

VOICES

from the

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Writing Center

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A Hero’s Death

By Jinxia Wen

Home Country: China

Statistics and Actuarial Science

Like everybody else, when I saw the news that crocodile hunter, Steve Irwin, died after being stung by a stingray, I was shocked. I used to worry that some day he would be bitten by a huge crocodile from the back when he was smiling at the audience. But I had strongly wished this

would never happen. He was my hero, and he survived every dangerous moment. The more I watched his TV program, the more I believed that Steve would never die in the way I imagined, because he loved these animals and he was a professional. But things always happen in an unexpected way, like Steve’s death.

I like animals, which made me like Steve so much. When I was a little kid, one of my hobbies was to watch ants moving before rain. They were busy carrying pieces of their home from a wet spot to a dry one. Also whenever I came cross a dead bird, I buried him in my own way. I wrapped his body with soft leaves and put him into the holes which I dug, and then covered him by layers of leaves and flowers. Of course, like other kids, I treated some “disgusting” insects cruelly because I did not like them. At that time I also did not like crocodiles, because they are ugly and “bad,” like there are “bad” people and good people in the human world. Thanks to Steve, I changed my attitude to those ugly-looking lives. Whenever he found a snake or a crocodile, he shouted excitedly, “Crikey, is she a beauty?” and called them “baby,” “baby” all the time. At first, I was indifferent to his passion,

which seemed more like a pretend show to me. But later on, I was finally moved by his enthusiasm and understood he truly loved these animals which he called babies. He had not only the curiosity and passion of an ordinary person but also the professionalism and insight of an expert. I believe that because of his show, more and more kids like to watch snakes and crocodiles in the zoo. Unfortunately, I had no chance to get to know Steve when I was a kid. Otherwise, lots of innocent insects would not have been killed by that evil girl.

There is an old Chinese saying, “Pots break near the well, and generals usually die in battles,” which can be simply understood to mean that people usually die doing what they like best. So in an optimistic view, Steve died in the arms of nature, which will bring him permanent joy and peace. Also, Australia's north coast will be remembered as the field where a great wildlife icon spent his last moment.

Becomes a Real Man

By Jinxia Wen

Hometown: China

Statistics and Actuarial Science

Many American friends have asked me the same question: I know Beijing, have you been there? My answer was no. Every time I said no, I told myself that once I got the chance to go back to China, I would visit Beijing for sure. My dream finally came true. I had a wonderful vacation in China this summer. I stayed in Beijing for one week, and visited several beautiful and special places, such as the Forbidden City, The Summer Palace, Ming tombs and the Great Wall.

If I had to tell which place is my favorite, I would say the Great Wall, although I like them all and if I had missed one of them, I would feel sorry for myself.

The Wall extends for 3,000 kilometers from the seaside in Shanhaiguan in northeast China to Jiayu Pass in Gansu Province, crossing five provinces and two autonomous regions. It is known as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The most imposing sections of the Great Wall today are located at Badaling, Mutianyu and Jinshanling. I visited Badaling Great Wall in Beijing.

On the day I planned to visit the Great Wall, I got up at 5:30am, because Beijing is a huge city. I had to take a taxi to the tourist center which is near the Tiananmen Square and it takes two hours to get to the Great Wall by the tourist bus.

Our tour guide, a cute girl, told us lots of interesting stories and facts about Beijing's history and places on our way to the Great Wall, which made the two-hour bus ride full of laughter. What most impressed me was the story about the youngest son of the Dragon King, Pixiu. He was the Dragon King's favorite son, and like other kids spoiled by their parents, he was pretty naughty. One time, he was playing on the Supreme King's desk and destroyed a very important seal, which represents the King's power. In order to punish Pixiu, the King turned him into a strange animal by magic, which can absorb everything but cannot expel anything. From then on, Pixiu eats everything he sees including gold and jewelry. If you look close at the jade jewelry Chinese wear, you will see that a big portion of the figures made from jade represent Pixiu, especially for business people. Do you know why? Because people believe that if they wear Pixiu as a talisman, they will

earn as much as possible, and do not have to worry about losing what they have.

Finally, we arrived at the foot of mountains on which the Great Wall was built. The Great Wall is made of thousands and thousands of stones. The basic structure is a road on the mountains with high walls on both sides. This structure was built to protect the country against the enemy from outside of the Wall. If any dangerous situation happened, soldiers would make a big fire with strong smoke to warn other soldiers in different sections. Since it was said that the thing they burned was wolf's dung, the smoke was called "wolf smoke" which is used to represent a war nowadays.

We prepared ourselves well by putting on sports shoes and making sure we had enough water for climbing the Great Wall, because we all knew the popular Chinese saying, "He who has not climbed the Great Wall is not a real man." No one who comes here wants to lose the chance to show himself a real man.

At first the road is not steep, we walked while talking and smiling. When we climbed higher, it became steeper and steeper. Some sections in the Great Wall are very narrow,

which only allows one person to pass through sideways at a time, while some places are quite spacious and can let five horses go through at the same time. Of course, it is not wide at all compared to the roads modern people build, but we have to admit it was extremely difficult to build such a huge wall on mountains back in the fifth century B.C., all by human power.

It was hard to walk against the strong wind up there. When I felt tired, I leaned on the wall for a short rest, and imagined how old these stones are and how many people touched them from ancient to modern society.

A famous story about an unhappy woman and the Great Wall came to my mind. Since to build such a great building, a huge number of laborers were needed, the Emperor took strong men away from their families by force as his slaves. One miserable wife could not bear the great grief of losing her husband, so she walked a long distance and overcame all difficulties to look for him, and finally arrived at the foot of the Great Wall. But all her effort came to nothing because her husband died working too hard. She could not help crying and her tears knocked down the Great Wall, which was considered as a brave fight against the cruel emperor.

I was absorbed by the story and suddenly I was interrupted by the laughter from a family of people standing by me. They were taking pictures and I happened to stand by them and become one of their members. They joked with me and asked me if I would like to join their family. The old couple in this group seemed very nice and energetic, which reminded me of my parents. I had not seen them for more than four months, and I missed them very much.

I kept climbing up. Every time I stretched my neck and looked through the gaps in the wall, I was shocked by two things. One was the huge wind which could blow me away with no doubt, so I had to hold the wall with all my strength. Another was the stunning scene: mountains spread out layer by layer without end. The color of the mountains changed from light green to dark green gradually, and in the far end of the scene, it became light again, but it seemed like a kind of blue under unreal smoke.

After quite a tough climb, I finally got to see the calligraphy written by Mao Tse-tung, 不到长城非好汉, which means that he who has not climbed the Great Wall is not a real man. It is carved into a stone standing at the 888 meter

elevation point. I spent 20 yuan to have my picture taken by the Real Man Stone and get a “real man” certificate, which is funny, but it makes me happy, and reminds me of a long time ago when I was a little kid. The teacher gave me a certificate to show that I was an excellent student for the whole semester.

I held my certificate tightly because I was afraid the wind would blow it away on my way to the foot of the mountain.

