



ISLAND VOICES #4

FIRST-YEAR STUDENT ESSAYS

2006-2007

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Composition Faculty



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Preface

Writing is never finished.

Every semester we tell our students, It's a process of getting it wrong, and doing it again, over and over, until it's almost right. Almost finished. That's the best writers can hope for.

The Irish poet Yeats first published his famous poem "The Second Coming" in 1920. It undoubtedly went through several drafts before he submitted it, since he later revealed that he had begun to imagine the "rough beast" of the poem as early as 1904. And yet, after six years of composing and revising, and after all the attention the poem garnered upon publication, he continued to revise it up until his death in 1939—twenty-five years after first imagining the poem and fifteen after publishing it! If I remember rightly from my graduate studies, he published a half dozen different versions of the poem. Always trying, and never succeeding, to get it "right."

So it's fitting—and right—that we celebrate these nearly finished essays from our first year composition students of 2006-2007. Our congratulations to the authors for succeeding in being published so early in their careers, and for getting their essays "nearly right." Yeats would be proud, as we are, though he might wish them luck with their next version.

This year's collection is the first to be published electronically. The CSUCI library has graciously provided us a space on their Institutional Repository (a digitized collection of works generated here at Channel Islands) where this and subsequent editions of *Island Voices* will live in perpetuity.

Moving to a digital version has meant several changes from last year's volume: first, we can include more essays and more genres, which makes this collection a better teaching tool in our classes. One way that is evident in this edition is the inclusion of examples of both MLA and APA citation formats, which means our students have models of the two most prominent styles for crediting sources. (A list identifying which citation style is used in which essay is below.) Electronic publication also means the collection is available to anyone with access to the CSUCI website, greatly expanding our potential readership. And finally, a digital version can be revised or augmented at any time. This has made the process of assembling, formatting and proofreading these essays much easier for us.

One note about editorial changes to these essays: we've made no changes to the student texts without consulting the authors themselves, with the exceptions of minor changes made in formatting, mechanics and citations to maintain a consistent style throughout the volume.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Camilla Griggers, who designed a stunning layout for last year's volume, which I have ripped off whenever possible. And to Scott DeLoach, who did the bulk of the proofreading on the student submissions. Without them, these *Voices* would have been silenced.

Read on!

Bob Mayberry
Editor

MLA Style Documentation

Weal, A Weals' Tale
Mackenzie, A Writer's Discontent
Waddell, et al., Maltreatment in the Hospital
Kolic, et. al., Mohandas Gandhi
Sakaye, GA: Gamers Anonymous
Banayo, Wildlife & Suburban Sprawl
Nette, Now That Is a Syllabus!
Gallup, Breastfeeding

APA Style Documentation

Ewing, Making a Change in the World
Villalobos, Is rGBH in Your Milk?
Mackenzie, Society's Mold of Language
Hintlian, Praising the "Hero of the Underworld"

Narrative / Reflective Essays

Whatever we might say about narrative essays, they are diverse. Everytime someone tries to set down a set of “rules” to govern what a narrative essay must include or how it must be organized, we find abundant examples of successful, published narrative violating the so-called rule. They are as unpredictable as first year students. And nearly as rich with potential.

We’ve included several varieties of the species in this edition of *Island Voices* both to celebrate the differences and to identify the range of options. You’ll find narrative/reflective assignments, adventure narratives, lifestory interviews, autoethnographies, and even medical reports that are organized and presented as narratives. At CSUCI, whatever kinds of narratives teachers may assign or students choose to write, we expect those narratives to not only tell the story but to reflect on it—think about it, assess its significance, speculate on its consequences, analyze its causes, describe its reception.

One of our goals is to prepare students for the writing that will be expected of them throughout the rest of their college and professional careers. To that end, we aren’t solely interested in the tale well told; we’re also keenly interested in what the writer thinks about the event: How did it affect you and those around you? Why did it have that effect? What difference has the experience made in your life? What longterm consequences do you expect there will be from it? Those questions constitute the So What? part of the essay. You tell us a story, but we also want to know So What? Why tell us this story in this particular way? What is its import to you or me?

Here are comments and advice about writing narratives and reflections from other members of the composition faculty—the very same people who will score all those essays you write!

Before science, even before the printing press, there was storytelling, one of the oldest forms of knowledge. Every story requires a teller, a listener, and characters—one of whom may be you! Knowing how to tell a story about yourself and your people, to engage an audience, and to reflect upon the deeper meanings of that story, is part of the process of knowing who you are in the world. In this sense, being well-read implies having a vast array of stories by which to imagine your life. When we teach narrative, we ask that students also reflect upon the stories that they tell, to themselves and to others, about who they are and about major events that have shaped them. This reflective or ‘critical’ thinking has its roots in philosophy where it is important to step back and ask some of the bigger questions in life, such as: How do I know what love is, for example? What is the truth of this experience? Who am I? What is beautiful or sublime about my experience? And even, what is the nature of my own judgment (am I prejudiced for example, misinformed, brave)? These are the two poles of knowledge: the horizontal, narrative pole that reveals the sequence of events as we experience them in time, and the vertical, reflective pole that dives deep into meanings and mysteries that are timeless.

—Camilla Griggers

Most of us cannot get through the day without telling a story, our subject matter ranging from the mundane (“I mowed the lawn this morning”) to the extraordinary (“I was just awarded a full scholarship to the college of my choice!”). When it comes to a significant event in our lives—the kind that shapes us into the people we are, the kind that we are still trying to make sense of or find meaning in—we will often find ourselves retelling the story of how it happened. With each repetition, the story takes on a different hue, variegated by the audience who is listening, the setting in which the story is being told, and our own evolving perceptions of the event we are describing. In such cases, narrative is necessarily reflective; our words are not merely a regurgitation of the details that make up our experiences, but the means for placing those details into a context that makes sense within the ongoing narrative of our lives. This reflective aspect of narrative can be especially potent when we choose to write down our stories, the very act of writing itself evoking previously unrealized reactions, connections, and insights. The recursive writing process we practice in our courses is especially conducive to generating such reflections, compelling us to continually revisit the ideas we already have on paper and thus to reconsider the event that we are trying to put into words. Each revision also brings us closer to a new understanding of the event, one that we never would have gained had we chosen to let the story go unwritten.

–Stacey Anderson

The Narrative/Reflective essay offers students the opportunity to critically think and write about their experiences. Both in telling the story and in reflecting about it, students learn the importance of vivid descriptions and insightful musings in capturing the audience’s interest and imagination. During workshops on the Narrative/Reflective essay, students also learn a great deal about their peers, expanding their understanding of each other’s uniqueness and paradoxical sameness. As a student receives feedback on his or her work, the awareness of socio-cultural, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic bias each student writer might bring to the experience of narrating an event or memory increases. Essays should reach a balance between describing relevant facts and reflecting on the personal and larger significance of the occurrence.

–Christine Popok

One of my favorite quotes is from William Faulkner who said, “I never know what I think about something until I’ve written on it.” Writing is one of the best mediums that humans have to understand themselves. Therefore, writers write reflectively for two reasons. The first is that all writers have interesting experiences from their lives that they can call upon in their writing. Reflective writing helps writers to develop confidence in their voices. The second reason writers write reflectively is because the reflected upon life is a life with more value than the life that goes on without reflection. In order to really appreciate all of the wonderful occurrences that take place during the writer’s life that make every day more exciting, he needs to reflect upon them. These reflections allow the writer to see the inherent value in his own experiences. This then gives the writer more confidence in his voice.

–John Guelcher

Alexandria Santos

English 103

John Guelcher

In-class essay: Narrative/Reflective

Clearing the Smoke

Everyone, at some point in his or her life, goes through pain. That pain may be physical or emotional, and the sources of pain could come from a number of things, such as people or narcotics. Right before the summer of 2005, I was facing all sorts of pain. My boyfriend and I had just ended our one-year relationship. In addition, my parents were arguing constantly, and the idea of a divorce had come up. Academically, I was succeeding, though I felt the stress of my workload. I began to deal with my pain and stress with a maladaptive behavior: smoking.

I had always thought cigarettes were utterly disgusting and foul. I hated the smell, and I knew how terrible they were for your health. It was only when my friends started smoking that I became accepting of the behavior. I remember the day vividly. It was June 23, 2005. My first cigarette was hardly glamorous. The taste was bitter, and I felt like a human barbecue with smoke flowing out of my mouth and nostrils. I was distorting my face into disgusting shapes, and it was uncontrollable. I couldn't see why people like it, but then I inhaled for the third time. It was like my body did a 180-degree turn. I felt light-headed and almost dizzy, but in a relaxing way. My hands were weak like jelly—I couldn't clench my fists. It felt as if my body was melting into the warm grass. I remember my friends' faces, with their smirks and chuckles. They looked at me as if they had felt the exact same way before. All four of us sat in the grass with white cancer-sticks in our hands, and covered our faces from the sun. My problems at that

moment seemed almost mediocre or mundane. I felt as if the cigarette was empathizing with me so I wouldn't feel so alone. My ex-boyfriend seemed unworthy, and it seemed like my parents were only joking about the divorce. Everything in my life that was troubling me seemed to be minimized, just with the flick of a lighter and a suck of the mouth. I remember only saying one thing after my first stick. It was, "So *that's* a cigarette."

The summer ended sooner than I hoped, but my habit was still going strong. However, I kept it at a low amount, usually 3-5 sticks a day. For a while, I felt like I wasn't even a real smoker. People didn't know, but I felt the need to tell everyone. With cigarettes, I felt as if I had control over something. Sure, I couldn't stop my ex-boyfriend from cheating on me, but I could smoke a cigarette every time I thought of him. I also couldn't stop my parents from fighting all the time, but I could light up a cigarette outside and shut out their yelling. Even though I knew this wouldn't stop my problems, it would still help me. No one could tell me to stop, and I felt a sense of control over my own life for the first time. I broke free. I was no longer the "nice girl" who always got walked all over. I was no longer the "smart girl" who spent her time studying and doing homework. I was no longer the "obedient daughter" who would do anything she was told to do. I was now a "smoker." I could identify myself with more people and it drastically increased my social skills. After only a year of smoking, I moved to live on campus at California State University Channel Islands for school. Of course, I handled that stressful change with a new pack.

I was nervous about my new life here. I moved in later that Friday night, and my four roommates were off doing things together already. I felt lonely, so I walked down to the only smoking section in Anacapa Village. There, I met almost twenty people who I never thought I

could be friends with. While most of our common interests were cigarettes, it was nice to find people who knew and understood why I was smoking. They felt the same way I did, and coped in the same way. Being down at the smoking sections was comforting. It was like being under warm blankets on a winter night. We would gather around four benches and four ashtrays, and vent to each other like a support system. We would inhale each other's positive feedback, and exhale all the negatives in our lives. While we all knew smoking was not a positive, it helped us with the struggles of daily life that we couldn't deal with alone. Within one month of school, I had bumped my five sticks a day up to twenty sticks, which is an entire pack. Even though I was blinded by my daily problems, I could still see that I was smoking too much. That was when I decided that I needed help to cut down.

