

# Guidelines and Policies

*Freelancer* is an annual publication of the Amarillo College English Department designed to showcase student, faculty, and staff writing of all kinds. Winning entries from the Amarillo College English Department Writer's Roundup contest are also included. A new issue is published each spring.

*Freelancer* invites submissions from AC students, faculty, and staff. You may send us original poetry, short stories, essays, reflections, etc. Submissions may be emailed to a staff member, given to a member of the English Department, or delivered to the English Writing Lab in Ordway 101. We would prefer to receive an electronic copy of each work, either saved on a disk or emailed as an attachment. Submissions must have a name and contact information on them. To be published in *Freelancer*, submissions must be accepted by staff majority vote.

Each submission becomes the property of *Freelancer* until after publication of the issue it appears in, when rights revert to the author. Submissions will not be returned unless accompanied by the author's request and a self-addressed stamped envelope. All submitted works must be original and unpublished.

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# Table of Contents

Contributors This Issue	2
The Silent Demonstration	4
Dr. William Netherton	4
The Roaring Twenties! (Dust in Your Blue Eyes)	5
Milam Stone	5
Silence	6
Brennan Lawler	6
Baldwin	8
Jake Fox	8
An Offer of Hope	9
Mary Waguespack	9
Wanderlust	13
Dr. Mary L. Dodson	13
Kidnapped!	14
Gary Peters	14
Stalker	16
Jackie Long	16
Gossip	17
Missy Nelson	17
Heat	26
Frank Sobey	26
The Dark Side of Robin the Hood	27
Matt Kime	27
Faulkner's Emily: A Character Analysis	31
Julia Savala	31
<b>Spring 2007 Writers' Roundup Winners</b>	<b>35</b>
Finally Seeing Sarah	36
Deborah Upton (Grand Prize Winner)	36
Duke & Persnickety	42
Anthony Wright (1 <sup>st</sup> Place Sophomore Category)	42
Marching Orders	47
James Keevan (1 <sup>st</sup> Place Freshman Category)	47

## The Silent Demonstration

by Dr. William Netherton

Clouds build and roll to the east  
in the late March Panhandle skies.

On Buchanan Street,  
beside City Hall,  
the boots  
sit placidly  
where the Quakers placed them  
in the early dawn:  
Two hundred pairs  
in neat, military rows.  
Each bears a tag  
with the name of its former owner,  
now deceased.

Silently, they tell the story  
of lives lost,  
of loved ones lost,  
of a different, slower kind of  
mass destruction.

The boots stand empty—  
Some scuffed from heavy wear,  
Some still polished and almost new.  
Men's boots,  
Women's boots—

Those who once wore them  
are now silent,  
But their boots  
All quietly ask the question:

Why?

## The Roaring Twenties! (Dust in Your Blue Eyes)

by Milam Stone

24 hour party central.  
Center your feet and mingle  
On my chest,  
I blacked out on the mezzanine.  
    This is for me,  
    Not your serial epitaphs.  
    This is for me,  
    Not your bellowing people laughs.  
Green light, go!  
Well we're going every season now,  
Packing rocky roads down  
Into the real estate.  
    Miss Daisy in her white dress.  
    We won't make this serious.  
    Tangled up in your white sheets.  
    Let's never make this serious.  
As we're riding in your  
New car, black and gold  
Like your sentiment.  
Dazzle with your dance moves,  
We're not dependent on the government.

Glass to the ceiling, friend,  
Let us toast to the big crash.  
Glass for the ceiling planks,  
You have to push 'til your fingers gash.

A headache from a dizzy heart,  
Just a symptom of my yesterdays.  
Black soot in my fingernails,  
Overshadowing a Tuesday.

## Silence

by Brennan Lawler

Working on Pre-Calculus in a coffee shop seems like such a waste. As I stare blankly at endless problems, I feel my mind wandering. I notice the tinny sound of the bell above the door and the blast of cold air that accompanies the opening. I notice the sweetened, acidic smell of coffee and the din of voices--conversations existing in seemingly chaotic circumstances. I take a small drink of my tea as I realize that I'm not really doing my homework. Somehow, I just exist in this place, and for the moment, that's alright with me.

I'm also eavesdropping and observing. A pair that looks to be mother and daughter discusses knitting while sipping flavored coffee. They glance distractedly away during the frequent stalls in their conversation. Their stop-and-go conversation confuses me, but I listen closely as the discussion moves jerkily to the topic of exercise and then back again to knitting. The purpose of their conversation is lost in the constant stirring of coffee and shifting of body weight. I get the feeling that whether it's of knitting or politics, they speak only to fill the silence.

I hear the small bell above the door and watch as a man enters the shop, shaking the cold from his body. A man rises from his table in the corner to meet him. He is greeted by a silent embrace, a passionate grasp that makes me wonder who the man he meets might be--perhaps a brother from home from college, perhaps a friend home from war. They never speak to one another and quietly make their way back into the corner of the coffee shop. Although my back is turned to their corner, I listen closely and try to catch pieces of their conversation, but am met only by silence. Not a single word is exchanged between the two who were so happy to be reunited.

However, a quick glance tells me that their silence is different than that of the other pair. I watch in amazement as hands fly rapidly in silent sentences, forming thoughts and meanings that are beyond my comprehension, but somehow, their emotion seems quiet familiar. The beauty of their motion catches me off guard, and I cannot help but stare. One of them notices me staring and smiles; I turn quickly away. I wonder how many words he missed in his quick glance in my direction. I smile back my apology and return to my coffee and my thoughts.

As I realize the meaning of their silence, another realization threatens to overwhelm my senses. It is not the number of words that measure a conversation—words merely crowd the more important part of the engagement. Whether our talk is of politics or weather, friendship or art, it is not the words that convey our meaning. A healthy relationship does not work to fill the silence; it exists within the silence—not the awkward silence of the mother and daughter, but the rich, meaningful silence of the pair in the corner.

Years from now, we will not remember the words we have spoken; we will remember the silence we shared with true friends. Listen closely, and you will hear it, humming softly in the corner of a coffee shop or dancing unnoticed in a crowded restaurant. Be still, and enjoy its presence. Embrace it because, too soon, it will be all we know.

## Baldwin

by Jake Fox

Bravely and boastfully, Sir Baldwin went bounding,  
Forward through forests from cold canyons confounding.  
Leaping long lakes and hopping high hills.  
Not caring for cruel unkind combat's fair kills.  
They all said, "Sir, slow down, you run without a race."  
But Sir Baldwin's banter bantered on, barely slowing a pace.  
He raced round the rivers, through frost and through fog,  
He beat back the bushes and bashed through the bogs.  
He ran and he ran and ran a bit more,  
Loping limply until his legs became sore.  
And again they all said, "Aye, Sir Baldwin, be still."  
But, lusting not to be late, he loped on still.  
The knights and the nobles never forgot this terrible test.  
As – quelled – kind Sir Baldwin collapsed on his quest.  
He tarried too long and was taken by trolls  
And bludgeoned and beaten and hung on a pole.  
The moral to this melancholy tale, though you may think quite mad,  
Is quick and quite clever, but not just barely bad.  
Never rush forward, forgetting to think,  
Or you'll find your life's ended before you could blink.