Football Game

By Kai Ding

Hometown: Hangzhou, China

Biomedical Engineering

When I was in middle school, my English teacher taught us that football was called soccer in the US and football was another kind of sport. That’s my first impression of football, a game not so related to the foot but called football. It’s confusing, isn’t it?

Luckily, when I came to the US, I found my university had a good football team. UI’s football team is very famous. It ranks third in the Big Ten conference which is the best conference in the nation. In this city, Iowa City, where my university is located, most people’s weekend activities are mainly concerned with this exciting sport. You cannot drive in the street for two hours before the game and two hours afterwards because the city is crowded by the football fans. You cannot see more than two colors on every Saturday, because black and gold are the only colors in the street. You cannot feel that Iowa City is a small city with its seventy thousand people, because every seat has been taken in the university stadium which has a capacity of more than seventy thousand. People throng to Iowa City for the game. You cannot forget our quarterback’s number and his name, “Number 5, Drew Tate,” because he is more famous than our university’s president. There is a saying in Chinese, “One eye witness is better than one hundred hearsays.” I heard a lot from my tutor in the writing center about how excellent the game is and especially Tate. Therefore, I began to anticipate watching a real football game.

Waiting for more than two months, luckily I got a ticket for UI's football game with Purdue. Although much time has passed, I still remember the first time I set foot in Kinnick Stadium. It is a splendid stadium which is named after Nile Kinnick, the 1939 Heisman Trophy winner. Every time I pass by the gate of the stadium, the first thing greeting me is the statue of Kinnick. Finally I had the chance to see it more closely. After I took a picture with the statue, I walked with crowds of people into the stadium. It was so amazing to find that the whole stadium was occupied. Everyone was standing on their seat, shouting and singing. They were staring at little tiny changes in the game, not willing to miss any wonderful moment. The leader in the cheering squad asked us to shake our keys when we were on defense. The cheering squad activated the stadium by leading each section in shouting out "I," "O," "W," "A," clockwise around the stadium.

As the game starts, I am looking at the field. Our running back is putting all his attention on the ball and waiting for our quarterback's toss to go rushing to the opponent's end zone. Our players in the offensive line are ready for protecting our quarterback. Although they won't handle the ball, it's

because of them our quarterback gets the time to design the most elegant curve to pass the ball to our wide receivers. Suddenly, the ball is thrown back to the quarterback and the attack starts. One of Purdue's players breaks through our offensive line and runs towards Drew Tate! He wants to sack our quarterback. "Run, Tate!" I shout. I am so worried about Tate and become nervous when I see another two of Purdue's players coming to encircle Tate. Suddenly, a ball is thrown out from a small battle and all the audience holds their breath. At that moment, the picture stopped and the only moving object was the ball speeding like a bullet. On the right side of the field, a tall and strong player in a black and gold uniform stretched his body and caught that ball. Yes, twenty yards! Our wide receiver got it! All our players on the field ran to him and hugged together. There was no need for me to have worried. I had to remind myself, some birds are not meant to be caged. Their feathers are just too bright.

With the efforts of both the players on the field and the audience in the stands, the game progressed very well. After the second quarter, our team led 21 to 3. It was a match without suspense, so I had the chance to take pictures of the fans, the

cheering squad and the marching band. There was even a magician giving his show during the half-time break. The second half began after about twenty minutes. The highlight of the game came near the end. One of our players on defense intercepted the ball and ran ninety-eight yards from our end directly to Purdue's end zone. This long journey happened in no more than ten seconds and the entire stadium exploded. The commentator said the player set a new record for The University of Iowa's history for a touchdown run.

When the football game was over, everyone seemed unwilling to leave. Some of the fans walked to the field and took a picture of the victory field as a valuable recollection. Some of the fans took the cheerful train to go back. Thanks to our team everyone got at least one thing from the game. Some got the happiness and some got the memory of success. I got a spirit which is called solidarity.

A New World

By Kai Ding

Hometown: Hangzhou, China

Biomedical Engineering

As Forrest Gump said, life is like a box of chocolates, and you never know what you are going to get. Some people would like to have a normal life that they know what they are going to get: Education, Marriage, and Work. In other words, they want a predictable path, but I am not one of them.

After several months' preparation, on August 2nd, I crossed the Bering Strait, took a 14-hour-long flight and finally landed in Chicago. I got familiar with Chicago from the TV Series "Prison Break." Of course, I only saw the airport. With four other new University of Iowa students, we were expecting to start our life in US. We could have arrived in Iowa City that night if there had not been a strong rainstorm at the Chicago airport. All of our plans had to be modified and we had to spend our first night in the US in the airport's lounge. It was my first time to experience a cancellation of a flight, but my fellow students and I were not frustrated at all. We called our parents and told them we had arrived safely. Then we began our wandering at the airport. Things are not so bad if you look

them positively. Taking pictures, talking, wandering and laughing, we spent a night at the cold airport as if it was a visiting tourist attraction. Because of this night, we five individuals became close friends. After 4 hours of sleeping and 4 hours of waiting, we finally got on the flight to Iowa City. Reluctantly, we said goodbye to Chicago, even without getting to know about this city, except as a remembered joyful night.

On the flight, I was amazed to find that my new home was covered by an expanse of farm land and quite far from what I imagined. I thought it would be populated by cars and large mansions. Having grown up in a big city in China, the rural life in Iowa felt strange to me: a wide green land, few people on the road, blue sky, and a quiet city where I could listen to the singing from the insects to fall asleep.

Busy would be the best word to describe our first week in Iowa City. To get furniture, we rushed between the previous students' storage area filled with cast-off furniture and garage sales then to our empty apartment. To start our daily life, we bought almost everything we could from the supermarket and brought tons of these supplies home. Every evening, we gathered together to share the adventures around the long table

near our apartment and played poker. Days were imbued with the nectar of joy. Free from study, we ventured out as a party: we visited the nearby park, enjoyed the university orientation and of course, the party partied. Life at that time was simple but joyful because we could meet different people with distinctive backgrounds and communicate with each other using a language none of us were good at. It's time to make friends, isn't it?

Feeling excited about the new environment, we launched our important academic journey at UI. It provides us a great chance to study. New students arrived; old students came back; all together played this symphony in the golden fall. Expectation is wonderful. Whether exploring a different life or the mysterious world of knowledge, I will enjoy this great trip in my life and speak out proudly: I am on my way.

How Not to Cure Boredom; Or, Why You Should Never Stick Your Finger Through a Fence Just Because Someone Told You To

By Tommy Morgan

Home Town: West Des Moines, Iowa

English/Journalism

It was a warm, clear day in the middle of July. I, replete with all of the wisdom and elegance that a six-year-old often employs in his travels, was attempting a task which proved hard even for my own genius: riding a bike without training wheels. Long ago I had mastered the art of four-wheeled riding and would happily blaze up and down the street (or sidewalk, if my mother was watching), the wind in my hair, the sound of the tires hitting cement like music to my ears, the feeling of

total freedom taking me over, as if there were something that my six-year-old mind had to worry about. I was in my own little world, where nothing bad could happen. Little did I know, that particular day something bad would happen.