There was an event put on by the housing staff at Anacapa Village to help students quit smoking. I attended, feeling hopeful. The school's new psychologist talked to us about guided imagery, the patch/gum, and all sorts of methods on how to quit. I wasn't ready to quit, but I did want to cut down. At the end of two sessions, I felt so much pressure to quit, even though I knew I didn't want to. Despite the forcefulness I experienced, the psychologist did make me realize that I was scared to quit, more than anything. It wasn't because I *couldn't* quit. That was not the problem. The problem was that I was *scared* to quit, and I didn't want to try because of my fear. I realized then that I was really terrified. I felt like cigarettes gave me everything I ever wanted. I got better at talking to new people and my social skills improved. I had new friends, lots of confidence, and a way to deal with the "little stuff" that bothered me.

What if my new friends don't think I'm as cool anymore? What if they quit hanging out with me because I quit smoking? How do I handle my problems if I don't smoke anymore? I got

so accustomed to smoking that I felt I was giving away a body part if I gave up cigarettes. At first, smoking gave me a light-headed feeling. After a year of smoking, quitting was hard. Days without a smoke felt like months. I would be drowsy and cranky all the time. I was unpleasant and I felt depressed. I slept all the time, but focused more in school and other positive things. I gained ten pounds within my first two months of quitting. I remember being up late at night, wishing I could just have one. I knew what I was doing was right, and I kept up with it.

Now, I am two months smoke-free. I feel better about my life and myself. I feel like I now have real control in my life. I'm driving and steering my own wheel, instead of letting cigarettes get the best of me. I now don't have the constant damage to my body. I still can't believe how badly I was destroying myself daily for over a year, but overcoming this has been, by far, my greatest accomplishment. Pain is controllable without cigarettes. Without this experience, I might have always looked to something else to solve my problems, when in reality, all I needed was me.

Alejandrina Garcia

English 102
John Guelcher
Narrative/Reflective

¿Quien es mi Verdadero Padre?

I was looking out the window, wondering off into space. I hated being close to him, especially in his green '94 Toyota truck. His truck was very small and I felt we were too close; that made me very nervous. He put his hand on my leg and said, "*Mija, ¿te puedo hacer una pregunta?*" (Can I ask you a question?) I shook my head as if I'd just come back from Fairy Land, "Yes daddy," I replied. "*Mija, ¿si me quieres?*" (Do you love me?) I moved his hand away from my leg, "Yes, daddy, I love you," I told him.

I never really knew, much less understood, why I couldn't tell him I could care less about him, and that I hated being alone with him. He knew I couldn't even look into his eyes, yet it seemed that he believed every word I told him. A few moments of deep silence followed these thoughts, then he said to me, "*Si tuvieras un padre mas rico que yo, ¿me cambiarias por el?*" (If you had a father that was wealthier than I, would you leave me for him?) I quickly imagined what it would be like to have a different father with a lot of money. I knew it would be impossible. Plus, money doesn't buy happiness. His eyes were red and watery and it seemed he was about to cry; I could hear it in his shaky voice. I felt bad for even thinking about such things and forced myself to hug him. "Dad, I wouldn't trade you for the world."

As I said those words, I felt a knot in my throat and my eyes began to fill up with tears; this was torture for me, but I felt I had to make him feel better. He began caressing my hair and

said, “*Es que a veces pienso que no me quieres.*” (It’s just that sometimes I feel you don’t love me.) I held my breath until he finally let go, and I pushed myself back towards the window and gave him a fake smile. Of course I didn’t like him, but how could I tell my father that?

Summer was the worst of all times. I hated being home where every room, and every corner, brought disturbing images of pain, loneliness, and helplessness. I wanted to get out. There is only so much a thirteen year old can handle. I asked my mother to allow me to spend the summer at my grandmother’s house in Tijuana, Mexico. The first time I asked, she said No. After long hours of chores, leaving no room for a No, she said Yes. Finally, I was out and away from the nightmare house!

That summer changed everything I knew about my life. Every morning my grandmother and I woke up at seven-thirty and had breakfast. We cleaned the house and spent the whole afternoon riding a taxi all over the city. She took me to museums, plazas, cinemas, shopping centers, and restaurants. I saw everything there is to see in Tijuana. It was one of my greatest experiences.

One afternoon, my grandmother and I were making spaghetti, which is one of my favorite Italian dishes, and she asked me about my life at home. At that moment, my mind filled with so many images and I felt my heart pounding outside my body. I started to cry. I couldn’t hold my tears in front of my grandmother, and I told her everything.

Ever since I was young my father walked into my bedroom in the middle of the night and bothered my sleep. It went on for years until I finally mentioned it to my aunt because I knew it was wrong but I couldn’t explain why. My aunt told my mother about it and she called the police. While the police were on their way, I was rolled into a ball listening to my mother yelling, “*Por que! Por que lo hiciste! Eso no tiene perdon de Dios*” (Why! How could you! Not even

God can forgive you.) “*Perdoname, no sabia lo que estaba haciendo, no los quiero perder!*” (I’m sorry, I didn’t know what I was doing, I don’t want to lose you!) Back and forth they yelled, and I desperately wanted to wake up from the nightmare.

When the police finally arrived at the house my mom opened the door and didn’t want to say a word. My dad was back in the bedroom not knowing what was going to happen next. “Is everything all right here?” one of the officers asked my mother. “I dunno,” she said. She quickly ran up to me and asked me if I wanted him to go to jail. “What?!” I couldn’t believe she was asking me such a question. My dad looked at me and tried to tell me something but my mother interrupted, “*¿Quieres que se lo lleven a la carcel?*” (Do you want them to take him to jail?) What was I supposed to say, No?

“Okay” was the last word she said to me, and then she lied to the officers telling them that nothing was wrong, they were just in a fight and that I was scared and called the police. The officers left after a few questions were answered, and my mother kicked my father out. He came back a few days later and my mom took him back; she was not going to be able to handle the mortgage payment on her own.

My grandmother’s eyes were full of tears and I ran into her arms. “*Mija, ¿por que no lo mandaste a la carcel? ... Te adoro tesoro!*” (Why didn’t you send him to jail?!...I love you honey!) She held me tighter and tighter as she said those words, which made me cry even more. She stepped back for a second and said to me in a serious tone, “*Ay algo que tu no sabes, un secreto que te puede abrir muchas puertas, pero solo tu madre te lo puede decir.*” (There is something that you don’t know, a secret that can open many doors for you and that only your mother can tell you.) In a matter of seconds my cold and lonely desert life turned into a tropical oasis!

My mind started thinking of so many possibilities and I no longer thought about my terrible past. There was no time; I constantly wondered what type of secret could be hidden from me. My grandmother refused to say a word so I was on my own to figure out this mystery.

After that afternoon, the rest of my days seemed to go by quicker; before I knew it, my mom and dad came to pick me up. I was so happy to see my little brother and my parents, I missed them. A month away from home was a bit long for me, but I had the best time.

Soon after we arrived back home, I started having strange dreams. I saw a man, a man who constantly followed me and looked for me, always hiding in the shadows. He would tell me I was a part of him, to follow him, and that he would take me away from this nightmare. And that is exactly what I thought these dreams were: nightmares. I began to watch my back as I walked to school and was very frightened by every car that pulled up next to me.

I once had a dream that I was walking down an endless hall. There were so many doors, and they each had a name on them. I looked around and saw my name on one of the doors. I opened it and walked in; it was quiet, yet peaceful. There was a rocking chair, a wall full of pictures of me and a screen playing a silent film. I sat down to watch it, and I could see my mother holding me up in the air and spinning me around in circles, such a happy face. I had never seen her smile that way before. I continued walking down the endless hall to see if I recognized any other names. After a long walk I got to the very end and found an old door. It was covered with spider webs and it was chained up. It seemed as if this door was not meant to be opened. I reached over to see what the name was on this door but it was covered in dust, and just as I was about to wipe it clean, I woke up.

I had no way of understanding what was going on in my head and what all of these things

meant. Everything, from the reason why my grandmother told me about this secret, to my dreams, even my father's actions, were unclear to me. I was so lost and confused. I wanted to contact my grandmother, but I was not allowed to use the phone. So, I wrote her a letter. And here is where everything came to me.

I started off saying hi and that I missed her. I told her a bit about my dreams, and once I started writing I couldn't stop. I don't know what came over me, but I began to put all the pieces of the puzzle together. My dad mentioning a rich father, my grandmother telling me about this secret only because I told her about my terrible experience with my dad, a man following me in my dreams hiding behind shadows, telling me he was a part of me, and the locked door. I realized that it was not just a hall, it was my mother's heart, and deep down inside, she was hiding something, someone. By the end of my letter, I had figured out the puzzle, the mystery.

For the first time in my life I felt so comfortable; I felt relieved because of this new discovery. For being only thirteen, I felt I had accomplished more in that moment than in any other activity I had ever done. The only thing left to do was to confirm this theory, which I was convinced was true. It just made sense.

A few months passed before my grandmother came to visit us. I called her into my room and simply said, "*Ya se el secreto, pero necesito que me lo asegures...*" (I know the secret, but I need you to confirm it...) I hesitated a bit and finally said, "*¿Quién es mi verdadero padre?*" (Who is my real father?). My grandmother stared at me with a blank look on her face, shocked, shaking. Her eyes filled up with tears, and I could see her bottom lip trembling. I anxiously waited for an answer; each second that passed by made my heart beat faster and faster, which made me breathe more rapidly. Soon after, I heard my father's name, Arnold Chavez.

Everything about this episode in my life had a dramatic effect in my life and in my person. I realized that not everything is what it seems and that there is so much to see and explore. One shouldn't keep themselves locked away from the wonders of the world because something bad happened in your life. I learned how to forgive and appreciate my surroundings. For so long I was afraid of my own home, and even though my dad did indeed change, I was still afraid and hurt. This didn't help me at all to forget, much less move on, but because of this little adventure, I opened up my mind and allowed myself to breath.

What really brought me peace was my writing. Soon after my letter to Grandma, I kept a journal where I wrote all my thoughts, fears, goals, and new experiences, which not only helped me solve mysteries but understand the way I think and feel, eventually helping me overcome my trauma as a child. Today I call it my treasure, which keeps growing and growing as the years go by. Each time learning something new, and adding to my life story.

October 13, 2004

Dear Arnold Chavez,

How are you? You probably think this a joke or something, but it's me, your daughter. I found out about you three years ago. Ever since then I've been curious about you. I've tried looking for you but never seemed to find much. My grandmother has told a lot about you but not enough to satisfy my hunger for you. I wish I could see what you're like. I have never seen a picture of you, so I try to imagine a tall friendly man. My grandmother told me the story of you and my mom. I'm not very interested in that now, I just want to know why you were never by my side. You didn't have to be with my mom to be part of my life. I'm not saying that the man who raised

me is not a good person but, I wish it could have been you, my blood, my father. My mom's husband scarred me for the rest of my days. I knew I would never be close to him again. He did things that he shouldn't have which left me so lost and confused until you came into my life. There are so many things I'm dying to know about you but I know you are so far away from me. I hope you haven't forgotten you have a daughter. I was told about your sterilization. At first I didn't understand, I was only thirteen when I found out, but over time I began to understand many things and I feel special to know that I am your only child. I stopped my search for you a long time ago. Every thing happens for a reason and I'm sure you will come looking for me one day. All I have to tell you is that thanks to you I was able to forgive and forget, and most importantly I was able to escape a world of nightmares. You opened up my mind and gave me hope. With that in mind I promise you I will follow in your footsteps and go to a university, graduate and become successful in life. I'll tie this promise to my heart and keep it with me until the day we come face to face for the first time. I won't let you down...