## **An Offer of Hope**

by Mary Waguespack

An enriching period of growth and discovery took place after my junior year of high school. In response to endless urging by friends, I decided to embark on a mission trip to New Orleans. I have always been a compassionate person, so the idea of helping the victims of Hurricane Katrina was appealing to me. I had visions of traveling through flood-ravaged neighborhoods and helping numerous suffering people. The bus ride was long, and no one had gotten much sleep, but the bus was buzzing with chatter. Our heads were filled with images of destroyed houses, endless wreckage, and other sights we had seen on the news. We finally approached Algiers and found the church that would be our home for the next ten days. Each of us, equipped with only an air mattress, pillow, and blanket for comfort, quickly set up our beds and slept very soundly.

Early the next morning, we were to attend a meeting in downtown New Orleans and be assigned a damaged house to work on. After piling into our notorious bus, which became almost our second home, we drove for forty-five minutes to our post. In my head I had pictured a large soaked home with a blue tarp on what would have been left of the roof, and chaos all around. Much to my surprise, the neighborhood seemed very calm and almost uninhabited. The little house sat on a corner right beside a set of railroad tracks.

From the outside the house appeared desolate and hollow, but in no way did it match the picture in my head. Although its frame was still intact with the white paint slightly peeling, I was soon to realize the enormous dissimilarity between the exterior and the interior. A few of us had gone ahead with tools and work gloves in hand to scout out the work site. As we neared the house, a tall, older African American woman

with cropped, graying hair stepped out onto the front porch. Her clothes were bright and colorful. She wore large red earrings that dangled almost to her shoulders. Her brow glistened; she appeared apprehensive, and her eyes were weary. Like many of the people that chose to stay in New Orleans after Katrina, she must have been exhausted. Her coffee skin was aged, but still rich in character. Betty, as we later learned was her name, seemed a bit surprised to be face to face with a small group of unsupervised younger people. She was obviously expecting a different assembly of workers to assist with her house. Seeing her concerned expression, I quickly explained that our youth pastor was right behind us. Her features loosened and she asked, "Is it just going to be a bunch of you kids?"

"Well," I answered her, "us, our youth pastor, and the rest of our group." My heart ached for her as she went on to explain her concern.

"This house has been in my family for fifty years." she said with a pained expression. "My mama and daddy worked hard for this house and me n' my brothers and sisters were all raised in it." She settled into a sort of helpless resignation. "Well, I guess I can't complain," she said. "All's I ask is that you save the china plates...my mama loved those plates." I felt my eyes sting as I pictured my own mother and all of our possessions that had been passed down for generations in our family. "Everthin' else you can throw away," she broke in on my daydream.

"Yes ma'am," we said in unison. "Don't worry; we will take good care of your house." She nodded painfully. At that moment I realized that we would be tearing apart her childhood memories, her family's foundation, and the very home she called her own. Gutting a house requires very strenuous work. Besides removing all the mold-infested furniture, clothes, and other possessions, one also has to knock out all the walls and basically strip the house down to the skeleton. I wanted to preserve the

little that Betty had left, and although I knew I could not, I also wanted to restore everything that she had lost. I do not think any of us knew exactly what we were in for.

It was mid-June, and the humidity alone was almost unbearable. To make matters worse, a sickness was spreading through our group, and I was one of its first victims. For twenty hours I stayed in bed, with the worst fever I have ever had, not to mention I couldn't keep any food in my stomach. Frustrated with the fact that I could not lend a hand in the relief effort that day, I was determined to get well and do my fair share. The next morning I woke up, hardly refreshed, but well enough to aid my friends. Dressed in old, already moldy clothes, we jumped in the bus and headed off to the house.

Imagine a normal house one second and then submerged under ten feet of water the next. Add about ten months and the result is sickening. Mold grows at a very rapid rate, and it spared no object in this particular house. The refrigerator was still filled with the food from the day of the hurricane. The beds, sheets, clothes, and furniture were all wet and putrid. The carpet was filthy to say the least. Each of us was instructed to wear a protective mask over our nose and mouth and goggles over our eyes. In order to protect our skin from loose nails, jagged wood, and falling debris, we also wore long jeans. Our group varied from ages fourteen to eighteen. There were about twelve kids and seven of them were girls. We soon developed a system. After the brutal task of removing all the furniture and loose items, we began stripping the floors, ceiling, bricks, and stuck fixtures such as the toilet and fireplace. Equipped with two wheelbarrows, we soon were down to one due to a flat tire. It was put to use transferring rubble from the house to the trash site about twenty yards from the front porch. With about three people to a room, one person assigned to wheelbarrow duty, and a couple "light workers," the first few days were filled with the same labors. I had

one of the few large shovels and after a few hours, lifting load after load of junk really started to burn my muscles. My arms, shoulders, and back were exhausted. My clothes were almost completely black and in spite of our precautions, all of our faces were covered in dirt and mold.

Short lunch breaks were hard to enjoy due to the foul, wicked taste of mold in our mouths, noses, and lungs. Spirits were kept high by the encouragement of our group and the thought of a fully gutted and finished project. Also comforting was the fact that Betty would not have to pay for any of this work or do it herself. We knew our hard work was really serving a purpose. Day after day we worked. When fatigue struck one in our group, another would step in. I was amazed at how revitalized one could feel, even being covered in mold. I was truly taking part in changing the life of a woman who otherwise would be in despair.

On day ten we gathered inside the freshly stripped skeleton of a house. The dirty, hard work was finished. Betty had a head start on rebuilding her house. Looking around the house, I remembered what it had looked like prior to our visit. The result was astonishing. Transformed in front of my own eyes, by the work of my own hands, the house was bare and clean. In the grand scheme of things, we had renovated only one house in a devastated city. However, I realized that we had offered hope to one more person, and that was one more person relieved of despair. Much work still needs to be done in New Orleans, but the contribution that I and countless others have made will hopefully prompt further aid and support in the relief effort.

## Wanderlust

by Dr. Mary L. Dodson

I once dreamed of places far-away:  
Manchuria, Istanbul, Djakarta.  
Strolling down dark and narrow streets  
hand-in-hand with a mysterious stranger,  
stumbling across hidden, romantic cafes,  
becoming enchanted by starlight.

Now I wander nightly,  
my fingertips tracing unknown paths as they find  
    their way through the darkness of your chest,  
legs holding hands with yours,  
lips creating new sensations as they find secret hideaways,  
body moving intuitively, magically to your rhythms,  
lusting over the wonder of you.

## **Kidnapped!**

by Gary Peters

They blindfolded me and put me in the back of a car. There were three of them, and I recognized all of their voices. I was not overly concerned.