I was at the babysitter's at the time, rolling around her driveway, sometimes falling, sometimes staying on a little longer before falling again. Before long I grew frustrated and swore off riding my bike forever. There had to be something better to do in that driveway, and I set off to go find it. After a long and arduous search (lasting all of two minutes) I gave up on this venture as well, resigning myself to sitting on the stoop. After sitting there for awhile I heard loud noises, as if the hooves of the horses of the Four Horsemen of Apocalypse were bearing down on me. Just then, the children from next door appeared.

At the time I was the only child that my babysitter was in charge of, but next door was a different story. The woman who lived there had opened her own childcare business in her house and was watching over ten or twelve children at the time. Every day all of them would come bursting out of the door at once, creating large amounts of noise while running outside to

play. Two of them, devoid, like me, of anything better to do, approached the fence and called me over. With boredom eating through me from the inside, I obliged, craving something to feed the beast within. The two children, a little blond girl and a slightly taller brown-haired boy, looked completely harmless. At first came the mindless small talk of children, even more mindless than that employed by middle aged businessmen during cocktail hour. Even though I had just met the neighbor kids for the first time, I was having fun. I liked these kids, I thought. They seemed nice.

“Stick your finger through the fence,” the brown-haired boy said, interrupting the talk of bikes and dolls (she had dolls—I had action figures).

“What?” I looked at him, wondering if he had any brains at all.

“Yeah,” the little blond girl added. “Stick your finger through the fence and something coo-” Before she could even finish her sentence, I stuck my index finger through a hole in the chain-link fence separating us. I was always a sucker for women, even at age six.

I stood there for a couple of seconds, waiting for the “something coo-” that the little blond girl had promised. I, honestly, perhaps naively, expected something cool to happen, as if sticking my finger through the fence would lead me to untold treasures. All of the sudden I felt a sharp pain, hardly the treasure I was waiting for.

“Ow!” I yelped, and looked down to see the brown-haired boy’s mouth wrapped around my finger, teeth clenching as he seemingly attempted to separate it from the rest of my body. Moments later he let go.

“What’d you do that for?” I whined.

“Sorry,” the kid said, feigning a look of sincere apology. “It won’t happen again.”

“Okay,” I replied. At the time that was apparently all that it took to cheer me up.

“Put your finger through the fence again, and I promise that I won’t bite it,” he said.

“I don’t believe you.”

“Just do it,” the little blond girl chirped up. “And something cool will happen.”

Ever the ladies' man, I obliged, only to have my finger bitten by the brown-haired boy again. At this point I had enough and ran inside to tell my babysitter, hoping that she would bring down vengeance upon those who had wronged me. Much to my chagrin, my babysitter, a rather plump woman who did little more than watch television and fix my lunch, would be bringing no vengeance with her if she ever decided to stop watching *Oprah* and go and visit her neighbor.

"That'll teach you to not to do what everyone tells you to," she said, hoping to get back to the episode of *The Young and the Restless* that she was currently watching.

"But Debby," I whined, hoping to get her to see my side of the story. "They hurt me!"

"Too bad," she calmly replied, moving her head so as to see the television around me. "You shouldn't have put your finger through the fence. I hope you've learned your lesson."

"You're mean!" I replied, storming out of the room to go find a way to exact revenge. I couldn't believe that she wouldn't do anything about those child-devils running around next door, who try to bite off the fingers of poor, innocent children.

Still truly appalled, I sat in silence for awhile, trying to think of what I could do to get those kids back. Before long I gave up, the undeniable attractiveness of the box of Legos next to me finally convincing me to play with them instead of being mad. The multi-colored building blocks which were consuming my time did not completely erase my rage though, and I soon set about building a giant robot. When I turned this robot on, my adolescent mind thought, he would tear through the world and make everyone bad go away, especially those mean kids next door. Ricky (this was the name I had given my newfound protector after watching too much *I Love Lucy* with the babysitter), would make the world a better place, I decided, and would allow me to ride my bike in peace and stick my finger through any fence I wanted, without anyone bothering me.

Though Ricky didn't exactly destroy the entire world (he just kind of sat there really, and that's about it), building him calmed me down, and before long I had forgotten all about the children next door and their vile finger-biting. It wasn't too long before I even got up the courage to go back out into the driveway to play, though I rarely wandered anywhere near that fence ever again. To this day, however, I still think something

should have been done to punish those kids. To this day, I am still made fun of by family members because of the incident. And to this day, I still wish that robot had worked.

Coming to America: My First Day in Iowa

By Suying Liu

Hometown: Beijing, China

Environmental Sciences

Imagining what life is like in an American college while disconcertedly missing home deeply and struggling hard with jet-lag, I arrived in Iowa City on the morning of August 6th. I knew I would soon begin my college life, the life that would be totally different from what I had ever experienced. My friend, Pengxiang, picked me up at the airport in Cedar Rapids. As he took me in his car to Hawkeye Drive (where I am living), he told me that it was pretty difficult for him to adjust to the American style of life when he first came here, which enhanced my fear of being new. All of my surroundings would be strange to me, I supposed.

After lunch, Pengxiang went to his office and I was left alone in my apartment, my new home. “Home?” I looked around my room wondering. I hadn’t collected my furniture yet and my room looked just like a large empty box. I stared at the wall of my room for a while. Suddenly, a sense of emptiness and a feeling of loneliness swelled up in my mind. “I can’t feel anything like home here,” I said to myself silently. Then a voice came to me in my mind, “You are new. You are a stranger here!” I couldn’t bear that feeling so I went out of my apartment.

Where should I go? I didn’t know. I told myself it was OK as long as I didn’t go so far that I could not find my way back. At that moment, a silver, steel and glass structure captured my eyes. “It is the Hawkeye Tennis and Recreation complex, Hall of Fame Building. It is newly built, just open for less than a week,” I remembered Pengxiang had said. Why not go and have a look? “It is as new as me,” I said to myself. Somehow, I felt it was like my friend.

I stepped closer and suddenly I felt a moment of breathlessness as the building was shining so impressively when it reflected the bright sunshine. The light green color of

the windows looked lovely and welcoming. After a while, I noticed that the building was in fact made up of three major parts. In the middle, it was a gym covered in windows and through the glass I could see people working out. On both its left and right sides stood two steel-wall constructions. I didn't know what they were for, as I couldn't see through them. However, to my right, there was another glass door. It looked just like the one into the gym, but not as big. "What's in there?" I wondered. "There must be something interesting on the other side of the door. I'll just go and have a look inside."

As I went to the door, I noticed a guy sitting inside, while he noticed me almost at the same time. He came towards me. I felt a little bit nervous since he would be the first person who was not Chinese that I would talk to after my arrival here. He then opened the door for me, welcoming me with his bright smile and cheerful voice: "Hi, I am David. What can I do for you?"

"Well," I got stuck for a second, "Well, I am Suying. I am new. I've just arrived here today."

"Hum, you are almost as new as this building. It has just been opened. It is brand new. Let me show you around. ...