Sincerely,

Your Daughter

Kathryn Czerwinski

English 105
Adele Slaughter
Narrative/Reflective

The “F” Word

The first time I learned the “F” word wasn’t at home as one might think. No, I learned the “F” word at school. All the other kids said it and it sounded so cool. I wanted to be able to say that magical six letter word too, but I couldn’t . . . Of course, I’m talking about the word “father.” Mine left when I was three.

It’s night time. I always come at night, no one to recognize me then. I walk up to the door and it opens for me. The sad faces that flood the room all turn to me. I’m their entertainment for the moment. But I’m not here for them. What am I here for? I don’t know. I don’t know why I come but I do.

I make my way through the maze of people to the main lobby. It’s dead here. The lights are dimmed. I keep going on to the elevator. The doors open onto the third floor, and then the smell hits me, the overbearing smell of too much cleaner meant to mask the smell of piss and death. It doesn’t succeed though, it only makes a putrid mixture of the three. I hate that smell: the hospital smell.

Room 3228. The only light is from the TV on the wall that is showing some old B movie. As I enter the room a new smell assaults my nostrils. Alcohol, cigarettes and body odor all mixed together to make one lovely, lingering smell. There’s a man lying in the bed. His gray hair is grown wild to match his well over five o’clock shadow. His gown is pulled up, revealing a diaper

strapped to him like a Sumo wrestler. His fingernails are overgrown and colored with nicotine, as if he had purposely painted them orange. His hair looks wet as if he had just taken a shower. But this is a different kind of wet. This is the wet hair of a man who hasn't taken a shower in probably over three months.

I set my bag down on the table next to the bed, and nod a hello to him. He twitches and mumbles incoherently with his raspy speech. "What? I can't understand you." I pull out the bag of chocolates and open it for him. "Okay, well I have to go; I'm going to class now." That's always my excuse no matter what time of day it is. I hate staying long. There's nothing ever to talk about and the smell gags me.

I walk out of the door quickly and wave a goodbye to him. I wouldn't want to touch him with a ten foot pole, let alone hug him or kiss him. I feel guilty but hey, he's lucky I come at all.

So, who is this guy, this dirty, smelly old man with his greasy, wet hair, and crusty, scabby skin? His blood, leaking out of the IV in his hand, is the same blood that runs through my veins. Yes, this man gave life to me; this man is my father.

All I had to know him by when I was younger was this one picture of the two of us on the fourth of July. He looked so cool and handsome with his leather jacket, piercing blue eyes, and perfectly trimmed beard. I looked adorable sitting on his lap in my pink one piece and matching bonnet. I loved that picture when I was younger, I idolized it. It sat on my nightstand next to my bed for the longest time.

When I was about ten my mom dropped me off with him to stay the weekend. I thought he was the coolest dad ever. He didn't have just one house—oh no, he had many. He would move around from one house to the next and sometimes, he'd even sleep out under the stars. How cool

is that? And he'd always buy me candy whenever we went to the liquor store. I got candy more than three times a day. He was the greatest. Or, so I thought. I don't know if it was because I was too young to realize or if I was just in denial about what he really was: an alcoholic and a bum, living on the streets of The Avenue in Ventura. Or maybe because of his absence, any type of father would look cool to me. I don't know.

He was never there for me. He never called on Christmas or my birthday. No, he would call on his birthday. He would call on his birthday and talk about himself. And he never cared to get to know me. He still tells everyone how proud he is that I go to The University of San Diego. Yes, I live at home and drive four hours every morning to get to school. He was just a stubborn, selfish, arrogant asshole.

Now he is feeling the repercussions of alcoholism and living on the streets. He is milking his veteran's benefits from an injury and illness that he didn't receive in Vietnam, because he never went to Vietnam. He's stuck in a wheelchair for the rest of his life, and no one can understand a word he says because of the Parkinson's disease. The once arrogant badass who knew "all there was to know" and could do "anything," now needs help with everything. I guess karma does exist.

He started calling me a lot last year when I turned 18. He just popped back into my life again as if nothing had changed. But he had changed. Now he wasn't just hell, he was hell on wheels. He was sick and needed someone to help him and I guess he thought I was the only bridge he hadn't burned yet. He was never there for me when I was growing up. So, why do I come? Why do I keep helping him? Is it love? No. How can you love someone you don't know?

I come because although he was never there for me and he never helped me once in my life, he is still a human being. That's all he is to me: a human being, not my father. My love for human beings is what drives me to help him. I wouldn't wish suffering on anyone, even someone who has shown such disregard for me. But there is only so much a person can take of being used. I think I've reached my limit.

I know why he calls me now. I'm worth something to him, that I could never be when I was younger. I have something to offer him; I can benefit him. I have a car. Yes, I can be at his every beckoning call to dote on him, usually to bring him chocolate whenever he feels like it. I'm the one he can depend on to always be there. I'm his rock. I'm everybody's fucking rock, and none of them give a damn that they're all pulling me in different directions and one day, I'm going to break. I'm tired of being the rock—find someone else to shit on.

Nova Islam

English 102
Stacey Anderson
Narrative/Reflective

Getting to Know My Pots and Pans

About a year ago, I had the kismet of getting to know my pots and pans. My grandmother, the cook in the house, decided to go back to Bangladesh, leaving my family and me "chef-less." Being the oldest in the family, the spatula was naturally handed down to me. I did not have a problem cooking for my family; however, not knowing how to cook was an issue that needed to be solved. Up until that point, I never gave cooking much thought; I did not think I had to.

I would call myself a responsible person, but having the responsibility to feed people is a little overwhelming. Questions like, "Is there enough food to feed everyone?" or "Is my family going to like what I cook?" popped into my head. These questions, however, were the least of my worries. The biggest concern I had was deciding what to cook. My family does not like to eat anything but Bengali food; therefore, I could not just pick up the phone and call Domino's. A typical Bengali meal consists of fish curry, vegetable stir-fry, and white rice. I remember watching my grandmother cook when I was younger. She would put all these different spices and there were many steps involved in preparing the food. Who was I kidding? I did not know how to cook. I could not fry an egg, let alone cook a Bengali dinner.

After my grandmother left, my aunt, who lives a half hour away from my home, was kind enough to cook extra food and send it over to my family and me. She let me know, however, that

this was something that was not going to last very long and that I needed to learn how to cook. At first I did not take her comments seriously, but then I realized that cooking was something I needed to learn. I could not rely on other family members to do the work for me. I, quite frankly, had no problem with this, but it was not fair to them to go out of their way to help my father, younger sister and me.

A couple of days after my epiphany, I decided to take a shot at cooking. I chose to cook on a day when nobody was home. I then would not have to worry about distractions and could have my full attention on cooking. I walked around the kitchen, looking inside the cupboards, deciding if I could make a meal out of anything I saw. I did not find anything that was of any use and then started to look through the pantry.

After a good ten minutes of wandering through the kitchen a thought dawned on me. I told my aunt earlier that day that I was going to try cooking and that she did not have to worry about preparing dinner for my family and me. After this awareness, I did the first thing I could think of in a situation like this. I panicked. I called my aunt told her that I had no idea what I was doing and needed a tremendous amount of help. After calming me down she told me that she would e-mail me the recipes of some simple and easy-to-cook Bengali dishes. Hearing this made me feel better. I could do this. I could follow directions, how hard could that be? I got off the phone, quickly retrieved the e-mail, and started reading: curry chicken, daal (lentil soup), baji (vegetable stir-fry), tomato salad, and white rice. This seemed fairly simple; I could handle this, couldn't I?

I started taking out the ingredients I needed to make the dishes and soon acknowledged that I had only half of the things I needed. This meant I had to go to the grocery store. At that

point I started to get annoyed. I felt pretty discouraged about this whole cooking deal. I grabbed my keys and purse and started walking miserably to the car. I drove for about three blocks before realizing I forgot to bring the shopping list. Angrily, I turned the car around and went back to get it.

Luckily I had gone shopping with my grandmother before; therefore, I had some kind of idea as to what type of vegetables to buy. Driving to the grocery store, I could just imagine myself standing in front of the potatoes, onions, or peppers contemplating what type I needed. Surprisingly enough, it did not take me very long to get the ingredients; most of them were vegetables. I was in and out of the store in under a half hour.

Back at home, I started cleaning and chopping the vegetables while reading the recipe instructions. On my first try, I burned the onions, put too much water in the rice, and cut my finger while chopping the vegetables. After I cleaned up the mess and tended to my wound, I took in a deep breathe and started the whole process all over again. To my luck, the second try went a lot easier than the first. I was able to catch my mistakes before they happened. I made sure the vegetables were cut the same size so they would cook evenly. The scent of burnt onions lingering in the air kept reminding me to stir the food. I felt pleased when I saw the dishes slowly coming together.

About an hour later I was putting the finishing touches on the dishes when my father came walking through the door. Coming home from work, he gave me a kiss on the cheek and after looking at what I cooked he said, "Smells good." It was quite odd to see how nonchalant my father was about my cooking. I am not sure how I wanted him to react, but hearing his approval made me feel less insecure. I told him to go freshen up and that dinner should be ready in about

fifteen minutes.

I started cleaning up, washing the pots and pans, sweeping the kitchen floor, and setting the table. After I put the last plate down on the table, my sister came home from her friend's house. She offered some help but I told her I had everything under control and to call dad; dinner was ready. As she walked out of the dining room, I stood there surprised by my own comment; I did not think I had "everything under control" a few hours ago. I had just gone through what was probably the most stressful three hours of my life, and my father and sister did not even know about it.

As I look back at the first time I cooked for my family, I see how my cooking has improved and progressed. I am more comfortable in the kitchen and do not see cooking as an overwhelming task. Before, preparing dinner would take me least three hours; now I can cook a meal within an hour, having all the ingredients at home of course. It is amazing to know that I have come to enjoy something that at first petrified me. I no longer feel like a stranger in the kitchen.

Cooking for my family has helped me established a new set of responsibilities. Making sure my family eats healthful and nutritious food is something I never would have thought about before. It now is something I constantly think about when I go to the grocery store. Before, I was not aware of how much oil or salt goes into Bengali food. Once I was aware of this, I knew it was something I needed to alter. Steamed vegetables and grilled fish are obviously healthier than eating fried vegetables and beef. I tried cooking healthier versions of Bengali dishes; the problem was that food always ended up tasting bland or had a funny taste. After I failed at my first attempt to cook healthier foods, I understood I needed to be more creative and be sensitive to

taste and flavors.