We drove for ten minutes in silence. I knew they would not tell me why they were doing this or where they were taking me.

We turned in to what I assumed was our destination. When I was taken from the car still blindfolded, I heard water rushing off to my left, a waterfall I presumed. We went inside a building and my blindfold was removed. My eyes took a few seconds to adjust, but darkness still enveloped us. Ahead in what looked like a main room, I could barely make out a dull glow. We moved ahead cautiously, picking our way through the murky blackness.

Suddenly, on my right I heard two men speaking in a strange language. As the man farthest from me turned and looked in my direction, recognition showed on his face. He looked vaguely familiar as he turned back to face his companion. We continued to cautiously move toward the main room.

As we entered the main room there was slightly more light. Dispersed through this large room were numerous altars, some with people sitting around them. These people seemed transfixed, watching the men standing guard over them. The guards had knives in their belts, and some had drawn the knives to their hands and were waving them toward the people menacingly. The people stared at the altars and the guards, not looking up to acknowledge us as we moved through the semi-darkness.

We chose one of the empty altars and took a seat, hoping the guards had not noticed us.

Immediately, I felt a presence behind me. I turned quickly and observed a female figure moving out of the darkness toward us, her feet whispering on the carpet. As she moved closer, I looked into the face of the most beautiful Asian girl I had ever seen. She accepted my gaze, looked directly into my eyes, smiled and handed me a book with what looked like ancient writing on the front. Her gaze put me at ease, and I started to relax, thinking maybe this girl or this book could explain what was happening.

Again she smiled, opening her mouth to speak: "Welcome to Kabuki, Mr. Peters. We understand it is your birthday, and you have never dined with us before."

## Stalker

by Jackie Long

A whisper  
I turn  
A chill lingers  
With the scent of ashes  
Thick upon it  
He's come  
Again  
I wait  
As always  
For his life stealing kiss  
Merely to receive a caress  
He toys  
With what he lusts for  
The warmth of a soul  
Something he cannot have yet  
And that I cannot give  
Though the desire lies  
Goodbye, Thanatos  
Someday



## Gossip

by Missy Nelson

Maggie Jameson sighed in relief as the sound of an engine sputtered away from the driveway. She turned back towards the kitchen, resisting the temptation to slam the screen door on the way in. Maybe other women enjoyed this type of break from their daily routine, but this “company” was something that she could do without. It seemed that every time she got the baby to sleep, some well-wisher had to show up on her doorstep, obnoxiously ringing the bell. This went on until either baby Reese howled in protest or Maggie surrendered to the plague of neighborly concern that had recently begun to overtake her home. She puttered contentedly around her kitchen for almost a half an hour, welcoming the silence. She knew that it was time to sort her laundry. This project had begun early that morning, but had been duly interrupted by a visit from the mailman. That dear, irritating man had launched himself onto the creaky front porch at exactly ten o’ clock that morning. The beauty of the matter was that this happened to be the time of Reese’s morning snooze. Maggie appreciated that Earl was willing to walk all the way up to the door to deliver her mail instead of placing it in the MAIL-box like he did for everyone else. She appreciated the fact that he stood in her doorway for almost fifteen minutes, talking about...well, everything. It was no secret around town that Earl was the guy to talk to if you wanted “news.”

“What can you expect in a lonely man,” she thought to herself. “Since his wife went off and left him for that soldier, he’s had nothing to do but meddle in other people’s affairs.”

It had caused a horrible scandal at the time. Earl had been happily married for almost thirty-two years when his wife vanished, leaving not so much as a note behind.

Yep, Earl had gotten home one Friday afternoon to find that Evie had taken the car, the jewelry and even the rugs in the back hallway. She was kind enough to stop at the bank to pick up Earl's Friday paycheck and anything else he may have happened to have lying around in a safe deposit box....such as his life's savings. Evie was not altogether heartless, though. She was kind enough to leave behind the photographs of Earl's mother, adorned with some interesting additions, compliments of a magic marker. Belford was a small town, so word "got around." Maggie had been told from the butcher's wife (who had of course, heard it from a reliable source) that Evie had run off with a soldier from Connecticut. However, Sarah, down at the market had heard that Evie had told Judge Jefferson's daughter that she had met her a sweet-talkin' city man from New York. Maggie shook her head at the memory, grateful to be living on the outskirts of town. She was young and missed the crowds, but people gossiped in this town something terrible.

Belford was a quiet place, or at least it seemed to be. It was small, but the people that filled its streets seemed to think that they were living in the big city. Or so Maggie thought.

"Meddlesome," she said out loud, "This town is meddlesome."

Hadn't her own experience proved this to be so? When Maggie and her husband had searched for a place to settle down, they had been enthralled with the old-fashioned atmosphere that carried the town. There was a little shop for everything. There was the market for the fresh produce on Mondays and Thursdays and of course, there was still a quaint little butcher shop down the road. They had a grocery store in town, but Maggie had thought that it would be charming to go by each little shop to buy her wares. Of course, all that was before she and John had known about Reese. When Maggie and John had first moved to Belford, nobody seemed to pay them any mind, but

the minute Baby Reese entered the world, the arms of the townspeople opened wide. This would usually have been a good thing....Maggie's thoughts were interrupted by the sound of that damn doorbell. She was a sight to behold, but at least the laundry was in the washer, safe and out of sight. As she looked out the peephole of the front door, she gripped the doorknob and nodded grimly with resignation. She had known that this visit was coming and she might as well let it come today and get it over with: Mrs. James Kendredge was bestowing the honor of her presence on their meager household.

The Kendredges were a wealthy family in Belford. Mr. Kendredge prided himself on the old-fashioned feel of the town. He didn't want *his* town cluttered with all of this technology nonsense.

"Just give me the basics," he would say, when approached with a new computer system to electronically organize his store. He and his wife congratulated themselves on being the center of the town's proverbial universe. They had the final say so in all of the town's major events and from the way they carried on, one would think that they had built the town with their bare hands.

The doorbell rang again, somewhat impatiently. Why couldn't this woman at least have called ahead to warn her? She opened the door to greet the supreme Mrs. Kendredge. This was a mistake.

"Actually, dear, I do so hate to be a stickler, but the correct pronunciation is 'Kend-*red*ge,' emphasis on the '*red*ge.' People seem to always want to put the 'd' and 'redge' together and that's quite wrong."

Maggie stared at the woman in stunned silence. What do you say to something like that? She tried very hard to look both contrite and interested.

"Well, don't be too hard on yourself, child. It's a common mistake and I do hate to bring it up. Well, where is the baby?"

This change in topic threw Maggie off-guard and before she knew it, Mrs. Kendredg had marched past her, walked down her hallway, gazing harshly at the doors as if trying to discern which one belonged to Reese. She stopped at what she deemed to be the appropriate door and opened it.