This building is the Hawkeye Tennis and Recreation Complex. There is a gym and an indoor tennis court. Here is the Outdoor Rental Center. You can rent the equipment you need for tennis, canoeing, hiking, and so forth. You see those bags. They are for tennis. ... Well, the rest of the building is still under construction. And behind the building, there are the Klotz Outdoor Tennis Courts. They are all brand new!" I could feel that he was very excited about the new recreation center. He was eager to let others know what the building could offer them!

I whispered to myself, "Brand new..., I am brand new, too! This young man is happy to work at a new place. As for me, why not? I should not fear being new." Actually, being new means that you have the chance to know, to feel, and to enjoy the excitement that you have never experienced before. Being new also grants you the opportunity to design a new life freely for yourself, just like you can draw freely on a piece of blank paper. What you should do is treasure it and with the colorful pens available to you, do your best to draw the new picture of your life as brilliantly as possible!

In fact, for me, the new recreation center is only a small part that is new, as the whole University of Iowa is new to me. Shouldn't I be excited as I will be exploring what the University has to offer?

I am glad to be brand new!

Secret Room

By Gilsun Lim

Hometown: Busan, South Korea

Science Education

I was born in 1962 in Busan, which is the second capital of South Korea. I was not a brilliant child, but sometimes I would say something in my own special way. My parents liked the way I spoke, and they memorized what I said to tell their neighbors. Now, I realize how well I was loved by my family and neighbors during my childhood.

At that time, my country was poorer than it is now. I thought my village was poor, too. Only two houses had telephones and T.V. sets. One of them was my house. In the evening, neighbors gathered at my house to watch T.V. or to

talk about the news. But I didn't like the noisy sounds and smoky air of these villagers, actually I didn't like it when young guys shouted as if they were fighting each other. I was looking for a quiet place in my house. Finally, I found a small room under the roof which I called my secret room. I went there day and night. There, I read and read a few fairy tales dreaming that I was a real character in the story. Sometimes I was Sleeping Beauty, the other times I was a suffering poor girl who was selling matches in the streets. Most of our neighbors were poor, so they just focused on eating and working. They had no time to think about a young girl's eagerness and curiosity about reading. Books are such precious things to me, but the neighbors' most important need was to keep their family safe and not hungry. My house was no exception to this thing.

One day I played in my secret room as usual, but that day I took a nap and slept until midnight. My family thought I was missing. They organized teams and looked for me during the night in the forest and river in which I swam and collected shells with my friends.

When I walked out from the room, I found nobody was there. I was so scared and started to cry. Someone heard me crying and told my parents and neighbors. They came back to my house and hugged me. But I didn't know why they hugged me so tightly, and why they were holding a big torch. I couldn't forget my mom's crying face, and my father's frightened face different than usual. He went to the secret room and hammered the door closed just like a mother who removes the stones which caused her child to trip.

After that event, I couldn't go to that room anymore, but I still miss the room, because there I dreamed about my future. The small room was the only space where I could be alone. When I was not in the room, I was always surrounded by my big family. I could read and think quietly without exposing myself to others. I couldn't find another secret room for a while.

At that time, I was deeply impressed by the biography of Helen Keller. I dreamed that someday I would become a teacher like the Annie Sullivan who taught Helen Keller and who loved her student more than anything in this world. Today, when I remember that time, it seems like a scene from a movie.

I wanted to go to school before I was six years old. If I didn't go to school, I had nothing interesting to play with during the whole day. In school, there would be an excellent playground and a beautiful young lady teacher who smiled whenever she saw me.

By the time I turned five, we had no school in our village. The school was located in the next village. To get to the school, we had to walk almost one and a half hours. Every year in March, it was a big event for villagers to let their children go to school. All my friends were older than I was, so they began to go to school before me. It was so upsetting to me. I really wanted to go to school with them. My older brother, Sangsoo, also started to go to school. How I envied him. It looked like he had everything that I wanted most. For example, he had a shiny school bag, brand new shoes and clothes which he thought were just usual things, because actually he wasn't excited about school. But those gorgeous clothes and that bag were very special things to me. If I didn't go to school, I wouldn't get those things. Sangsoo thought that school wasn't interesting, and he preferred to stay at home and

wanted to play with Grandmother who gave him unlimited love.

Because he was the first grandson of my family, he was supposed to carry our family name. Everyone expected him to be successful in his school. So Grandmother worried about him disliking school. She suggested that she and I take him to school. I accepted with joy, because that was what I wanted most.

The three of us went to school every day. I always ran ahead of Sangsoo and Grandmother. I walked toward his school with his school bag on my head, he followed me walking slowly, and our grandmother walked with a walking stick and worried eyes.

When we three passed through the downtown, I thought everyone bowed to me; everyone bowed not to me but to my grandmother. My grandmother was old and wise enough to receive their respect, but it didn't matter to me. I walked more proudly with the bag on my head, holding it with two small hands and sparkling eyes, so it wouldn't fall down.

Sangsoo ate breakfast very slowly complaining how difficult it was for him to go to school every early morning, so

one day we arrived late at the school located in the next village. The sun already had risen above our heads. I can't forget the time when we arrived in the late morning. In the distance, I could hear the students reading in unison. The playground sand was so bright that I couldn't open my surprised black eyes. When I remember that moment through the eyes of a five-year-old, I feel a kind of peace from that scenery. It was a momentous event of my life.

Now I am a teacher. I don't know how much that impression influenced me to choose my job. But I can tell that memory went to my subconscious. When I recall entering the school gate as a child, it looked like a different place than the outside world, and I didn't know that school existed in this world. I finally found another secret place there. It was so amazing to me. My heart was filled with wondering and curiosity about school. It still influences me, and prevents me from leaving school.

The year before last, I came to Iowa with my two sons. Sunghee, my older son, went West High School, and Donghyun, my younger son, went to the Northeast Junior High School. I don't know whether they like their schools as much

as I did. I know that they don't dislike their school though. I hope my two sons also have some special memories of their lives. Now I realize my secret room is Donghyun. When I see his face I smile and feel my heart filled with unknown peace and joy. It is very special feeling. I also dream that I need to devote myself to his dream.

Now I am hurrying to see my quiet secret room. After school he will open the door with a low and beautiful voice, "Mom, I am home."

The Present

By Bret Coons

Hometown: Bettendorf, Iowa

English

The Present

The greatest is **the** unopened door,
the **item** behind or beneath.
To know it gold would take its value.
To know it a great **love** would take its fear.

For the unknown result;
that **moment** of *infinite* possibilities!
How I live and die **and** live again by **it**.
Creating and whetting my thirst all at once to know it;
NOW!

Have I done what was needed?
Invested all I could?
What?! What will the darkness reveal...
are things good great, better than I could ever know;
bad horrible, worse than I can take?

Perhaps nothing at all. /
<there is the need to risk it all; you cannot deny it, but it can deny you>

So take the risk!
Spin that blessed wheel of blank symbols and black abyss!
Do what you can while you can so you can,
 enjoy the struggle
 embrace the change
Undertake, perhaps overtake,
 it
 all...