Unlike my family, I enjoy eating Italian, Mexican, and Thai food. I try incorporating some of the flavors and cooking concepts found in these types of cuisine into Bengali dishes. I experiment with different dishes and try to create my own unique mix of flavors and ingredients. One night, I wanted to make chicken enchiladas. However, instead of using Mexican spices, I used spices found in Bengali dishes; and instead of using tortillas I made rooti, which is basically a Bengali version of Mexican tortillas.

I try cooking a variety of dishes so my family and I are not eating the same kind of food over and over again. I also try to get my sister involved with cooking. I would not want her to go through what I had to go through to learn how to cook, and cooking should not be a dreadful task. I feel that cooking is enjoyable and relaxing once you get the hang of it.

This change has helped me become more aware of how my sister and I used to be. My grandmother always kept food in the kitchen, and because of our busy schedules, my family and I spent very little time together. We would come and go as we pleased, ate whenever we got hungry, and my grandmother was sort of the constant that held us together in our lives.

When my grandmother was still around, family members would stop by during different times of the day and visit my grandmother. They usually came with their stomachs empty, looking forward to eating my grandmother's food. Once my grandmother left, there was a dramatic shift in the atmosphere. Family members no longer came to visit as often as they once had, the aroma of food being cooked no longer sneaked into my room while working on homework assignments. The house was empty, silent, cold.

Now, having dinner ready at a certain time, eating together at the table, has created an

occasion in which my father, sister, and I have the opportunity to have an actual conversation, something we were not able to do before. We talk about how our day went, what things we wish to do in the future. I think it is wonderful to see how close my family and I have gotten over the course of the year. I hope we will be able to continue having family dinners every night for a long time. It is a nice feeling; however, it is not the same ambiance my grandmother generates. It is a different sentiment, a mood that cannot be described, but only felt, shared between my father, my sister, and me.

Catherine Anson

English 102
Stacey Anderson
Narrative/Reflective

What Keeps Me Going?

Ever since I was in kindergarten, and beginning to write my name, I have had many ups and downs. I loved to write different words and, when I got to second grade, five-and-six word sentences. I developed my writing skills throughout my high school career, and despite its high and low points, I still write today, but it is a mystery to me why I do.

I began serious writing in fourth grade. We had to do a creative writing project where we wrote five stories and had to turn them in at specific deadlines, ultimately completing my very first portfolio. I remember writing about things that I had experienced with other people as the characters, and my extensive detailing that my teacher said was quite advanced for a fourth grader. She loved that I wrote about a family driving to New York, being at the top of the twin towers and how much they enjoyed it, and that I described every little detail about the trip. My Mom and Dad were very proud that I had written something and gotten such high praise for it. I enjoyed the praise so much that during the summer, and the beginning of the following year I continued to write creative stories. I really developed my brain function in imaginative skills, but not necessarily my ability to write.

When I was in eighth grade and getting ready to enter a private high school, I was pretty confident in my ability to get in. The school had rigorous entrance standards, like essay writing and test taking, but I thought it would be easy because of what I thought was my incredible writ-

ing style. I had just won a writing contest sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution, so I missed my entrance exam to go to the award ceremony. When I made it up, I found that I had to write a timed essay, and I had practiced in my class for an essay that I thought had to be written outside of the test, at home. I was told that I needed to use “bigger words” because I was no longer in fourth grade. I could not understand how I had just beaten my entire class as well as many other classes to win a writing contest, and then be told that my writing, in essence, was not good enough. It was very frustrating, but it did motivate me. I got into the high school with honors at entrance, but the fact that someone had told me that my writing style was not good enough really hurt me.

This was not going to be the last time that I was told to use “bigger words.” Once in high school, I took two years of Honors English, followed by two years of Advanced Placement English. My teacher my freshman year would tell me that my chunk paragraphs, which I recently learned was also called the Schaffer Method, were not strong enough, and that I needed to practice writing, which I did to no avail. That statement was repeated to me that entire year. My chunks were so repetitive and I did not always have commentary on every single concrete detail. If I tried to creatively elaborate on the concrete details, she would always tell me that they were not good enough. Things only got worse when I was supposed to write about a daydream. I did the assignment, and was quite proud of it because it was creative writing and I thought I could get an “A.” When I received it back, my teacher had written a comment on the side of the paper saying “This is not a daydream.” I thought and still think that because of that I got a “C” on the paper. When I asked her about it, she told me that a daydream was one that you could not have while being awake, that it was one that you had when you went to sleep. It was a really simple

daydream while I was riding on a bus to a volleyball game; I imagined what it would be like to play volleyball in the desert that we were driving through. I had a few miniscule grammar mistakes also in the paper, but not enough to get a “C”. It seemed like my writing was in a downward spiral and that it was not going to get any better in years to come.

The next year, my class did nothing; our teacher always felt a need to not make us write and not critique us when he did. This really did not bother me until the following year, when our teacher expected my class to be excellent writers. The problem was that in my sophomore year, the entire honors English program was split in two, with two different teachers, and I was fortunate enough to get the one that had the lower standards. I was really excited that we rarely had to do any work in the class, and had very few tests and quizzes; but later, I was wishing that I could have had the teacher that had higher expectations. It was a good year, because I did not get criticized nearly as much as the year before, and I received a lot of praise. This was a confidence booster that I was grateful for, and I was elated until the next year when things were hard again.

My teacher during my junior year took it easy on the entire class because half of us were behind. The most difficult part was the research paper that we had to write. I remember having to do massive amounts of research. It was hard because I was doing several extracurricular activities that took up a lot of my time. One of them was track, which was such a big responsibility. I was a leader on the team, was the best girl for my event, and had to help teach others how to properly do all of the techniques, as well as have composure. It was easy to keep composure during track because I was good at it, but with writing the research paper, the easiest part was researching it. As soon as I got it back, it was a nightmare. I lost points for things unimaginable, like instead of putting “Work Cited Page,” I put, “Works Sited Page.” I lost five points for that

as well as numerous other little mistakes. I felt that I was not being graded on my writing, but rather how many mechanical mistakes that I had made. It was very frustrating to be shot down once again. I dreaded senior year, and as soon as I had found out that I had failed my AP test I wanted to switch to regular English. Thanks to my mom's love and support, I decided to stay in AP English and hopefully have a more successful senior year.

I had no such luck. It was almost as if my teacher was trying to make up for lost time, and we did so much to prepare for the AP test. I scored low on our practice multiple choice, and my writing once again never had big enough words, never was long enough, and was definitely never AP caliber. I struggled through that year, barely getting a "B" and, once again failing that AP test. It was truly devastating to me that my teachers had once again proved their point, and I sadly accepted it.

My entire high school years, I could not do any of my writing well enough for any of my teachers. They were always so critical, and they were apparently not lying, because I did fail both AP tests, and even did poorly on my SAT essay. All of these failures made me feel like my writing would never be good enough for anything, and I now see that I lost the passion that I once had for writing in grade school. I would like to find it again, but I am not sure if I can. I wish that I could write how my friends wrote in high school, with such a flame of passion, but my flame went out a long time ago, and even though I am writing in my college classes, I still feel that the criticism that I was told so long ago will never be very far away from me wherever I go.

All of these instances have helped to shape me into the writer that I am today. I still have a lack of "big words," and I still do not have enough commentary to please my teachers. I believe

that I will always struggle with these problems, but I will slowly develop more and more and be able to become a better writer because of all of these experiences. It is very hard because I have never lived up to my apparently brilliant essay that won me the Daughters of the American Revolution contest. Even in college I still struggle, but I feel that if I keep practicing, my writing will finally get better.

I have learned that I must persevere through all challenges that I will face not only in writing, but also in life. I know that I want to do better, from writing essays for history, to writing enormous papers that will take me weeks to complete. I now try extra hard to succeed and am beginning to develop a writing style that many of my teachers appreciate. I know that nothing comes easy and that hard work might take a while, but in the end, it will benefit me.

Adventure Narratives

The act of reflection allows us to find meaning in any experience we apply it to, from the most mundane to the most powerful. The adventure narrative demonstrates this. The guidelines for the assignment are simple: do something you have never done before and write about it. In order to write about it meaningfully, however, you need to constantly reflect on your actions. We urge students to define a specific adventure and set aside time for it in their schedules. But, most importantly, do something fun.

Producing fieldnotes prior to, during and after the event are essential to the successful adventure narrative. Write down what you think the adventure will be like before you act. Then, write down as many details and realizations that come to you during the adventure. Finally, consolidate your notes as soon after the event as possible. Writing these notes allows you to reflect more easily on questions such as, How are your expectations for the event different from your realizations during and after the event? Why is that important? What does it say about you?

This simple structure lends itself to quality reflection. You will see how writing allows you to arrive at deeper meaning on a moment-by-moment basis. The adventure narrative shows you how writing provides a more textured existence.

The following selections display a wide range of adventures, from a simple journey to Olive Garden, to a question of morality and willpower in the firing of a gun for the first time, to a “do-over” of a painful 13 mile run. Each of these writers breathes life into the narrative by using rich detail, and they foster meaning by asking hard, reflective questions.

Casey Penn

English 102
John Guelcher
Adventure Narrative

Without Them It Would Have Been Nothing

“When you’re here you’re family” is the saying from the common American restaurant, the Olive Garden. There are Olive Gardens in almost every town and there used to be one in the one I live in, but sadly for some reason it shut down. While the O.G., the Olive Garden, was in my town I went there once only as a child and today I have no recollection of that trip, except for going to the O.G.

Recently I have been seeing all these commercials for the O.G. on television. These commercials got me interested in going there and how glorious it would be. During this time I went to San Diego to go to a concert, and right across the street from where the concert was being held there was an O.G. and I wanted to eat there but sadly there was not enough time before the concert; and the concert ended too late to go afterwards. At this time I said to myself that I am going to go to that O.G. some day. For a while I had forgotten about this oath I had made to myself. It was only after the dreams of my first idea were crushed that I was uplifted with the memory of my oath. From that moment onward I knew that I was going to go the O.G. in San Diego.

One thing that I did want to do on the drive down there was to find the Triceratops and ride it. The first time I drove down the 5 towards Anaheim I saw a Triceratops and a giraffe statue and have not seen them the past eight times I have driven by. My friend Mark and I

wanted to ride this Triceratops so much but it looked as if we had missed out on our only chance to do so. It was a sad trip down there because we did not find the Triceratops; it was lost for good.

This trip to the O.G. would not have been that fun at all if it was not for the friends that I brought with me. It meant the world to me that my two friends went with me because I am comfortable to say and do what ever I want around Mark and Zach. What we were doing was nothing great, going to eat lunch, but it was what we made out of this simple concept that made the trip so fun.

After we had reached the limits of San Diego Mark had some trouble taking a picture of a sign showing we had actually made it.



Right after the Sea World Drive sign, which is what Mark ended up taking a picture of, I had to get off the freeway. I did not notice it before but right off the freeway there is a strip club and less than a block away there is a Chuck E. Cheese. Once I saw this sad sight I had to make a right turn and as I turned I saw the Glorious O.G.