“That would be our utility closet,” Maggie said quietly. She was met with an icy stare. Apparently, Mrs. Kendredg would have expected the door to any potentially hazardous room to be “baby-proofed,” but then again, she had always been awfully picky with her children. The woman proceeded down the hallway until she found the door to the nursery. Before Maggie had time to protest, Mrs. Kendredg had marched into her nursery, picked that child up out of a sound sleep and held her up, eye-level for a good look. She stared so hard at the baby, Maggie was wondering if she should offer some sort of magnifying glass to expedite the inspection. When Reese began to cry, the woman frowned.

“Is she ill-tempered or just sickly?” she asked Maggie.

“Apparently, just lazy,” Maggie replied in an almost hostile voice. “She likes to sleep sometimes and that worries me greatly.”

Mrs. Kendredg’s gaze wandered over the nursery and she gave Maggie a very polite, motherly smile.

“You poor thing. You have no idea how to mother, have you? Well, now don’t look upset, dear. I never leave a helpless creature defenseless, and I won’t start now.”

Maggie decided that if Mrs. Kendredg called her “dear” one more time, she would throw a rattle at her head. She didn’t have time, though, for Mrs. Kendredg thought that she should know a few things. She had a great many things to learn about parenting. Apparently girls’ bassinets should never be put near a light switch because after all, dear, babies do grow and learn to stand up and move around. We wouldn’t

want her electrocuting herself now would we? The child already seemed to be of a delicate nature (because of its tendency to cry when held), and we wouldn't want to tempt Fate would we? Reese's long fingernails were apparently a danger to all mankind and if Maggie insisted on feeding her lukewarm bottles, she was sure to develop colic within the hour. Just when Maggie had reached the point of all endurance, the delightful Mrs. Kendredg turned to her.

"What do you call this child?" Maggie silently glowered, several choice phrases coming to mind. She had been imagining what Mrs. Kendredg would look like, wearing the soup-pot on her head.

"Well, speak up, girl. What do you call the child?"

"We call *it* Reese."

Mrs. Kendredg blinked at her in disbelief. She put a wrinkled hand to her ear as if years of stealing sanity from young mothers had left her hard of hearing. She paused as Maggie repeated the name and then looked very polite and very nurturing.

"Dear, isn't Reese...a man's name? Surely it may be short for something else. Maybe something a little more...feminine?"

"No, just Reese."

"I suppose the child has been named for either the paternal or maternal grandmother, then?"

"No, John's mother is named Sarah and I was given my own mother's name."

"Then John has been consulted in this matter," queried that abomination of a woman.

"Well, he was partially involved in the creation of *the child*," Maggie retorted. Turning a mottled pink color, Mrs. Kendredg fired another question.

“Well, at least the grandparents were consulted as to the naming of their only grandchild!”

“Oh, no.”

“No, they weren’t consulted?”

“No, ‘no’ Reese isn’t their only grandchild. John’s sister has two boys.”

“So they were consulted?”

“No. We forgot to take a poll, I suppose. With the elections just over and done with, we figured they’d be tired of voting.” Maggie was mocking her now, openly.

“We thought that ‘Reese’ was a safe name. If we had a boy, we’d name him ‘Reese.’ If we had a girl, we could call her ‘Reese.’ In fact, before we found out I was pregnant, we were planning on getting a dog and calling it ‘Reese.’ It was all a matter of fate as to which person or animal got the name.”

Mrs. Kendredge blinked stupidly.

“You named your posterity after a *dog*.”

“Well, an imaginary dog, of course. If the daughter hadn’t shown up, though, there would eventually have been a dog.”

“An imaginary dog?”

“Oh, a real one. Perhaps a German Shepherd.”

This was too far for Mrs. Kendredge. She stood up icily.

“Well, my dear, you seem to have no desire for my kind advice. If you do not wish to listen to wisdom, then I fear I must leave you and poor John to figure out how to raise a child on your own.”

Maggie could not resist. “Well, we figured out the first part okay, so I’m sure that we’ll be fine. Thanks, though.” The mischief in her eyes belied the grave expression on her face.

The pink shades in Mrs. K's face had escalated to a purplish color and she stood to go, almost as if in protest. Maggie didn't dare pause a second for fear that this horrid woman would change her mind and decide to forgive her. She began to lead the troll towards the front door. It seemed miles away. *Why* had John insisted on the house with the long corridor? She cursed her short legs and tried to take longer strides to the screen door that held her freedom...and possibly Mrs. Kendredge's safety. She didn't dare breathe until the expensive Mercedes had indignantly announced its departure from the driveway. At last, quiet.

The poor girl stormed back into the kitchen and began to prepare a pot roast. John loved pot roast. She could imagine that horrid woman still standing in her kitchen.

"Dear, if you wouldn't put in so much salt perhaps your husband could taste the meat. I hate to be a stickler but he probably wants to enjoy his evening meal, not be pickled by it!"

That poor roast was pounded, viciously salted, pounded some more and then slammed vigorously into an awaiting pan. Maybe a bit too vigorously. The little house was soon filled with the sound of a wailing baby. Maggie could hear her daughter crying, demanding to know what a baby had to do to get some sleep around this place. First the city ogre tears her out of a sound sleep and now her mother is bullying innocent roasts in the kitchen. Maggie looked at the clock. By Mrs. Kendredge's expert calculation, the colic should be setting in within the next eight minutes, so mother and child had better enjoy the time together while they still could. She gazed at the rosy infant and stroked her perfect nose, her beautiful cheeks and the little fuzz that was beginning to grow on her little head. It promised to be yellow, just like her father's.

"Man, indeed," Maggie fussed to the baby. "I'll feed you next time the horrid lady comes and you can spit all over that fine jacket if you like."

John was home within a few hours and glad to be alone with his young wife and daughter. Over that injured roast, Maggie related the details of the visit and felt slightly indignant when her husband roared with laughter. She had at least hoped he would be a little angry. Instead he wiped tears from his eyes as he tried to imagine the honorable Mrs. Kendredge being told that they had equally hoped for a child or a German Shepherd. He shook his head and grinned.

“I don’t know where you think of these things. You know that within twenty-four hours the entire town will know every detail of that visit.”

He leaned his head towards her and lowered his voice to a conspiratory whisper, “They probably know what color socks you had in the dryer by now. *They* know everything.”

Maggie rolled her eyes and began to pick up dishes. It was no use. She had been picked on, humiliated, and sorely imposed upon and all her husband could do is laugh. For the rest of the evening as he walked about or played with Reese on the carpet, Maggie could hear him occasionally chuckle to himself and say,

“German Shepherd, indeed.”

The rest of the week was deliciously quiet. There were a few visitors, but the usual neighborhood well-wishers...the kind that brought food for the new mother and then left a girl alone. Maggie reveled in the silence and rejoiced in the almost certainty that that troll Kendredge would never return again. She hummed as she worked and was not at all cross to hear Earl’s truck turn into the driveway. She not only went to the front door immediately, she brought the baby with her so that Earl could see. He grinned gratefully at the two beautiful faces and, with Maggie, admired that perfect nose. He listened to her praise her healthy, sweet, and precious baby and then delivered her mail. Right as he was about to turn to leave, Earl paused for a minute.