Behind the Slamming Door

By Bret Coons

Hometown: Bettendorf, Iowa

English

“Kavyel,” the soothing voice of the computer said, “It is time for you to wake.”

The young man grunted as he opened his eyes wearily and threw back the white bed sheets. He had been on the White Star Interplanetary Cruiser for his entire life, all eighteen years without human contact. The ship’s crew had been lost when he was two months old, and the ship’s computers had been rendered inactive during the event. The event in which one

thousand thirty-six out of one thousand thirty-seven of the ship's crew members were lost.

“Kavyel,” the computer repeated, “It is time to get up now.”

Kavyel got out of the large blue plastic bed and walked over to his white plastic dresser and picked out a dark blue uniform. It was a plain jumpsuit with four stars and a pair of wings over the left breast pocket. He had been told by the ship’s computer (whom he called MOM, short for master operating machine), that the symbols on the pocket gave the rank of captain on the ship. MOM had given him the outfit in order to help with his boredom, and for the same reason the computer had been making him rearrange his room every month. It thought that if it made Kavyel’s surroundings different then maybe it would help him have more variety in his life.

Kavyel changed into the uniform and walked though the narrow doorway to the right of his dresser and went out in the large hallway that lay beyond his room. The hallway was a good five hundred feet long and was lined with doors to the other unoccupied rooms. Kavyel had searched them all long

ago and taken what he wanted. He took books, games, clothes, and many posters; all of which filled his room. He continued down to the end of the hallway and stopped in front of a large metal elevator door that opened at his arrival.

“Please come in and report to the bridge for studies,” MOM said.

Without answering, he walked in and pressed the necessary buttons to get him to the bridge as he looked impatiently in front of him, and when he arrived at the bridge he went straight to his desk and accessed the ship’s data logs of the newly charted space from his console. He was always searching for planets and their conditions, hoping he would find what he had been searching for his entire life. The newly reported findings flashed on the screen. Five new planets had been found, and Kavyel was overwhelmed. He had not seen this many results at one time before. *There must be at least one planet here I can live on... come on... all I need is one*, he thought, as he found the first two uninhabitable.

“Kavyel, why are you looking at that, I have told you every day for ten years that I would report to you if I found a habitable planet,” MOM said as it began to scan its

programming for ways to convince him to stop his search. “Kavyel you need to be working on your studies right now. You are wasting your time.”

Kavyel continued his search, ignoring the computer’s words. Three planets were now off his list and he was on to the fourth.

“Kavyel, you are wasting your time,” MOM repeated. *I cannot let him see the fifth report; I must cut the information from his monitor. No*, the computer thought, *it is too suspicious. I must try something else*. “Kavyel you must stop looking at that file and begin your studies immediately.”

He had reached the data on the fifth planet; his eyes widened as he read the report and a smile swept over his pale face. He had found it, a planet he could live on, freedom from the eternal prison of the ship! He threw his head back with laughter and pushed himself from the desk spinning wildly in his chair. He was free; he could leave. The excuse that there was nowhere he could go was gone forever now. He quickly stopped spinning and ran toward the elevator.

“Kavyel you must start your studies; you will not be allowed to waste any more time.”

“Open the door I need to return to my quarters immediately to pack. Didn’t you see the report on the fifth planet from the star here? MOM, I can leave, it’s able to sustain me!”

The computer didn’t respond.

“I can leave... I am free to go,” Kavyel said. His voice was losing the excitement it once had. “I need to start packing so I can leave. My studies no longer matter I have learned more than I need to know to be an expert in any field of study. Besides,” he said “I know you only made me study to keep me busy anyway.”

I can not let him leave, MOM thought, if he leaves I will fail my objective to protect the crew; but it is probably best to keep him calm...I will let him pack, and while he is packing I will convince him to stay while he is distracted with his task.

The elevator doors opened and Kavyel walked in with a new smile, thinking that the computer was in agreement with his decision. He started to think about what he was going take with him and how much water he should take, when his thoughts were interrupted by MOM’s mellow voice.

“Kavyel, why must you go?”

“I want to make my own destiny and be free from the ship. I’m sick of being a caged animal with the whole universe waiting for me outside.”

“You will not have my protection, you will be vulnerable to the world and even though my main purpose is to protect the crew I cannot go with you. The ship must continue to its destination. You could die.”

There, the computer thought, he must see the logic of the facts and withdraw his request to leave and the mission of protecting the crew will not be failed.

“Yes,” Kavyel calmly said, “I know the consequences of leaving and I am willing to take them.”

The elevator stopped and the doors opened letting Kavyel run into his room and start packing.

“You will be alone,” MOM said after a long pause.

Kavyel stopped his packing, and the look of excitement on his face turned into a look of anger. He stood silently for a few seconds to consider if what he had feared was happening.

“Why are you talking like this?” Kavyel said, “I must leave now, there may never be another chance for me to go.”

It is not working, the computer thought, Kavyel seems more determined now than ever. I must stop this before it goes too far.

“I am sorry Kavyel, as your parent I cannot allow you to leave the ship. I find it too dangerous.”

“NO...NO! You will NOT!” Kavyel was now standing straight up with white knuckled fists. “You can’t,” he said softly; then just as fast as he had become quiet he became louder still. “YOU’RE NOT MY PARENT! MY PARENTS ARE DEAD!”

“I raised you. I am your adopted parent.”

“No,” he said gritting his teeth, “You aren’t even human. Why should you care whether I die or not?! You have no feelings. You may be content with the situation we are in, but I’m not!”

“I am sorry, but I still cannot let you leave,” MOM said, its voice calm although a little sharper than usual.

Kavyel closed the case he was packing and upon picking it up he began to walk quickly out of his room to the end of the hall opposite of the elevator.

He must be heading to the escape pods. If he tries to override my systems I will not be able to stop him. Options are kill... does not compute... cut power to pod bay doors. Power cut.

When Kavyel got to the console at the end of the hall to open the bay doors nothing responded to his touch. He slammed his fists on the console in an explosion of anger.

“WHY!” he screamed. His eyes were becoming a mess of tears. “Why are you doing this?”

The computer did not answer. Kavyel ran over to the wall by the console and opened a small panel containing a mass of wires, and thrust his hands into the mess.

“You will not stop me... you—”

Options are... kill... does not compute... options are; FAILED... FAILED... ERROR 10456 HAS OCCURRED, SYSTEM SHUT DOWN IMMINENT

“will not stop me!”

The bay doors opened and Kavyel looked at them in puzzlement wondering if he could have opened them so fast on his own. He shook his head of the thought and picked up his bag and ran to toward the doors, still confused.

“Kavyel,” MOM said, its voice crackling, no longer calm and collected, “you must not leave me.”

Without a word he ran into the closest of the hundreds of escape pods and started its jettison sequence.

“Kavyel you must not lea-”

He shut down the com-link in the pod. He is going out of the bay... can't stop... options... alone... no one left... FAILED... ERROR... SHUT DOWN IN 20...