This strip club and Chuck E. Cheese was a sad sight because it shows how our morals are deteriorating as a society. I mean back in the 40s and 50s there would never be something like a family fun restaurant right next to a strip club. It is as if a single dad could go drop his kid off to

have fun at Chuck E. Cheese while the dad goes off and has his fun at the strip club. This sight was just pitiful.

At this moment I was starving and craving the scrumptious food from the O.G. With one block left to make our final stop, I made a left and parked on the side of the O.G. I noticed there was but one other car in the parking lot, for a second I thought to myself, “what if they were closed on Sundays?” The three of us marched to the front door, the O.G. opened at 11 and we were a few minutes early.

I was very tired from my weekend and once we arrived at my truck my first thought was to take a nap because I was beat, as were the other guys. After I thought about it though, I realized that it was a bad idea so we all decided to stroll on over the Ross. As we got closer to Ross I asked, “Why are we going here?” The unanimous answer was, “What better thing do we have to do.” However, when we drew closer we saw that they were closed. When we realized this, we never stopped walking; we just kind of turned to the right and said “Target, it is.”

Mark, Zach, and I had driven all the way to San Diego from Simi Valley just for lunch and when we found out that the O.G. had not opened yet I was seriously thinking about sleeping in my truck for a little bit. This nap would have been nice but when I drive this far and have time to spare I might as well spend it doing something enjoyable. Sleeping would have satisfied each of us but we would have had no interaction with each other. However, going shopping for nothing in particular is fun because you just walk around and look at everything.

Once we walked into Target Zach noticed, and later the rest of us noticed, that Target was full of young attractive female employees. We then agreed to walk on over to the toy section because we are all still kids at heart, and on top of that toys are awesome. On the way to the toy

section was the Boys Clothing section and Mark read the Sign out loud. Right after he said “Boys” he said “Michael Jackson”. The three of us chuckled but we also walked into the Boys section, which turned into the Men’s section very quickly. Walking amongst the clothes Zach and I saw some sweaters. Zach stopped and picked one up and blurted out “We should get matching sweaters.” The sweaters were fairly expensive but it was a great idea that we did not pass up. We each got the same sweater but in a different color. The female cashier surprisingly did not comment about the three of us buying the same sweaters. She just asked us the same thing, “How are you doing today?” and “Did you find everything okay?” Throughout this time we were just laughing and smiling because what we were doing was crazy.

How often do you see three men buying matching sweaters from Target? The answer to that is probably going to be never, and I was quite surprised that the cashier did not make one single comment on what we were doing. I knew what we were doing was crazy and most people would shake their head while laughing at us, but it is something that I will never forget. There is nothing wrong with doing crazy things and having fun with your friends, as long as you are not doing anything bad. What we were doing was far from something bad, but something legendary (to the three of us at least).

Once the merchandise was paid for we all walked outside and started to take the tags off the sweet sweaters and put them on. We finally got the sweaters on about halfway to the O.G. Mark, Zach, and I walked towards the O.G. as if we had just won a battle, or had just won a prestigious prize. Nothing could bring us down now. This time we flung the doors open with ease and it was time for our feast. AS we entered the host saw us and could not contain herself from laughing.

This scene with the host laughing at us is a depiction of our journey as a whole. The whole time I told people about the journey before I even went on it, they all thought I was crazy and they would laugh at me. This laughter never brought me down; it only bolstered my eagerness to go to the O.G. in San Diego. The whole trip was just two of my best friends coming with me to eat at the O.G. in San Diego and to have a good time.

Mark, Zach, and I were seated promptly as there was nobody in the restaurant, well hardly anybody. The waiter then came up after we had looked at our menus for a second and we each gave him our drink order. After what seemed like a second, but was really like 5-10 minutes, the waiter came back to take our orders. At first no one would step up to the plate to be first so I put myself out there and ordered the Fettuccini Alfredo with some chicken, Zach then ordered some new chicken entrée, and last was Mark with his chicken parmesan. As quickly as the waiter came he left but only to return promptly with our salad and breadsticks. I was the first one to dig into the salad and after I received my portion I passed the rest on to Zach. Before I started my salad I snatched a breadstick from the depths of the breadbasket and took a bite. The first taste was an orgasm in my mouth. After realizing how great the breadsticks were I took a bite of the salad only to be disappointed. Even though it was not up to my standards I continued eating it. I did not come all this way just for a salad, so I did not let this get let me down.

Once the three of us devoured our salad, the waiter returned to replenish our beverages and took away the bland salad remains. Out of nowhere the waiter returned and the moment of truth had come, our final meal had arrived. The waiter set each plate in front of us one by one and we waited until the waiter had departed to taste our glory. The meal was untouchable, it satisfied every taste bud on my tongue.

Zach asked if anybody wanted to try his potatoes and as anyone would, I took him up on his offer. I took one of his potatoes and once it got by my nose I smelled it and I realized that it was going to be fantastic. All of our stomachs were then full and could not take anymore. Before we were to pay and leave though there was one more thing that we had to do. We had to order another basket of the breadsticks to go. They were just so damn good.

Throughout the whole experience I had been describing the O.G. with the utmost respect and saying how good the food was going to be, but to be honest the food was pretty, however I have had better. It would not have even mattered if the food was bad. If the food at the O.G. would have been repulsive I think the experience would have actually been more interesting because then we would have made the whole trip for nothing and would not have even wanted to finish the food. The three of us would always have an inside joke about the horrible O.G. instead of the one we now have about the Glorious O.G.

The three of us walked back to my truck and once we got to it we were confused as to what we should do. It was obvious that we had to take a picture in front of the O.G. to remind us of the good times. After this picture we started the journey back home.



At first I got lost trying to find the freeway again but after about five minutes I found it and we were on our way home. Once we were well on our way the party died down because we

were all tired, all of us were going on five hours of sleep two nights in a row. In this situation I had the short end of the stick because I was just as tired as the other guys but I still had to drive home. Almost the whole way back Mark and Zach were both sleeping.

Once we were back in the Anaheim area I woke Mark up because he wanted to find the mysterious Triceratops. So, for about ten minutes both of us were looking for this elusive creature. Then just as Mark was about to give up hope he spotted it. This was a disappointment due to the lack of any off ramps for the street it was on, because if there had been one the three of us would have ridden a Triceratops. After this highlight on the way home Mark returned to his nap as Zach was still slumbering in the back seat.

Angela Crisp

English 102
John Guelcher
Adventure Narrative

A Day at the Shooting Range

While sitting in my grandmother's dark, dingy attic going through a dusty, worn box of my deceased grandfather's possessions, I came across one of the items that he had prized the most: his silver and black .38 caliber Derringer pistol. As I held the gun in my hands I was amazed at the coldness of the metal and at the weight of the small gun. I sat in awe as I turned the gun over from one hand to the other. It was barely bigger than my fist, yet I knew how extremely powerful the tiny weapon was. I wondered what it would be like and how it would feel to shoot this archaic weapon my grandfather had prized so much. Where could I go to shoot this gun? What would it feel like to pull the trigger and feel the explosion caused by the bullet pulse through my entire body? What would the noise resounding in my ears sound like? I had to know.

I never fired or even saw a gun in real life before but I was very excited to feel the powerful and exhilarating emotional response that firing a gun is said to evoke. There was nothing else on my schedule for that day so I immediately looked in the phone book to find a local shooting range. As I was extremely intimidated not only about being completely clueless but also about being a female, I called my older, much more knowledgeable brother and asked him to come with me. He readily agreed.

As we approached the building I could feel a combination of apprehension and excitement rising in my stomach. What I saw ahead frightened and intimidated me but I was deter-

mined to follow through with my plans. The brown concrete building had bars on the windows and peeling paint on the eaves. The parking lot was nearly deserted; just two older model cars sitting on the side of the shabby, dilapidated building. One was a tan Chevy Impala, the other a faded blue Ford, an indistinguishable model. Both of them were covered in metallic rust, giving them the impression of relics once cherished and now discarded, much like the gun my grandfather had owned long ago. Not a person was visible on the street as I approached the firing range to begin my adventure.

I hesitantly pushed my way through the dirty glass door, the entrance to the firing range. I was instantly aware of a greasy, metallic smell in the air, incensed with the smell of stale cigarette smoke. It was dingy and dank. Where there was carpet on the patchy floor, it was stained and threadbare, marked by a thousand anonymous footprints. The color was utterly indistinguishable. A large glass case ran the length of one wall, filled with various hand guns. I never knew they existed in such variety. Two young men were in front of the display case admiring the firearms and discussing the features of the various models, using terms that were unheard of in my vocabulary. In regard to guns, I knew almost nothing.

As soon as I pushed my way through the doors I felt a rush of intimidation sweep over me, I immediately sensed that this was not the place for me but knew that in order to quell my curiosity and find the answers to my questions, I had to continue on my adventure.

From behind a wooden counter an employee asked in a throaty voice if he could help me with anything. I could tell from the way he glared at me that he was expecting a negative reply. I slowly and shyly turned away from the gun display and approached him guardedly. He was an overweight middle aged man with a balding head and a large peppery mustache resembling that

of a giant walrus. I pulled out the treasured weapon, showed it to the attendant and told him I wanted to fire it. After a few seconds of silence the man picked up the weapon and began admiring it. Without saying much, he provided me with the correct size ammunition, ear protection and safety glasses to use on the range. After thrusting all of the above on the counter, he called for his assistant, a tall thin elderly man who led me into the back of the store where the range was located. I was excited and scared at the same time.

The range was much larger than I expected and it was nearly abandoned. I felt insignificant in the expanse of the space. The room seemed to be over one hundred feet long but was particularly narrow. The walls appeared to be made of concrete and were painted a dull, dreary grayish color. Lights shone from the ceiling, mostly at the far end of the alley-like room. There was a long high counter that was separated into ten different sections. From each section a wire pulley ran down the length of the range. There were old wooden benches running along the wall behind me but as the range was deserted no one was sitting on them. They looked so ancient that they probably would have buckled under the weight of anyone anyway. The attendant led me to one of the many empty stalls and began my lesson on gun safety.

He showed me how to load the ammunition into the gun by sliding a lever and bending the barrel of the gun forward. The two bullets slid smoothly into their chambers. I straightened out the barrel and slid the lever back to its original position. He then showed me the safety on the gun and how to switch the safety to the off position, as well as how to cock the hammer on the pistol to prepare to shoot. I clipped a small square target onto the pulley and slid it out to the end of the range. I thought I was ready to fire, but he informed me that I definitely was not.

After instructing me how to site the target and to squeeze rather than jerk the trigger the man showed me the proper stance for firing a weapon. My feet were spread apart with my right arm extended above shoulder height towards the target while my left arm was holding my right wrist to help provide support and stability. He then warned me of the "kick" I was going to feel when I fired the weapon. After putting on our ear and eye protection the moment was finally here! I was going to get to fire my grandfather's gun!

The moment I had been anticipating since the moment I discovered the pistol had arrived, my excitement and anxiety levels were rising. I wanted not only to fire the weapon but also to do it perfectly. I was nervous that I would do the wrong thing or continuously miss my target.