“Y’know, speaking of babies. I heard in town from Mary Teal that she heard from Martha Stutton that there was a woman somewhere that was wantin’ children. Wernt from around here ya know, but down South somewhere. I hear it’s getting awful dry down there in the South. Wind’ll suck all yer life out and leave you to...oh...where was I. I’m getting’ off track. Oh yes, the baby. Anyways ‘er husband was of no mind to have a young one in the house and he was quite stubborn about it. The poor gerl begged and cried but he’d have none of it. One night she took to carrying on so much with the cryin’ and the naggin’ that he finally gave in and promised her that come Monday, they’d work on havin’ a larger family. Not a word was said until Monday, when the man came home with a large basket.”

Maggie stopped and stared at the man. Earl had an ear and a tongue for gossip, but this story was a bit of a stretch, even for him.

“The husband brought a *baby* home in the basket? Just like that?”

Earl spat on the ground and thoughtfully took off his hat and scratched his head.

“No, that’s just it, ma’am. That’s the part that ‘wer strange.”

“What was strange?” Maggie queried. She tired of this story.

“The basket ma’am. It didn’t have no baby in it ma’am....” He paused for effect and looked at her gravely,

“It were a German Shepherd.”

## Heat

by Frank Sobey

The great poems teach  
one must not say love  
if love is what one means.

Instead I should write  
of snowfall on our porch  
and unused rocking chairs,  
of the wood fire you stoke  
to cook with and keep warm,  
of what you knead and bake  
each dawn while I chop ice,  
of coming home at dark  
to share hot biscuits with you.

Such moments are fine,  
but the best love poems  
have yet to be written,  
nor will they be this night  
when you come to bed,  
your gown an open blaze.

## **The Dark Side of Robin the Hood**

by Matt Kime

An arrow whizzes through the air, slicing a hole through the bag of gold carried by a twelfth-century aristocrat. Gold spills onto the worn forest path as dark figures move through the woods. In an instant, the aristocrat is surrounded by a group of dangerous looking men led by the notorious vigilante-thief, Robin Hood. This may be a piece of childhood fiction, but this particular bit of folklore is playing itself out today as strongly as it was nine hundred years ago. The henchmen of the outlaw, Robin Hood, are at the door of American economics, ready to take from the rich and give to the poor once again. On the surface, the philosophy of taking from the rich and giving to the poor seems like a good idea, but digging a bit deeper will reveal the insidious nature of Robin Hood's economics.

Economic policies of the 1970's were disastrous to the American economy. Rampant inflation, slow economic growth, and an energy crisis leaving automobile drivers to wait in line for blocks to get a gallon of gasoline seemed to be insurmountable economic problems in the United States. These situations began to change when Ronald Reagan became president in 1981 and implemented his own brand of supply-side economics dubbed Reaganomics. What this meant was that instead of raising the taxes of the American people as his predecessors had done, Reagan did the unthinkable and cut taxes across the board for the poor-, middle-, and upper-class. He did this at a time when the United States was in a monetary freefall due to lack of direction from the previous administration. Politicians screamed that tax cuts would bankrupt the government, but the model of Reaganomics proved sound. The basic hypothesis of supply-side economics is simple: if the people have more money to

spend, they spend it. This theory applies even more to the rich because they are the suppliers: the ones who run the businesses and the industries that employ American workers. Cutting their taxes allows the suppliers to expand current industries or speculate on new business endeavors. This creates jobs for people and wealth for the country. Progressive taxation will only lead back to the monetary nightmare of the 1970's.

George W. Bush has kept the principles of supply-side economics throughout his presidency by increasing tax cuts, and though we have seen economic prosperity since the attacks of 911, opponents of Bush refuse to see lower taxes as a benefit to American society. William Hoar, on the subject of the "CBO [Congressional Budget Office] Report: Bush Tax Cuts Tilted to Rich," quotes Senator John Kerry as saying that the Bush tax cuts " 'will break the back of middle-class families.' " Hoar goes on to say that the middle-class have, in fact, had their taxes "reduced from 16.5 percent to 14.6 percent" and that "7.8 million low- and middle-income families actually had their entire income-tax wiped out by the [tax] cuts" (Hoar). Senator Kerry and other politicians like him are determined to pass a progressive tax system that would force the wealthy to pay proportionally more taxes than low- and middle-income households.

But the questions remain: Why do the Democrats fight supply-side economics, and what is wrong with making the rich pay more than their fair share? Bill Sizemore, Executive Director of the Oregon Taxpayers Union, provides a shocking conclusion in the form of a short test that can be used by anyone:

Try this experiment on 10 everyday people....

I usually ... [ask a] question, stated something like this: A famous person once described such a tax system this way. He said, "from each according to his ability and to each according to his need." Do you agree with that

statement? They usually say, "Yes." Do you know who made it? They usually say, "No."

Very few Americans seem to be aware that the author of that statement was the communist philosopher, Karl Marx, or that a highly progressive income tax system is a foundational stone of communist doctrine. (Sizemore)

America was not founded on communism or socialism. It should be the utmost priority of every citizen of the United States to fight these cancers of freedom at every turn. It will never be in the best interest of Americans to discourage hard-working entrepreneurs from being successful or to punish someone who is lucky enough to be born into wealth. Robin Hood is a wonderful fairy tale, but it is not something Americans can expect to use for political doctrine if they care about their children's prosperity and freedom.

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## Faulkner's Emily: A Character Analysis

by Julia Savala

The most influential type of author is one who can create fictional environments and characters that are relatable to an audience. As readers connect with a character, their minds are able to open and understand a different point of view. William Faulkner recreated the Southern world during its Reconstruction Era in the short story, "A Rose for Emily." In Emily Grierson's story, everything around her is changing and although many readers may feel that this is a positive change, when looking back at the upbringing of Miss Emily, there is a moment for the reader to feel pity, like the townspeople, for the vulnerable icon of the dead old South. This peek into Emily's character reveals she is a person who is chained and repressed by her role as a symbol of the Old South.

Emily's last name, Grierson, ties her to a family that upholds traditions of the Old South and high society. The way her father chose to raise her left her isolated from the town outside her home. "We remembered all the young men her father had driven away," recall the people of Emily's town (208). She lived with her father until he passed away without anybody ever proposing to or courting Miss Emily (208). The social approach of the Griersons left people to think, "the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were" (208). After Emily's father passes on, her only inheritance is the house (208), but growing up a Grierson permits her to carry "her head high enough – even when we believed that she was fallen" (209). Emily's character can also be psychologically analyzed. According to psychology studies, the attachment between a child and a parent shapes the child's future relationships with others

(Bogaerts, Vanheule, and Desmet 799). Due to her upbringing, Emily continues to isolate herself from everything around her and behaves like a Grierson.