Kavyel was free. He was no longer in the over bearing grip of MOM's protection. He turned in his small spherical pod that contained his bag and him alone, and looked though the back window. Kavyel wanted one more look at the ship that was his home for so many years. His smile faded and his thoughts turned into a strain of emotions as he remembered how MOM had pleaded with him to stay, but he made himself stop thinking about it, after all, MOM is just a computer. Kavyel watched the ship as it moved slowly to his left in the window and shrink in size above him as he fell toward the blue-green planet below, until he could see all of the White Star. He then saw something that confused him.

He saw the ship's lights go out. It started at the head of the ship and spread to the end, until the ship was only visible by the star's light. And as he watched he noticed that even though the ship was still above him to his left it wasn't getting any smaller as he fell away from it. He saw the ship start to grow back in size. Kavyel had to turn to the window on his left side, as the ship was now beginning to pass him and was hundreds of kilometers if not a thousand away perpendicular to his side. He watched in horror, as it fell toward one of the oceans below. As he was landing in his new home.

Zack's Escape

By Charles Wolford

Hometown: St. Louis, Missouri

English

The car rushed through a black vortex of air and into Scott's neighborhood, through the street that ran between a long wall of brittle December trees and the quiet houses, down

the sloping avenue and into the enclosing darkness of the last Clayton borough. Out of the gutters a dense fog had collected, an amorphous portal. Emerging in the windshield, a long corridor of suspended pale moons hung brilliantly among the branches of the median, curving away to their left. The car shot on. They had passed the condominiums now. In front of them, to their right, a low metal fence surrounded an empty park. “Scott — Scott —” It was Zack’s voice in the front, fierce, loud. “Where to? Where to? Where do I —”

“Here.” Scott sat forward out of the backseat in a single rapid motion, his wide-eyed face between the two headrests, pointing out of the passenger-side window.

They crossed another street, acorns popping and scattering frantically beneath the tires. Overhead, the treetops rattled against the streetlights: strung beneath the globes, blue flags, announcing in muted trumpet iconography an upcoming festival, fluttered rapidly but tersely in the winter-night wind. Bare of cars, dotted with flattened fans of powdery leaf-bits, the lane was a contained world: a narrow silvery conduit bounded by two vast dark gulfs — Concordia, the seminary, to their left, a seascape of chilled blackness dotted with wavering

orange bulbs; to their right, the high apartments, the bottom-floors occupied with midnight stores (the antique shops and salons and cafés) vacant beneath the stiff overhanging awnings.

“Turn here!” Scott said.

The car made the swooping right, a tire rolling heavily over the curb. A string of golden bulbs, dangling decoratively across a restaurant-front in the distance, raced across the glass. Pulling into a gap between two bumpers near an alleyway, they parked. Someone hissed and, as one, they ducked beneath the windows. Tense, motionless, they huddled silently in the floor, close in the rich darkness. Above them the opulent, forbidding apartment buildings soared; the scant foliage whispered in the black air, the heavy trunks looming. The cold had rushed in. For a while there was silence, not even breathing almost, but soon Scott began to pant, inhaling steadily and rapidly, as though he would sneeze. Zack cursed, striking Scott. But now Scott was becoming louder, his eyes bulging, and his head seeming to swell. “Air, air,” he gasped, choking, now striving upward, “I must have —” clawing them away, furiously, wildly grappling against their restraining arms. Always before his voice had been a whisper, although insistent: but now all at

once he began to shriek: “Air! AIR!” In the little car, in the silent night, his scream was more than an explosion — it tore roaring upon them like a thunderclap, like aghast, abominable insanity.

At first they beat him, but he thrashed desperately, and in a huge heave shot rigidly erect, waist-up into the light of the seat, like a submerged plank violently airborne out of the surface of the sea. His face was grotesque: his bulging eyes were lidless, his sucking cheeks hollowed. In the same instant Zack turned the key in the ignition and reached back; as the window lowered a few inches, Scott’s mouth, straining upward into the icy blast, slammed into the swift hammer of Zack’s fist.

“Now shut up! Shut up! Shut your fucking —” Zack whispered viciously. But even he knew it was useless: it didn’t matter anymore. Scott lay trembling against the back of a seat, holding his softly heaving throat, his temple pounding, his windpipe still curdling gutturally, rasping. He was watching something. Staring out of the back window, his eyes, becoming smaller and smaller, were still large. Outside, a hardened leaf capsized slowly out from the cold yew bushes nearby.

Hovering for a moment above the sidewalk, at last it arced into the street and flew above the car. Alighting again, the brown claw passed like a whipping cape to reveal for Scott a distant image: the five-pointed electric star perched atop the western ramparts of the high Concordian belltower. The four stone sides were illuminated in the somber height, overlooking the cloaked hills. Even in the car they could hear the leafy millions of the bowled park rustle ominously. A lone path, dipping low from the street level, was the single incandescent thread climbing to the church. Cold green poles alternated the concrete way in zigzag pattern; glass boxes sat perched atop, shielding pale bulbs from the wind. Mounting around a wall, it led eventually into the inner courtyards, where now a form huddled into a corner, bowing her hooded head beneath an endless soaring nave.

Her pale lips murmured from beneath the steel strands of masking hair: “Father of Christ, behold me.” So soft, the sound was a dispersing mist in the presence of the crafted summit. She sank to her knees, wrapping her breasts close, fitting against a frigid doorway. “Father of Christ.” Guttured into a portal of rock, the wracked Savior hung before her, his

dripping beard, his weary eyes. Somewhere, she knew, beyond, within, blue smog shrouded the altar, the immaculate trays were filled with still pools.

“Father —”

She saw the miles and miles of uniformed seating, the hard wooden backs, the splendid pillars ascending forever only to fade into the swirling jet. A cold hand grasped the orifice between her legs; creeping veins sifted treacherously within her womb, seeping subzero. A cluster of glinting stars were studded into the southeast, a look of poesy and destitution. Now beneath the terrible climes she began to weep, her shallow frame collapsing, sinking into the paneled slabs, into sin, the refuge of sin.

Max

By Meg Tisinger

Hometown: Davenport, Iowa

Secondary Education/English

Max

he's in the basement
watching Holocaust porn
and wishing that he had
never been born
he's tying his shoelace
he's playing the Strokes
he's buying the war
and packing his smokes
and asking me questions that
I cannot answer
like if the room stopped
spinning would he still

be a dancer
and if God wasn't real
could I correlate
between "Leaving so soon?"
and staying too late

Attire

By Meg Tisinger

Hometown: Davenport, Iowa

Secondary Education/English

wool merino felt
flannel gabardine
jersey melton
panama tartan
sateen velvet
cotton silk
muslin
organza
poplin gingham
gauze seersucker
terry houndstooth
brocade chiffon ogee
chamusee organoly
maklasse linen latex
georgette damask
sailcloth venise
acrylic viscose
lastex rayon kine
polyester petersham
cheviot donegal drill
neather spandex dimity
linsey velveteen polished
herring bone
diaper suede
lace

Are Social Networking Websites Desirable?