The attendant stepped back as I prepared to fire. The safety was off, the hammer cocked and I raised my hands to look through the sites of the pistol. I shut my left eye and pointed the gun at the target at the end of the range. I had the center of the target directly in my site. I slowly squeezed the trigger and suddenly, BAM, the gun fired! I was shocked at the loud noise the gun made as it went off and at the powerful kick I felt. Even though the gun was so small, the recoil made my arm rise up towards the ceiling. Taking a deep breath, I prepared to fire again. This time I was ready for the noise and the kick. A powerful feeling ran through me and I wondered what my grandfather had felt when he fired this pistol.

I was curious to see how well I shot, so I reeled the target in along the pulley with minimal difficulty. Even though I aimed carefully at the center of the target, I missed it completely! I felt so disappointed. What went wrong? I sent the target back out to the end of the range and was determined to try again. Several shots later, I finally hit the target, although it wasn't anywhere

remotely near the bulls-eye I had been trying to hit. A feeling of excitement ran through me like a shiver. Maybe it was my grandpa watching over me.

I spent about an hour shooting my grandpa's pistol that day. As the time progressed, I felt more comfortable using the weapon and my accuracy improved slightly. Being at the shooting range gave me a better understanding of why people own guns and provided me with some very useful self-defense information. Spending time at the range also gave me a very powerful sense of self, I had done something that I never imagined. I left the shooting range with a sense of accomplishment and feeling closer to my grandpa. I plan on going back again soon.

Katie Rycroft

English 103
Adele Slaughter
Adventure Narrative

My Finish Line

Running has always been a big part of my life, especially in high school. I ran track and Cross Country my junior and senior year and it made a huge impact not only on my high school experience but also on me as a person. It not only challenged my emotions but also my body and mind. I loved it and I still do. Even today I try to run everyday of the week; it's my ultimate stress reliever and my choice of exercise.

However, there is one memory I'll never forget. My last run at Cross County camp was a thirteen mile run. Half way through it started to rain and my shin splints came back. I thought I was not going to make it. So, after I crossed the finish line and cheered for the rest of my team mates, I swore to myself I would never run a long distance ever again.

For an adventure I am going to run thirteen miles again. After my horrible experience with it last time I think this will prove to me that I can run over ten miles and still enjoy it. I know it's going to be challenging and at times I will probably doubt myself but this is something that I feel I must do for myself. I also know that the conditions last time I ran such a long distance played a role in my experience. I hope this adventure will allow me to get over my fear of running over ten miles because I feel that I'm shorting myself by just stopping after ten miles and just to ensure that I make it to the end of the run I'm going to have my dad waiting for me at my finish line.

It was the morning of the day of my run. It was cold and the air was crisp with an overcast sky, a perfect morning for a run. I finished lacing up my running shoes and begin my stretching process. After I was finished I started my warm-up run. I ran about half a mile and then stopped to stretch again now that my muscles were warmed up. After the stretch I knew the long run was now going to happen. A feeling of excitement and nervousness came over me and I was ready to take on the challenge.

I started down Wildwood Canyon Road at a pretty moderate pace. Cars zoomed by but it didn't seem to faze me, all I could hear was the sound of my iPod blaring out my favorite tunes. I found myself glancing down at my miles watch ever so often to see how far I had gone. After making it down the Wildwood Canyon Road hill, I had already gone three miles. Now, when I looked to my left and right there were houses. The temperature seemed to be rising but at a gradual pace. The sun started to peek through the clouds and the warmth of the sun felt good on my face; it was almost like the sun was charging up my battery to give me energy for the run.

When I hit the five mile mark I smelled the smell of horses. It was strong and it tickled my nose and I almost sneezed. The part of Wildwood Canyon Road I was on now had a number of houses that have horses. The strong, distinct horse smell made me think, horses run, horses get hurt, and they're put in weather conditions that aren't ideal but they always give it their all. Running is easy for horses because they don't think, they just exist. Thinking and over analyzing is what has caused me my fear of running a long distance run.

I was now at seven miles and begin to feel the run. My breathing was really heavy and I could feel the sweat on my face beginning to drip down. My body felt strong and still felt like I could run the thirteen miles. I just kept moving along trying to concentrate on keeping my long

stride and pumping my arms. The next time I looked down at my watch, which I made myself wait awhile because the anticipation makes me run faster, I was at ten miles. I couldn't believe it. This was the part of my run that I usually stop at but I didn't even feel like I usually did on days I ran ten miles. I felt good, I felt as if my body was really in good rhythm and I had a good stride with each pounding of the pavement.

When I hit eleven and a half miles I felt the exhaustion come over me. I was drenched in sweat and my body began to feel weak and fatigued. I knew that I had to keep going. I was now on the homestretch and knew there wasn't that much farther to go. I turned the sharp corner of Wildwood Canyon Road and knew at the end of this road I would be done and my dad would be waiting for me in his black Toyota Tundra truck. In my mind all I was picturing was my dad standing there waiting for me. The feeling I used to feel during track races came over me. My dad was at every race and always standing close by the finish line. This was no different my dad would be at the end of this run, my finish line, ready to support me when I crossed it.

I looked down at my watch and it read twelve miles. Alright, one more mile, one more mile and this long run would be completed. I tried to keep telling myself to keep my stride but all I could think about was being done and seeing my dad watch me cross my finish line. The cars just zoomed by me like I was standing still. I came around the blind corner of the road and could see my dad's truck in the distance. A feeling of relief came over me. I had almost done it; I had almost out run my fear of running thirteen miles. I crossed the intersection and there I was at the bottom of Wildwood Canyon Road at my finish line; done with my long, exhausting, but doable run.

My dad gave me a hug like he did after every run I ran in high school and then I took my cool down around the block from where my dad was parked. As I ran my cool down my mind was running full speed. I felt incredible; my endorphins were pumping and I felt part of me was a little surprised I had beaten my fear of running thirteen miles. My body was tired but I was really pleased with my accomplishment. I felt powerful, like I was a strong woman. I then sat on a part of half grass, half dirt and stretched. As I stretched I drank water and Gatorade. It felt excellent to be done but it felt even better knowing that I accomplished something that I thought I would never do again. I felt proud of myself that I really had proven myself wrong. I look back now and think it was ridiculous for me to make a promise to myself not to try something again just because my first experience wasn't ideal.

I took this lesson to heart and I learned from this experience and apply it to my life. In many situations now that I'm away at college I'm faced with obstacles and difficult issues that may not go perfectly the first time. Life is about retrying difficult obstacles that I'm faced with and learning from retrying those obstacles in the hopes to grow and better myself as a person. I hope that by not being afraid to try things a second time, third time and even a fourth time allows me to keep an open mind through life.

I also took away from this adventure a family lesson. Even though I don't live with my dad anymore or I don't see him everyday I know he is always there for me in any situation. He lives inside me. He and I share a special bond and he understands the importance of supporting me. Where ever my life is going to take me my dad will always be waiting at my finish line.

Life Story Interviews

Interviewing is an underused academic research method that can elicit valuable information that might take weeks or months to gather in a library. John Guelcher introduces students to interview-based research with the Life-Story Interview assignment, which asks students to find someone close to them who they wish to know more about and who has a story to tell, and then to have them tell that story. Some students assume the researcher's job is to tell the entire life story of that person, from birth to the present day. That's unnecessary—and it's too much to ask in a single semester. It's preferable to write about one pivotal moment in that person's life. A story about when your father moved from the Philippines to California is much more interesting if you focus on what he was going through during the plane ride, for example, rather than comparing his early life in the Philippines with his later years in California.

As a researcher, you want to narrate an event of importance in the person's life and, through that single event, reflect on why it was significant to the person you interview and why it is important to you.

In the following selections you will see that while interviewing close acquaintances, the authors uncovered meaningful stories from the past, which the authors had probably never thought to ask about before. Through their interviews and subsequent reflections on their notes from the interview, the authors came to unexpected realizations about their interviewee and, more importantly, about themselves.

THIS ASSIGNMENT HAS MANY BENEFITS, BUT TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ARE (1) LEARNING MORE ABOUT SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU, USUALLY SOMETHING THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE; AND (2) UNDERSTANDING AN IMPORTANT AND USEFUL RESEARCH METHOD THAT SHOULD BE OF USE TO YOU FURTHER ON IN YOUR ACADEMIC CAREER AND YOUR LIFE. —JOHN GUELCHER

Caitlin Weals

English 103
John Guelcher
Life Story Interview

A Weals' Tale

How well do we really know the people around us? Our friends? Our family? Although we may have a thorough understanding of their likes and dislikes, their personalities and behaviors, how much do we really know about the lives that they have lead and the experiences that they have had in the past? Experiences which may have likely made them the person that they are now. We may hear about these stories on a casual level, just getting a brief glimpse into these life experiences. But if we delve a little deeper into these stories we can surely gain valuable insight into the lives of others and even insight into our own lives. If anything, taking time to hear a person's "life story" can teach us about cultures other than our own and give us a perspective on life that we may never have. But perhaps even more so, by doing this we can acquire a better understanding about the people in our lives and also find connections to their stories within our own lives. Maybe, we can even come away learning something about them and ourselves that we had never expected to find.

When I started my life story interview, I immediately thought of my grandfather, Frederick Weals. Not only do I have a great respect for him but he has had a very long, full and eventful life that I believed would be interesting and beneficial to learn from, especially considering that he has witnessed first hand many important events in the history of this country (he is eighty-nine and still lively!). Having said that, I thought that it would be very appropriate, not to mention very interesting, to ask him about his experiences during the Great Depression. I chose to focus on this time in his life for two reasons. Firstly, I saw this as a great opportunity to learn

about and get a perspective on the Great Depression from a primary source. And secondly, it concerns a time in my grandfather's life that I know nearly nothing about. Therefore, I also saw this as an opportunity to get to know my grandfather on an even deeper level.

Although I had never heard my grandfather speak about this time in his life before, I was almost sure of the kind of story he was going to tell. Based on my knowledge of the Great Depression, I assumed that he would provide me with a poignant account of his family's hardships and distresses, like so many others throughout the country who were severely impacted by the economic crisis during that time in our nation's history. I imagined my grandfather, a young adult, possibly having to put his education on hold and work to help support his family.

Unfortunately for our first discussion, I was unable speak with my grandfather vis-à-vis, so I resorted to a conference call style interview. I sat posed at my desk with my questions and pen and notebook at hand ready to transcribe our conversation and jot down all vital details in his story. I dialed his number and after he answered the phone, we greeted one another briefly before getting right down to business. Luckily for me, he was eager to share his experiences as he opened up immediately without any preliminary questioning. "When the Great Depression started," he said, "I was twelve years old, and our family had what you would call a 'non-typical' experience." Even as early as this point was in our interview, some of my expectations about his story were already contradicted. Now taking into consideration his young age at the time, my image of a working man was false. And furthermore, what did this "non-typical" experience mean?