The people of Jefferson thought, “Miss Emily had been a tradition” (206). As the town transformed and grew into the New South, Emily remained static. From Emily’s refusal to pay taxes (206) to her refusal to even allow the numbers to be put on her house for the new postal delivery service (211), Emily did not allow anything new to touch her life. The door of her house remained open only for her generation’s children, and this was only to teach them china-painting, an old tradition (211). Miss Emily refused to see the world around her change. When the Aldermen approach her about paying her taxes, she does not acknowledge that Colonel Sartoris no longer had any say-so over the city’s affairs and ignores the current city officials (207). Emily’s rejection of new society even causes her townspeople to hold on to old southern mannerisms. They do not even approach her about the smell coming from her house and, to avoid having to be rude, sneak to sprinkle lime to get rid of the smell (208). Finally, even the city officials stop bothering her to pay her taxes (211).

As observed earlier, change is constantly rejected by Emily. Beginning with the death of her father, it is evident that Emily wants to hold onto the past and refuses to see any altering. It takes the police three days to get Emily to break down and face the death of her father (208). The father was her teacher of the only things she knew about life, and those old-fashioned conventions taught her not to let go of the past, but to hold on tight even if that meant not letting anything new into life. According to McNally, the more people repeat past events, the more they will be reminded of those events, and their memories of past, and present experiences may become jumbled together (819). Emily was continually reliving her past, unable to distinguish the past from the future, and stubbornly held onto that poison, which stopped her from being with people.



Unfortunately, Emily becomes acquainted with Homer, a man who represented everything Emily was not, the center of all the laughs, a northerner, and a worker who brought change into the Old South (209). Rumors about their relationship escalate that they may be married when Emily begins to buy men's clothing, but after the townspeople witness Homer's last visit, they never see him again (210). Not until Emily passes away do the residents of Jefferson find out that he never left her house (212). Maybe Homer was a reminder of all those men that her father had driven away and she did not want Homer to leave her alone like her father did, or perhaps Emily had to kill the change that Homer represented. Emily's father and the choices she made after his death robbed her from the most important aspects of life: emotional and physical connections. So she lay with him dead in her bed, and "with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will" (208).

Emily's attachment to old southern traditions left her with an empty life. She did not have any friends, she did not court many men, and she did not experience the diverse world around her. The deep-rooted conventions of noblesse oblige may have elevated her socially, but her obligations to tradition left her alone. She could only grasp onto things that were dead. She was not only a symbol of the Old South; she was repressed by it because she could not grasp onto the living.

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# ***Spring 2007 Writers' Roundup Winners***

Each year the Amarillo College English Department holds a Writer's Roundup contest to encourage beginning as well as advanced writers to demonstrate their creative flair. Students are given a prompt and have two hours in which to write. The type of writing is up to the student.

For more information on how to enter this friendly competition, please call (806) 371-5170 or email Angie Kleffman, English Department Writing Lab Supervisor II, at [kleffman-am@actx.edu](mailto:kleffman-am@actx.edu).

## **Finally Seeing Sarah**

### **(Grand Prize Winner)**

by Deborah Upton

Sarah was always a little different, a little off. Adults referred to her type as “special.” She wasn’t special in the sense that she rode the little yellow school bus. She didn’t ride any bus at all. Her parents lived a few short blocks from Lincoln Jr. High. When people drove past her in the morning, they rubbernecked. She was the catalyst in more than one fender bender. People rubbernecked because Sarah walked to school. She walked backward.

When new kids started Lincoln Jr. High they noticed Sarah right away. They would stop and stare at her as she walked by. She was anything but a wallflower. She made a point of dressing oddly. She would wear different colored socks, one scrunched down and the other pulled up to her knee with her pants tucked in. Her whole style of dress was unusual. It wasn’t so much the clothes that caught kids’ and even the teachers’ eyes; she carried her books not in a backpack like everyone else, but all stacked up. She stacked them on her head.

She didn’t volunteer answers in class. Teachers would call on her only if they were new. They did it only a handful of times. If they did, the class would laugh and the teacher would soon lose control of the students. Sarah’s classmates loved when a substitute would arrive. If a teacher or, more often, the sub would call on Sarah to participate in class discussion, she would answer and if you thought about it hard enough her answers might have been right. It was hard to concentrate on the accuracy of her response, because Sarah always answered teacher’s in Pig Latin.

There's only one thing that seventh graders dreaded more than group assignments, and that's if you got stuck with Sarah as your partner. She was weird. Most weird kids in Lincoln were at least sometimes smart and the possibility of a decent grade made spending your personal time with the weirdness bearable. Not Sarah, she was weird and she could have been smart, but unless you were an expert and well versed in Pig Latin, you would probably never know. Pretty much she was just a whack job.

My heart raced as Mrs. Jacob was reading off the randomly paired partners for the science project. Random, not likely. It was interesting how best friends and super smart people were paired up. My palms started sweating as more and more kids were paired up in the room. It was getting down the wire and finally Mrs. Jacobs dropped the bomb, "Next, Michelle Stevens you will be working with Sarah Connolly." Kids started to point at me and snicker. I hated all of them. Jerks. Then I looked across the room and glanced at Sarah. She wasn't even paying attention; she was making a bun in her long dirty blonde hair by shoving several chewed up pencils into it. I threw up in my mouth a little.

I gathered up my things and shuffled my way over to Sarah's desk as I rolled my eyes at my horribly cruel teacher. I asked Sarah if she wanted to work at my house or hers. I was praying to myself that she would answer in English opposed to her normal pig speak. She looked up at me and glared right into my eyes. She scared me a little. "My house, I have a computer. Be there at 7:00 PM. Do you know where I live?" she muttered. How could I not know where she lived? My friends and I had been avoiding her block for years. We used to joke that the block was cursed and that's how she ended up that way. "Yeah, I know where you live. Be there at 7:00," I said as I walked briskly away.

Word spread quickly at Lincoln that I was doomed to work with Sarah Connolly in science. The cafeteria lady even gave me grief in the lunch line, “Enjoy your last meal. I hear that people don’t come out alive in that Connolly house.” I hated everyone, especially that fat, hairnet-wearing cafeteria lady. I didn’t enjoy my meal. My friends or my so-called friends made fun of me the entire lunch period. I hated them too.

I ran home as quickly as possible after school. I needed some comfort, before I had to go over to that crazy girl’s house. I ran into the house and told my mom about the appalling assignment that the spiteful Mrs. Jacobs gave me. I cried and told my mom that even if I came out of that house alive, I would be cursed and everyone would avoid me forever. It was like walking right into plague. My mother looked at me with disapproval. She told me that I should be ashamed of myself. She said that I should be nice to Sarah, that maybe Sarah just needed a friend. “Whatever, Mom. She’s not normal, she’s insane!” I shouted. My mother said calmly, “Sarah simply marches to the beat of a different drummer. Accept her for who she is and be nice.” And then Mom added the ultimate guilt, “What would Jesus do?” I hated when she said that. What would Jesus do? He would probably perform a miracle and make her normal, before he did a science project with her.