By Grace Kim

Home: Iowa and South Korea

Pre-Pharmacy

MySpace and Facebook are social networking sites that connect friends and form new relationships. They also provide users with personal space which enables them to upload images, sounds and movies of their own interest. In other words, the owner of the page is the one who decides its content and how to organize it. As a result users are able to feel free to express their personalities and styles through these homepages. I use a site of South Korea called Cyworld, a social networking website that works similarly to Facebook. It connects people by allowing the user to click on names and upload photos, diaries, music and comments. Actually I did not realize the need for this space before I came to the USA. However, after I came it let me keep in touch with my friends in Korea and share photos of how we were doing. Eventually I was able to feel emotionally secure through this cyber network.

The major social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace emerged not long ago. MySpace was founded in July 2003 by Tom Anderson and Chris DeWolfe and Facebook was founded in year 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, a Harvard University student (Wikipedia). The sites are still new so there are problems that should be seen to. For example personal information is not kept safe, and users do not have much control over photos that display uncomely behavior and addiction. As a result, controversy over the desirability of these websites has grown. In this paper, I will discuss the range of the controversy over the desirability of these spaces and whether they provide an appropriate environment for kids and teens.

The relevance of this issue is that this social networking cyberspace is becoming more and more prevalent, especially among children, teenagers, and young adults. It is playing a role of determining people's popularity and providing another way of communication. I think this issue will help to understand how people are making social relationships online and what they think genuine relationships should be like. The people involved with this issue can be divided into three major

groups: experienced users, new users(teens/children) and parents/teachers. Interestingly I was able to observe contrasting arguments not just among different groups, but also among people of the same group.

The first group is the experienced users. For college students, Facebook connects them with their friends who attend the same school and also lets them find old friends or make new relationships. Current experienced users think these social networking sites are a good way to keep in touch with people because it is cheaper than calling and easy if one has basic computer skills (Caudillo, 1). This argument has a logical appeal since contacting people and saving money at the same time would be a reasonable choice for users. This group also acknowledges that they have enough computer skills to use these sites and knows what level of skills a user needs. That is why they could say that it is easy for beginners to use them. A college newspaper writer points out that it is also easy to form a community with people in common because the site allows the posting of photos, notes, music and journals of personal interest to share with other users (Caudillo, 1).

However, there are various complaints from experienced users about these sites too. One such case deals with chain messages left on comment sections. Most students become annoyed when handling these letters. The purpose of using Facebook or MySpace for these students is networking and sharing interests with people, not spending time reading unnecessary letters (Caudillo, 2). Furthermore, some experienced users argue that users are at risk of becoming addicted to this activity (Caudillo, 2). There are times when users feel deprived of connection with their peers when not on MySpace. As a result they constantly log in and spend excessive time wandering around friends' homepages. I observed that the users were appealing to emotions when making their arguments. In some ways, the websites can be beneficial in letting people feel emotionally content by letting them form and maintain relationships, but it could make people lonesome when deprived of the access to the sites. This argument would help the audience get a sense of what they would feel through these sites. There is also criticism that some people "mask" themselves as if they are cool and sexy just to be more attractive to others (Austin, 3). One could mislead

others, making it difficult to develop honest and clear relationships with others. People who are looking for genuine relationships might think that internet social spaces are not very effective. Because this group is made up of people with much experience with these sites their opinions would be influential. In other words their status as experienced users is an important factor that makes them seem credible.

The second group that is involved are the new users, including kids and teenagers who think that MySpace is a “cool” and mature place. They know that many young adults have MySpace or other personal homepages. These sites provide an area for teens to experience what it is like to be an adult (Andrews, 1). Since it is not complicated to make an account in MySpace or Facebook, kids and teens can easily see how adults hang out by looking at photos they have uploaded. This group is curious about the adult world as they are in the stage of growing into adulthood. Thus, they tend to imitate adult behavior and activities without thinking critically about the consequences. In addition, this group also tends to regard these homepages as a place to hang out with friends. It is easy to contact their peers and share comments online since they can

use the sites anytime they want. Moreover they are sensitive to what their peers are engaged in so they like to spend a great deal of time browsing their friends’ homepages (Andrews, 2).

This group’s argument can have an appeal to others due to their identity. Kids and teens are in the stage when they consider their peers’ interests seriously. As a result, it makes sense that they want to do what their friends consider “cool.” Thus, if these sites have a good reputation among some kids and teens, use of these sites will spread rapidly. This could be the reason why MySpace has turned into an “online hotspot”(Andrews, 1). Although their identity does not serve as a credible background for giving an effective argument like the experienced users, the fact that they are kids and teens makes their argument understandable.

The third group involved in this issue is parents and teachers who are concerned about their children’s engaging in MySpace or Facebook. Many in this group argue that these homepages have dangers that children are not aware of. These dangers include the exposure of personal information as well as explicit sources that show uncomely behaviors of adults that children may imitate. For example, a sixth grade teacher from

California rails against the photo postings of people smoking joints, people who are hardly dressed and people engaging in violent behavior (Brown, 2). Moreover, the unrestricted network of these pages can be overwhelming because there may be sexual hunters and criminals browsing the pages that show so much personal information about children.

The measure that a few parents have used to protect their kids is to block them from using these sites. However, there is an argument that this is not an effective method. Due to its unrestricted nature, these sites can serve as material to learn what is right and wrong, can enable children to think critically, and to observe various viewpoints (Downes, 3-4). In other words, children can achieve a broader outlook on the world just by sitting in front of the computer. It has another advantage by letting kids “disconnect” the site when they want to, so it is actually a safe way to learn (Downes, 4). The important thing is that this learning process ought to be supervised by parents. They should understand the child’s curiosity and try to help the child understand what is right and wrong about any inappropriate behavior displayed by others. The parents have a responsibility to show kids what a decent

adult is like, and social networking websites can serve as a helpful source. Parents are adults. Thus they have considerable knowledge and experience of society. As a result their arguments are backed by their credibility. In addition, as the parents are dealing with their own children, their arguments appealed to emotion. Since the sites have a potential to harm the kids, parents would argue in a worried and concerned tone.

Social networking sites have been expanding rapidly. As a result, these sites are drawing attention from various people. Experienced users have both positive and critical views on them, new users think that they are a mature playground, and parents are protective or favorable about their children using them. There are various arguments among the same groups. The sites are very personal so there could be more thoughts about the sites which makes the controversy persistent.

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My Childhood

By Qingyu Yang

Home Country: China

Industrial Engineering

I was born in a medium-sized city in China, but I spent most of my childhood in the country. The reason might be difficult to understand for people who did not live in China in

the late 1970s. At that time, all of the graduates from the universities were assigned to jobs by the government. Thus when I was born, both of my parents were working as high school teachers in a small town. Although the school was only about two hours' ride from our home in the city, it was impossible to go home every day. Private cars were beyond the means of common people in China at that time; taking buses is very time consuming. The nearest bus station to the high school was several miles away, and there was a river across the road. There was no bridge across the river at that time. Two little boats were used as ferries, but their schedule depended on the weather and the number of people who wanted to cross the river. My parents had to live in an apartment provided by the school on weekdays, and went back to their city home on weekends. They decided to leave my elder sister in the city, living with my grandparents, and had me live with them in the town.