My grandfather went on to describe that the rural farming and mining community in eastern Ohio in which he lived did not feel the impact of the Great Depression as much as many

other places did. Like many of the people in his town, he was part of a typical, middle-class family and wasn't particularly wealthy. Still, they weren't really affected by the Great Depression. He said, "My father always had a steady job and there was plenty of food . . . [we] never suffered, and my parents didn't worry about it too much." He also said that although some businesses had slowed and the demand for products was less, most people in his town were able to maintain their pre-Great Depression lifestyle.

As he entered his teen years, his circumstances did not change. However, he became much more aware of the situation and was able to better comprehend the effect it was having on the nation. He mentioned that he knew people who were much more affected by it but didn't go into a lot of detail. I asked him to elaborate on his experiences with these acquaintances but failed to elicit much more information from him. Unfortunately, we had to cut our interview short, but for now I had some good material to work with as well a few ideas for questions for our next interview.

After we both hung up, I skimmed over the notes that I had made and tried to put it all in perspective. Up until this point, all of my original assumptions about his story were incorrect, and frankly, I was very surprised by the information that he gave me. I wouldn't say that I was expecting to hear about devastation on a level depicted in the heart-wrenching photographs of Dorothea Lange, but I thought that his story would include some amount of adversity endured by him and his family.

During our next interview, I tried to pick up where we left off and get my grandfather to reveal even more details about his experiences and perhaps get him to tell me more about his interactions with people who were more affected by the economic recession. However, much of the

information he gave to me in our second interview was a reiteration of the information from our first. He, again, described how he and his family had experienced a minuscule effect from the Great Depression and had to make very few, minute adjustments as a result of it. In fact, he went on to say that most of the people who lived in his small Ohio town had similar experiences to his family and that they spent much more time discussing the politics of it than actually dealing with the practical effects of it. Even my attempt to have him elaborate any more specific stories was unsuccessful as he really couldn't recall any that particularly stuck out in his mind.

When I had finally finished interviewing my grandfather, I once again recollected my thoughts and processed the information and insight that he had given me. I soon discovered, after thoroughly reflecting on the material I had gathered, that my whole perception of his story had been completely altered. I was entirely surprised by what he had to say. But why was I so puzzled by the story he had told?

I explored this thought more deeply and came to the conclusion that I felt so confused by his story because I had such a stereotypical conception of Great Depression life. Admittedly, I am no expert on the Great Depression, but I feel that I have a fair understanding of the subject. However, from my limited knowledge base, I had falsely assumed that all people in the United States had suffered and struggled greatly as a result of the Great Depression. Therefore, I was rather surprised by the content of his story. I had never once considered that people at the time had been affected at many different degrees, from severe poverty to comfortable living, like my grandfather. His personal story is proof of that. Yet, I had fully expected him to tell me the story of his family's struggles and hardships. In retrospect, however, I realized how easy it was for me to make such an inaccurate assumption. Throughout the history classes and text books of my past

public school education, the picture of poverty and destitution, or at least some degree of hardship, is exactly what was painted to depict the Great Depression. One would most likely never hear or read about the people who didn't have to endure its adverse effects. Can you, the reader of this paper, say that you didn't have any of these preconceptions, perhaps because of your former schooling?

Yes, my grandfather and his family belonged to the smaller group of people at the time who were not significantly affected, but his experiences are still evidence that people were impacted by the Great Depression on a broad scale. Until hearing my grandfather's own personal account, I had never considered that, and now realize why I was so surprised and had the expectations that I did before learning his story.

In order to help confirm my new observation, I searched online to find evidence of people who had similar experiences as my grandfather. After a thorough investigation through Google, I finally found such an example. In an interview conducted by Bob Smith of the Incorporated Village of East Williston, an online newsletter of the same name as the small Long Island community in which it is written, informant Jean Koistenen recounts her memories of her experiences during the Great Depression. Smith writes in his documentation of the interview that Koistenen said, "We didn't have any particular hardship during the Depression. I didn't know of anyone suffering: my family wasn't, my father didn't lose his job. Life went on as usual for us" (Smith). Owen Peterson, from the New Deal Network in Richfield Utah, interviewed Tom Abbot on the same subject and had similar findings. In this interview, Peterson records Abbot as having said, "We didn't feel the depression as bad as many people. We had the farm and we had grain and

cows that gave milk” (Peterson). This is particularly notable because Utah was one of the states that was affected the most severely.

Both of these personal testimonials reflect the information that was given to me by my grandfather in his story. Reading these quotes made me realize that every situation and event in history is seen from entirely different perspectives by the people who experience them. It’s always complex with many exceptions. My conceptions about the Great Depression were too simple, too black and white, which is why I had the expectations that I did for my grandfather’s story and why I was surprised when I heard it. I do not mean to diminish the fact that many people did in fact struggle during the 1930’s, but we don’t often hear about the people who were affected on the other end of the spectrum, and therefore don’t expect to hear stories about them. In fact, when I was researching for stories like my grandfather’s, I found it extremely difficult to locate one.

When I first began this entire assignment, I thought that I would be merely writing and reflecting on a story from my grandfather’s past. Little did I know that his story would not only tell me about a time in his life, but would make me aware of something about myself and take my reflection on his story down a totally different avenue than I had originally expected. I had basically approached the situation with one attitude and left it with a completely different one. After hearing my grandfather’s personal experiences during the Great Depression, I realized that I had certain expectations and pre-conceptions about what life was like at the time, and had wholly predicted that his own story would reflect that. However, I learned that this assumption was inaccurate, but furthermore, allowed me to look at his story from a different perspective that I might never have been aware of before.

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Carlin Ewing

English 103
John Guelcher
Life Story Interview

Making a Change in the World

You think you know someone like the back of your hand because they are family and you have known them all of your life. This was the relationship I had with my grandfather, Dr. Bradley R. Straatsma. I was almost a hundred percent sure I knew everything about him. But, little did I know this interview would bring me so much closer to him.

Due to my grandfather's busy schedule, we decided to meet up at his office at the Jules Stein Eye Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles. It was a Saturday afternoon and the sun was finally out. I must admit I had butterflies fluttering in my stomach. But what was I nervous about? My grandfather is far from the "typical" grandfather. For example, he does not offer you a drink, he offers you a beverage. His idea of weekend clothes is a pair of slacks and a dress shirt, but no tie, compared to his work clothes of a dress shirt, slacks, a tie, and a lab coat. As I was driving the 405 South, I started to wonder where this formality came from. I remember his telling me that he grew up in a conservative East Coast household. His father, Dr. Clarence Straatsma, was a successful plastic surgeon in New York City and his mother, Lucretia Straatsma, was always the president of a women's club. His father would order a brand new black on black Buick over the telephone each year and there was always a live-in couple that took care of the house. Growing up in such a formal lifestyle, it was natural for his family to send him away to an all boys academy.

The pressure of his studies, yet a glimmer of his personality, started to develop in this new environment. In his high school years, he would send letters home to his parents letting

them know how well his classes were going and different interesting facts he had learned throughout the week. Being a growing boy, he would occasionally need new clothes. My grandfather told me, “Since I was away at school, I did not know what size I needed in slacks. When I would out grow my pants, I would measure my waist with the envelope to see how many envelopes it took to go around my waist. I would say that my waist was this number of envelopes. My mother would then proceed to go to the store with the envelope and measure each pair of pants. I always thought it was a resourceful idea.” I started smiling when I thought of this story as I turned into the cement parking lot.

As I started to walk towards his office my cute butterflies turned into a flock of seagulls in the pit of my stomach. I took a deep breath and knocked on the dark wood of the door. He greeted me warmly and invited me to sit down. There he was my grandfather, a 5’5” man, with light brown hair gently brushed to one side. His glasses lightly pressing on his nose and his fingers firmly laced between one another and placed in his lap.

As we started talking this whole new world of his life began to unfold before me. I never knew that in our world of today, 161 million people have acute problems with their vision. Of the 161 million people, 1.4 million of those people are children who are blind (Resnikoff et al., 2004; World Health Organization, 2000). Unfortunately, three-quarters of the people who are blind, can be treated and have avoidable blindness.

In my interview I wanted to concentrate on my grandfather’s interest in international ophthalmology and how he got started in this field. The conversation that followed was the most informative and the most interesting conversation I have ever had with my grandfather. It all started when he became the President of the Pan-American Association of Ophthalmology from

1987 through 1989. This was a very large organization composed of ophthalmologists from North America, Latin America and South America. From this position of leadership grew friendships and relationships that opened the door and provided opportunities for helping people in other parts of the world.

Since it was started in 2002, my grandfather has been President of the International Council of Ophthalmology Foundation. The Foundation came into being as a way of providing financial support for programs of the International Council of Ophthalmology which is a non-profit organization with members from all over the world. My grandfather has been involved with the International Council of Ophthalmology since 1993.

In 1999, he was a member of a planning team responsible for the direction of the organization and they created the “International Ophthalmology Strategic Plan to Preserve and Restore Vision – Vision for the Future” (ICOF, 2005, p. 3). This strategic plan focused on the needs internationally to improve the ophthalmic education and training of doctors, improve the guidelines for eye and vision care, and create programs to preserve vision and encourage research. Since the creation of this strategic plan for the organization, the International Council of Ophthalmology has been working on programs to support vision and as an active member, it was a natural step for my grandfather to assume leadership of the International Council of Ophthalmology Foundation.

At present, the International Council of Ophthalmology Foundation is supporting programs carried out by the International Council of Ophthalmology throughout the world. One program was created to improve the education of standards of medical students by developing a curriculum that is used all over the world so even students in developing countries are given the

same level of education as they would receive in the developing world. Another program focuses on advancing eye care through the creation of the Beijing University Eli Lilly Diabetic Eye Care Center in Peking. This is a new program that just received approval from the Chinese government in 2007 and is funded by the Eli Lilly Company. Diabetes is a disease that can be treated and under the direction of the doctors in China has the promise of success.

In looking ahead for the Foundation, my grandfather's efforts are focused on making an orderly transition so that the programs established will be self-sustaining and continue on. In this way, my grandfather feels that the Foundation has truly made a difference in the world and how its people see. He feels strongly that people should work together because vision loss is not only a personal loss, but a loss to society.

As the interview progressed, we talked more about his schooling prior to the foundation. I realized that my grandfather was not your average student when he told me that Yale Medical School accepted him after only two years of college at University of Michigan. He graduated from Yale Medical School, cum laude. But, the Yale student that I heard about was convinced that living in the dorms was a fire hazard. My grandfather decided to tie a rope to the base of his bed in case he needed to throw the rope out of his second story window and escape. He also placed a pair of workmen's gloves next to the rope because a future surgeon has to be careful of his hands.

In his younger years, he was a navy doctor for the frogmen in the Korean War, and my grandfather was also the on-call ophthalmologist for President Ronald Reagan. At the age of thirty-six, he was the Chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology at University of California Los Angeles. My grandfather told me, "This almost did not happen because several years before,

the water pipe that connected the house to the street broke and we, your grandmother and I, did not have the money to pay for it. We had thoughts of returning to my parents' home in New York. But, we loved California too much and we had dreams to achieve, even though our family was on the East Coast.”