I grabbed my backpack and stomped my way to Sarah’s house. When I got there, the sun was going down and it was getting dark. There were no lights on at Sarah’s house. And there were no cars in the driveway. I rang the bell and Sarah finally answered. She showed me in; the entire house was dark and eerily quiet. I kept thinking that her parents would walk in and introduce themselves. They didn’t. She showed me into the kitchen and I placed my backpack on the kitchen table. I was eager to get this project over and done with. “Well, let’s get started, I guess,” I said as I sat down at the table.

Sarah looked at me and asked if I wanted anything to eat or drink. I told her that a soda would be fine. She opened up the fridge and it was sparsely filled with some condiments and a bottle of soda and beer. Actually the food was sparse; the beer was plenty. She poured me a soda and we got to work. To my surprise, Sarah wasn't completely stupid; she wasn't smart either. Normal, she was just normal. The project was going as well as any science for normal kids could go. I glanced at the clock and it was already 8:00 PM. I asked Sarah if I could use the bathroom. She pointed down the hall and said go ahead.

I walked down the dark hall and turned into what I thought was the bathroom. I felt on the wall searching for the light switch. My fingers found what they were looking for and I flipped it. I wasn't in the bathroom. I had found Sarah's mom's room. Her mother was passed out on the bed surrounded by beer bottles and it looked like vomit was dribbling from her chin. My mouth hit the floor, and I quickly turned out the light and found the bathroom. I splashed my face with water and tried to collect myself from the shock of seeing Sarah's mom. I calmed myself and went back to the kitchen as if I was none the wiser.

We worked some more on the project, and I finally got up the nerve to ask Sarah where her parents were. "My mom is at a charity function tonight; she's very important in the community. My dad is working late; he's an attorney and has a huge case," she said kind of snotty. I already knew she was lying about her mother; I wondered if she was lying about her father too as we continued to work. I tried not to ask anymore questions. Soon we heard someone coming from the front door. Her dad was home.

Sarah rushed to the front door. Her dad was dressed in a suit; maybe he was an attorney. He looked tired and worn out. However, he didn't look at his daughter, not once. Sarah was trying to give him a hug and he kind of pushed her away. He grumbled

that he needed to unwind and to not disturb him and he walked off to his den. “He’s very busy,” Sarah said as a tear was forcing its way down her cheek. She walked back to the kitchen table wiping her face so I wouldn’t see. Sarah didn’t say that in a snotty tone. It was more of a sad tone. We finished up, and I started to collect my stuff. I don’t know what came over me, but I told Sarah that I was glad that we were paired together. I invited her to come to dinner on Saturday; the words kind of fell out of my mouth. I think I was more shocked at myself than she was, and she was pretty shocked. She smiled I think, just a little one and she said yes. It suddenly was getting a little awkward, so I walked to the front door. Sarah looked at me and said, “ Thanks,” as she shut the front door. The lights went off quickly in her house.

As I walked home, all I could think about was Sarah and her parents. It was as if she didn’t have any. They completely ignored her. It was sad. When I got home, my parents gave me a hug and asked me how the project was going. They asked me about everything and they listened. I told my mom that I had invited Sarah for dinner on Saturday. Mom said that was a great idea and that she couldn’t wait to see her.

The next day at school, Sarah was walking down the hall with her funky colored socks and books balanced on her head. I ran up to her and said hello. Sarah turned to me and smiled, not just a little but a lot. We walked to class together. We stopped traffic in the hall. Kids and teachers stared like crazy. No one ever walked with Sarah, until now. We got to class and took our seats. I quickly scribbled a note and passed it to Sarah. She read it. It said, “Hey Sarah, I like your socks.” She looked over at me and mouthed thanks. The class quickly got quiet as the teacher walked into the classroom. It wasn’t Mrs. Jacobs. Today we had a sub. Everyone smiled and took a look at Sarah, with great anticipation of the infamous Pig Latin.



The sub went through the boring lesson and periodically as they all do, looked through the roll sheet to randomly call on students. He finally called on Sarah. Sarah glanced at me and then answered the question. To everyone's shock, with the exception of the sub, she answered in English. She glanced at me and smiled then looked quickly at her book. At that moment it occurred to me that all Sarah needed was some attention. I had given her some.

My mother had asked me, "What would Jesus do?" I guess he would see Sarah not as we all did, as some crazy whacko kid, but as a person who just needed a little love and attention. I felt horrible that it took me seeing what her life was like in her house to understand her. I should have been brave enough to approach her and try to befriend her a long time ago. Jr. high is rough enough. Kids shouldn't have to face it all alone. It took me awhile to finally see Sarah, but now that I really see her for her, she doesn't seem that different, or a little off. She seems unique and eccentric and truly special.

**Duke & Persnickety**  
**(1<sup>st</sup> Place Sophomore Category)**

by Anthony Wright

Duke had a big head. It wasn't a secret. Everyone noticed it. That didn't bother Duke, though, because according to Dr. DeFitz, everything that was inside of it worked alright, and functionality is what counted to Duke. Duke's mother, Martha, on the other hand, sometimes wondered if Dr. DeFitz knew his profession as well as he thought he did because she thought her son to be right odd.

"I am no fool," she would say to the women in her prayer circle. "I knew my boy's not normal. Anyone could see that. The other day, he sat with his face shoved in the Christmas tree for two hours, and when I finally asked him what in the Lord's name he was doing, can you guess what he said?"

"What did he say," all of the women responded in a single, uninterested tone.

"He said he was pretending to be a baby deer! I said, Duke, if you had a little more brain and a lot less skull, you'd know that baby deer don't just sit idle with their face in a tree. They run. They frolic. They play with other baby deer."

"Oh, Martha, the boy just has a vivid imagination, that's all. You shouldn't be so hard on him," offered Peggy, Martha's least favorite co-member of the prayer circle.

"Well I suppose you're right, Peggy, but you don't know what it's like to deal with Duke. I try to be patient with him. I even try to reward him sometimes. In fact, I bought him a pet goldfish last week, and what do you suppose he did with it?"

"What did he do?"

“He named it Jesus, fed it ham, and killed the poor creature. I’ve never been madder in my whole life.”

“Boys will be boys, Martha,” Peggy said. Martha thought Peggy should mind her own business.

Despite his mother’s disappointment in him, Duke was a relatively happy boy. He kept to himself and ignored all other kids and their jokes and jeers about his big head. Duke knew about Jesus, and he had faith that Jesus would make the rest of his body grow to fit his big head. Duke always dreamed that if he had enough faith and patience, he would grow up and prove everyone wrong. He would do something incredible. He would lead a life of adventure. He would live on a reservation and play a hand-made flute while the shamans told stories. He would save an Amazonian baby from the grips of a boa constrictor. He would find himself a girl and they would ride off into the sunset on the back of a white buffalo.

