down from the thigh to the hoof, I had to do a double take when I realized at the end of the leg was a paw!

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A couple of friends and I went to a part of Seoul we hadn't explored to seek out an eatery off the beaten path. We stopped in at a noodle shop. It was small and quaint, and located in an alleyway wide enough to accommodate six pedestrians walking abreast of each other. Once we had started on our main course, a small group of riot police, in full gear, suddenly ran past the large, glass pane windows of the restaurant. We looked up, but the rest of the restaurant didn't, so we went back to our meal. Then a group of riot police in formation, four abreast, ran past through the alleyway. We looked up. And they ran past and ran past and ran past and ran past, until the entire restaurant started looking up. And they ran past even more. Once they had ran past, my friends and I decided it was time to leave to see where they had ran to. Once we reached the end of the alleyway, it opened up to a sea of riot police crashing up against a shore of protesters and curls of Molotov cocktail flames were licking the air where the riot police and protesters met. We retreated. We needed to get to the opposite side of the protesters to make our way back to the Post. So, we backtracked through the alleyways, eventually making our way out behind the protesters.

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The day I'd been looking forward to was finally here. I packed my bags, and in the days before, I said my goodbyes to my co-workers and the friends I had made. I said goodbye to Craig, who having found a Korean girlfriend, put in a one year extension on his tour. Many a nerds have found a girlfriend in Korea.

I made my way down the aisle to my seat. Sitting in an upright position, I breathed in the last of the tainted air that I had become so familiar with over the past year, as the flight attendant shut the cabin door to the plane. I closed my eyes, and I could see my daughters, Crystal and Heather, running towards me with open arms for a big hug and of my kissing Susan. I looked forward to learning Brandi's newborn personality. All the while knowing deep down, my imagined homecoming will be repeated after many other tours in the years to come.

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### Puzzle solutions

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