I had a happy childhood in the town. The scenery in the country was very beautiful. There were all kinds of flowers during each season; the air was always fresh and clean; there were little animals around such as birds, frogs and squirrels.

Each day I spent a lot of time walking around and playing games with other children, such as playing marbles and cards, catching frogs, and swimming. The people in the town were very kind to me. One reason was that all the people knew each other quite well in the little town; thus they tended to have good relationships with each other. Another reason was, as high school teachers, my parents had the respect of the local people. All the young guys in the town were educated in that high school; local people were thankful to the teachers, especially those coming from the cities. As a child of teachers, I was treated kindly by both the adults and the students in the high school. As the teachers' apartments were very near to the high school, I used to walk around the school, playing with the students, who were much older than me.

I lived mostly in the town, but it seemed I didn't belong to the town. Each weekend I went back to the home in the city with my parents. At that time, the weekend only consisted of Sunday, so we always began the trip on Saturday afternoon, and came back on Monday morning. My parents had no classes at that time. For me, that was also an excellent schedule. Although the school week is now five days, when I was a child

in China, we had school on Saturday also. I spent the weekend playing with my elder sister and a cousin who lived nearby. As I could only meet with my sister one day each week, we seldom quarreled. She always kept the candy that our parents gave her, and shared it with me on weekends. It was tiresome for my parents to go back and forth after a week's work, but I always looked forward to the trip.

When I was seven, both my parents moved to work in the city. Then I transferred to an elementary school in the city, and my rural life was over.

My First Cooking Experience

By Chen-Yang Chen

Home Country: Taiwan

Linguistics

Back home in Taiwan, the kitchen is always the last place I would go unless I wanted to grab something from the fridge. Therefore, to me, studying abroad means studying cooking at

the same time. To cover this embarrassing fact, I explored on the Internet, seeking simple and novice-friendly recipes and tried to rehearse the whole process in my mind to prepare for an upcoming potluck. However, even the simplest procedures in the recipe seemed even harder than my syntax and phonetics courses. Exactly how much is a spoonful of oil? How can I fry chicken without burning it? What is swordfish and why are there so many different kinds of flour? Many questions arose but none of them could be answered easily.

The tastiness of a dish is determined by two factors: One is the freshness of the ingredients and the other is good cooking skills. Obviously, I lack the latter and have no choice but to make up for it with fresh ingredients. Baked salmon and mashed potato salad were my final decisions. I sprinkled salt thoroughly on the salmon, and added soy sauce and some Chinese spicy sauce in the hope that all these ingredients would do magic and make me a wonderful baked salmon. Put it in the oven and the first dish is done, I told myself. But what was the appropriate temperature to bake salmon at? 450 or 550? and how would I know when my precious salmon was done? Again, with no clues and no answers, I arbitrarily made the

decision and decided to bake it until I personally believed it was done. I trusted my senses and intuition for cooking, which I convinced myself I must have.

Mashed potato salad must be easier, I thought to myself, because I just need to put all the ingredients in one bowl and mix them up. Novices often mess things up. Well-done potatoes take a lot of time and I have no idea what it means to be well-done. To make the dish seem more colorful, I decided to add some carrots, sweet corn and tuna. There came another question: What was the proportion of all the ingredients? Which one should be put in first? How could I mash the potatoes without a blender? The kitchen was already a mess, like a battlefield, but no dish had been produced. Without much time left, I tried to finish everything as soon as possible, not daring to imagine what my dishes would taste like. A knock on the door—my friends' arrival—indicated I had better finish the cooking and would have to wait for judgment. I went to open the door, greeted them, put my dishes on the table and, most important of all, slipped medicine for diarrhea into my pocket in preparation for any unexpected results.

Autumn

By Derek Otte

Hometown: Bettendorf, Iowa

English

The trees burst into flame

Each

Leaf,

A burning cinder

Falling to the ground,

Torrential fire from the sky

The wind

Churns

Crunching waves of

Smoldering flame

Red

& Yellow

& Orange

The tide of

Burning,

Crisp,

Ash

Rolls over

The open fields of grass

Dances through

The busy streets

Swirls upon

The sidewalks and the alleyways

Gathers in

The corners

And

Bases of wind-buffeted walls

Operation Iraqi Freedom

By Derek Otte

Hometown: Bettendorf, Iowa

English

1

Private first class

Steven D. Green,

21,

and other members of

1st Platoon,

B Company,

1st Battalion,

502nd Infantry Regiment,

noticed Abeer Qasim Hamza

near a traffic checkpoint they manned in Mahmudiyah,

south of Baghdad.

Abeer expressed concerns
to her mother,
because the U.S. troops made advances toward her.

Over drinks,
the soldiers worked out an elaborate plan to carry out a crime
By wearing dark clothes to the home,
killing the family,
raping the young woman,
and then covering it up by allowing authorities to believe
the attack was carried out by insurgents.

Green and the other soldiers changed into dark clothes.
One soldier was left at the checkpoint to man the radio,
while four others headed to the home,
armed with three M4 rifles
and a shotgun.
With one soldier guarding the door, the three others entered.
Green covered his face with a brown T-shirt,
grabbed an AK-47 rifle
and herded an adult couple and a young girl—
5 years old --
into a bedroom,
then shot them.
Green came to the bedroom door,
'I just killed them, all are dead.'

Green and another soldier raped Abeer
before Green shot her two

or three times
in the head with the AK-47.
She was set on fire
in an attempt to hide the crime.

Green and others returned to the Army checkpoint
with blood on their clothes,
which they later burned.
Green told one of the soldiers to throw the AK-47 into a canal.

Iraqis notified U.S. soldiers of the killings,
reporting the house was on fire.
A soldier, who was in the house during the crime,
was one of those who later responded to the scene.
Army investigators took
15 photographs of the bodies,
to record what was believed to be
an insurgent attack.

The plan worked, until
soldiers discussed the incident
while going through stress counseling
after two other members of their platoon were captured at a
checkpoint
and beheaded by insurgents.
Army officials began investigating
the day after hearing about the events.

Green,
who was honorably discharged for an unspecified

“personality disorder,”
which can be used to document willful disobedience
or a personality that does not mesh well with military life,
was arrested at his grandmother's house
in Marion, North Carolina.

Federal prosecutors pursue
four charges of murder
and one charge of rape
against Green.
Green could face the death penalty.
Four other soldiers,
who have been implicated, were not named
in the federal court documents
and remain in Iraq.
None has been charged.

1.2

Steven D. Green grew up in Midland, Texas,
joined the Army after receiving his GED,
went to Fort Benning, Georgia,
for infantry training,
and graduated in June 2005.
Family members joined him at the ceremony.

"It was such a proud day," Green's uncle said
"He had found direction in his life,
something important,

something he really wanted to do.
He was making the military his career.
He was ready to go to Iraq.
He thought serving his country was a good thing."