So he hoped....

One day Duke was sitting in class worrying about the germs that could be on his hands, when in walked the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

“This is Persnickety,” Mrs. Smith announced. “She is a new student, all the way from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I trust that you will all help Persnickety feel right at home.”

Duke felt his knees start to wobble. Duke wondered if all bayou women were so perfect. She had long blond hair that looked like it hadn’t been brushed in a year, but Duke thought that she did a nice job of taking attention off the tangles with the little pink and green plastic butterflies that she had clipped throughout them. It would be weeks before Duke worked up the courage to speak to her.

Duke considered himself a people-watcher, and over the next few weeks he found out several important things about Persnickety, his newfound obsession. For instance, he noticed that her father drove a big Harley-Davidson motorcycle with flames and saddlebags on it. Persnickety's father was proud of his bike, and Persnickety was proud of her father. Duke could tell this by the way her father would rev the engine as the other children's mothers walked and by the way Persnickety would run to him and yell "Daddy!" every single time he came to pick her up. Rumor had it that Persnickety's mother was a conservationist and that she lived with a bunch of other conservationists in California on what was called a "commune." Duke didn't know what a commune was, but he thought it sounded nice, living with people who share your interests. Perhaps the most important thing that Duke learned about Persnickety was that her favorite beverage was chocolate milk, a conclusion that he had come to after observing that all of her shirts seemed to be stained with it. This would be his ice-breaker. He would present to his love a nice, cold carton of Gandy's chocolate milk the next day in the cafeteria.

Duke could hardly sleep that night. He tossed and turned thinking about the different ways that he could approach Persnickety. He decided to be straightforward about it. He would approach her with the milk and say, "Hi Persnickety. I'm Duke. I noticed your daddy drives a Harley. Want some chocolate milk?" Duke thought it sounded polite, friendly, and not too forward. Hopefully she would ask him to sit with her.

When the time came, Duke felt paralyzed. He could barely count out the change for the chocolate milk. The lunch lady told him that he was holding the line up. He told her he was nervous. She looked at him like she just noticed how big his head was.

Duke took each step slowly and precisely, approaching the table that Persnickety sat at with a few other girls. They all stared at him. He wished they wouldn't. He set down his tray, picked up the carton of chocolate milk, and, staring at the ground, put it about two inches from Persnickety's face and mumbled, "Hey Per-snick-ety. I noticed... your daddy and...er...the stains on your...uh...shirt. Want some...some...milk?"

All of the girls began to giggle. It seemed to Duke that the whole cafeteria had burst out in laughter. Persnickety stood up, smacked the chocolate milk out of Duke's hand onto the floor, and said, "I don't take gifts from boys with big heads." Duke's lip began to quiver. This wasn't what he had expected to happen. He ran out of the cafeteria, out of the school, across the schoolyard, and all 1.78 miles back to his house, where he lay down in his bed and went to sleep.

Duke woke up to the sound of a lawn mower and his mother yelling, "Duke! What in the hell are you doing home so early? Are you cutting class?"

"No, ma'am," Duke said. "I didn't feel good."

"Well, I'm going to check with the nurse and make sure you were excused," Dukes mother said.

Duke knew he would be in trouble later, but he didn't care. All he could think about was how heavy he felt. It was as if someone had strapped a sack of potatoes to his back. On top of that, he felt almost certain that his head had grown a bit bigger.

At that moment Duke changed. He wasn't the happy, faithful boy with a big head and even bigger dreams that he had been just a few hours ago. Duke was hardened. Duke had his first taste of failure. He suddenly realized that he would never live on a reservation, save an Amazonian baby, or stumble across a door on the side of a tree, a door that would take him to a world where girls like Persnickety take gifts from boys like him. He realized that the minutes, days, and years might not ever make anything better.

Time marches on no matter what. People are lonely, people are sad, and it only takes a fraction of a second to grow up.

## **Marching Orders**

### **(1<sup>st</sup> Place Freshman Category)**

by James Keevan

Marching orders all start at home when you're two or three years old. I can remember some of the first marching orders like it's yesterday. My mother would tell me it was time for bed, that if I didn't march into that bedroom right this second my father would march me in there. My mother would give me marching orders to clean my room, pick up those toys. "March in this house for dinner right this minute or I'm going to get your father," my mother would say. She didn't have any military training. However, I'm sure every kid in the neighborhood could hear her when she yelled the commands. It looks as though the march was on at age three.

I started kindergarten at five and here I was marching again. "Everybody stand in a straight line, keep your hands to yourself, single file, don't get out of line," the teacher would say. I don't know if you could call them marching orders when it was time to take a nap, but I do know that if you acted up, the teacher would march you down to the principal's office. That was a march which I took more than once. Let me say that when you got to the office, the march ended with a call to your mother at home. Of course you know what would happen next. Your mother would arrive at the school and the march home would begin again.

Grade school was just a little better, I suppose, unless you decided that you weren't going to take part in the nuclear attack drills. The alarm would ring and everyone in the class would march, in a straight line, single file, keeping your hands to yourself and march out of the hallways in the school. "Get down on your hands and

knees against the wall. Put your hands over your head,” the teacher would say. It sure seemed like a smart thing to do back then, but really I don’t think it would have helped if I had known what I know now.

In junior high and high school we would march again to class, gym class, and band. That’s where my marching always got the best results. I was in band so we marched almost every day when the weather was good. I played the trumpet from seventh grade on up to ninth grade. That’s when the music teacher asked me if I would like to be the tuba player. I told him I didn’t know how to play a tuba. His response was, “You only have to learn a few notes: it’s not that hard.” I agreed to give it a try. That was when I realized that marching with a solid brass tuba, that weighed over a hundred pounds, was not something to march around with for long periods of time. Those voluntary marching orders were some I wish I had never received.

Out of school looking for a job, I marched myself all over town. You become a different type of marcher. You take pride in how you walk into an employer’s office to apply. You know to stay in a straight line; you keep your hands to yourself, you don’t get out of line, because if you do, someone else may take the job you want. These marching orders were my own, so nobody could yell at me if I didn’t get the job I went after.

I may have thought that I had outgrown the marching order days, but I went and got married. My wife became the drill sergeant, the school teacher, the band instructor and my mother. All I did was put a wedding band on her finger. “Yes dear I’ll take the garbage out just as soon as this game is over,” I would say. “No dear I didn’t get to that list of jobs you gave me last week, but I’m working on some from the week before,” I would say. That’s the kind of marching orders I get today. I have to admit they don’t get any easier.



So now here I am, fifty-eight years old, taking orders from college professors on how to write a research paper, how to understand American government, and learning math. Like my math professor says, “If you want to play the game, you have to play by the rules.” Now those are the marching orders that are given by a professor. I know that I’ll stay in a straight line, keep my hands to myself, walk single file, and won’t get out of line. I’m going to get a college education so I can give someone else marching orders.