My grandfather was the Founding Director of the Jules Stein Eye Institute in Westwood, CA. and the Editor-in-Chief of the American Journal of Ophthalmology for ten years. Instead of retiring, my grandfather refused to slow down. He graduated cum laude from the University of West Los Angeles Law School (UWLALS), the same law school that my uncle attended a few years prior.

The family story we always tell about UWLALS was when my grandfather took a criminal law class and his professor was talking about a case of neglect and one of the parties went blind. My grandfather raised his hand and continued talking about the case because he was the expert witness at the trial. The professor's jaw dropped.

In looking back over his professional life, my grandfather is most proud of the Jules Stein Eye Institute. He recognizes how much science has advanced in the last 40 years and still the elements that were put in place when the Institute was started have continued to thrive. Over the years the Jules Stein Eye Institute has maintained a strong position in the medical community in research, teaching and patient care. He is also proud of the work he has done in international ophthalmology throughout the years to help people worldwide.

In reflecting back to my original statement, “You think you know someone like the back of your hand because they are family and you have known them all of your life.” I believe we know people based on different levels. You may not know the person as a whole. We can under-

stand and enjoy different aspects of people. I have realized that the ordinary man that I thought I knew as my grandfather is actually a great man who is trying to achieve not only his goals but the goals to make our world a better place for us all to live in. He has taught me that we should make goals and dreams because when we all come together to achieve them, we are working together for a better good. Helen Keller once believed, “Only when the whole world combine(s) resources to address the toll of avoidable blindness shall all of mankind be blessed with the right to see” (ICOF, 2005, p. 17).

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Autoethnography

What is an autoethnography? Glad you asked. It's a genre of writing and research in which authors examine their own experiences within their culture in order to look more deeply into the interactions between themselves and others. The *self* is the major character of an autoethnography. In other words, you are the subject of your own paper. Therefore your *voice*—that is, how you sound to your readers—is crucial. Autoethnographies are typically written in the first person; they frequently include dialog and often focus on emotions or use emotional appeals. The authors of autoethnographies explore their subjects quite self-consciously, that is, they are perfectly aware of what they are doing and saying. They tell stories about how their experiences or their identities are connected to the culture and society that surrounds them.

The specific assignment for the two autoethnographies that follow included these directions:

Write an argumentative essay based on your writing experience in Stretch Composition in which you critically reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your writing process. In doing so, you should identify and zero in on a primary element for discussion and write of how this aspect of your writing has developed over the course of the past 2 semesters. The essay should also take into account the environment or “setting” in which your learning has occurred.

Your year in Stretch Composition will provide you with opportunities to write in a variety of ways for different purposes and audiences. Our hope is that you will come to recognize your own strengths and weaknesses as writers and acquire some strategies for exploiting those strengths and circumventing the weaknesses. To do that, you need to develop a flexible, useful writing process that can grow and adapt as you develop over the coming years. One way of doing that is to study your own process by examining it very self-consciously through assignments like the autoethnography. When you look back at the end of your college career, this assignment should help you appreciate how far you've come as a writer.

—Bob Mayberry

Duan Mackenzie

English 103
Clifton Justice
Autoethnography

A Writer's Discontent

Let's start out by saying that if you are a member of the composition faculty, I am very mad at you. Thanks to you, as a first year student at Cal State Channel Islands, my Stretch Composition course has made me feel like a complete foreigner. Throw away the constricting five-paragraph essay that had once taught me how to write, and bring on the more freestyle form of writing that allows me to express myself by using my own voice, opinions and experiences. Even as writing theorist Fan Shen stated, "In writing classes in the United States I found that I had to reprogram my mind, to redefine some of the basic concepts and values that I had about myself, about society, and about the universe, values that had been imprinted and reinforced...and that had been part of me all my life" (Shen 620). Therefore, this is a more complicated issue because I am not the only one who has felt out of place. Throughout this essay I am going to put you in my shoes and show you how challenging and how frustrating these two semesters in this freshman English course have been for me. I have done nothing but try my hardest and put forth so much time and effort, yet it seems that I am still not progressing. How would you cope with living in that reality?

August 2006

During the beginning of my freshman-writing journey, I had not a clue what was going on; I was not catching on to the completely new forms of college writing styles. For instance,

when it came time for the first in-class essay, I received a total of five out of twelve. A five is when I realized I needed to step it up and try very hard in this freshman writing class in order to achieve my goal grade, an A, and at this point the possibility of that happening was slim. Immediately, I started investing a lot of time on my drafts and revisions for my portfolio essays, and haven't stopped. As a result, I have become almost glued to my essays every chance I got to revise them because that is just the student I am. And when I say "revision" or "draft," I just want you to know that each one of my drafts consists of multiple drafts in one. To illustrate my point, it takes me hours upon hours to write an essay only because I sit there with my pen and paper and every few sentences I write, I cross-out words, re-word, draw arrows, or simply scribble it all out and start over until I'm satisfied with those sentences, then I move on. In fact, I cannot write a paper without doing so because I am somewhat of a perfectionist; this is just my current writing process.

For example, last semester one of the essays we were required to write was a Problem-Solution essay, and I wrote about my financial problems. Looking back at draft three, an excerpt from my introduction simply read, "It is Monday morning at 8 am. I wake up, take a shower, get dressed, do my hair, eat breakfast, get in my car and drive to school. This is a typical day for a college freshman" (Mackenzie "Freshman Financial Crisis"). By the next draft, the same part of my introduction expanded to, "'Ain't no mountain high, ain't no valley low, ain't no river wide enough baby. If you need me call me, no matter where you are, no matter how far...' is the blaring racket that wakes me up before I get ready for class. Startled, I hop out of bed to undergo the beautification process. I begin by rinsing myself in the shower singing the lingering tune of my abrupt wake up call. After I finish, I step out of the shower and dig into my closet for my attire

for the day. With no time to spare, I grab a stale bagel and stuff it into the toaster before realizing there was no more cream cheese left in the fridge. On my way out, I snatch up my porcelain piggy to the inevitable depressing sound of emptiness. I dash out to my car to ready myself for the long, routine half an hour drive to college, when noticing my gas tank less than a quarter full” (Mackenzie “Freshman Financial Crisis”). You can certainly notice the work I put into my revisions. The difference in the two excerpts is that I took your advice to “Don’t just ‘tell’ us how and why, but ‘show’ us—help your audience grasp the full significance of your experience.” In doing so, it is true that the transition from draft three to draft four didn’t just take me once to write. I wrote it out, scribbled, stared at it, blurted out frustration words, re-worded parts of it, scratched my head, and added more sentences and so on until I was somewhat satisfied. I wrote a total of seven drafts for this essay, which was a lot more because I revised each one over and over, and I apparently still didn’t have this new writing style down because my grades didn’t show any improvement.

January 2007

At the end of the semester I received a four on the two essays I had to turn in, (including my Problem-Solution essay) which was considered “Adequate Writing.” A four, according to the scoring criteria rubric at CSUCI states, “The essay addresses prompt, selected topic appropriate to assignment, occasionally simplistic or repetitive, more often explores complex ideas, adequately focused and organized, outside sources used, and few lapses in convention” (Scoring). As frustrating as it can be to admit this, a four sounds about right with regards to my writing. I just have to face it; I don’t have this new college writing technique down yet, which makes me want to throw a temper tantrum and kick something. And again, I am not the only one that feels

this way. Fan Shen states, “At the center of this mental struggle, which has lasted several years and is still not completely over, is the prolonged, uphill battle to recapture ‘myself’” (Shen 619). All in all I get so upset at the fact of how much effort I put in and still get the same “ok” grades because I am graded upon my writing, and not even by my professor, which is another big transition since high school. As you know, here at Channel Islands, my portfolio filled with my essays is being graded not by my professor anymore, but by you who has no idea who I am, how much time I have put in, how many drafts I write, and does not see the sweat involved, whereas my professor does. You just give me my portfolio grade (65% of my final grade) based on how well I write, which is not in my favor. To tell the truth, my professor even said, “If it was supposed to be about effort, you would have an A.” This made me smile, but I have to realize this is not about what I do on the way there, but about my end result. And the answer to your question is NO, I am not a brown-noser. My professor just knows the hard work and effort I put into his class.

April 2007

Furthermore, being a student in this freshman writing class has also given me the fear of time. When it was exactly a month before the portfolio due date, I was having panic attacks. So much was running through my head; “I need to write more drafts, I need to schedule more appointments with my professor and the Writing Center, I need to make my essays as perfect as I can make them, and I’m not going to have enough time.” Each day that inch towards the due date gives me more stress. For example, when I see the due date is nearing, I can’t help but cross off every day and count every hour that I can put into my essays. I just strive to improve my writing and have the grades to show for it.

Today

The most frustrating factor of being in a freshman writing class at CSUCI is that I do everything recommended, which has played a major role in my writing process. In this new CSUCI environment, I am in a Stretch Composition course with the same professor and same students and I take advantage of that. For instance, the fact that I know everyone in my class makes it a lot easier to ask another student to peer review my work. Also, throughout the semesters I have made many one-on-one appointments with my professor to note his opinions and points of view. In addition, another beneficial aspect of Channel Islands is that there is a Writing Center available where students can schedule appointments to have tutors peer read their essays, and yes I have been there as well. Not only am I taking advantage of everything being handed to me, I am also doing more to try to improve my writing. For instance, my boyfriend at times is a slave to my essays. I always ask him to review my essays and ask his opinion's about what I should change, and how to make it better. My boyfriend, being a far more advanced writer than I, has helped me tremendously. However, this has also left me frustrated at times because I am not as gifted. I know I am a good student and strive for good grades, but writing just doesn't seem to be in my nature. I am doing all that I can and more, but my grades don't prove I am getting this technique down.

Reflecting Back

Throughout these two semesters I might have made gradual changes in this class, but they just aren't recognizably noticeable because my grades haven't changed. I know my writing is far more different than the last day of high school, but I never seem to improve enough to reach a better score in college writing. And even after all the hard work and effort, I never re-

ceive a better outcome. When I look at the more optimistic side, if I did any less I most likely wouldn't be getting the grades I am getting. On the other hand, I do so much more work and can't seem to improve to "Excellent" or even "Strong Writing." Also, even though my college composition course ends this semester, writing won't end there. I still need to learn how to write successfully for other classes because I plan to graduate with a bachelor's in Business and then go on to grad school. The question is simple: how am I going to get through this? At this time I have come to a conclusion that I am not going to give up. I am still going to work hard on every essay and try my best because whether it is next month or in three years, I will get there some day.

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***Sara Nygard**

English 103
Clifton Justice
Literacy Autoethnography

A Transition to College Writing

As a student at Channel Islands I have encountered a big change in English Composition this last year. At times it was very awkward to grasp these new ideas. The transition to first year college writing from high school writing has been a long and windy road for me. When I entered English 102, I felt that my English Professor was speaking in his own language. I had no idea how to reiterate his teachings on paper. What the hell was he trying to say? Apparently, there has always been a barrier between freshmen students and their professors. In 1987 David Schwalm pointed out that freshmen writers are... "Just nice folks trying to get by in a system in which many of them have not always encountered a whole lot of success. We (professors) are the odd people, not them." (Schwalm) This means that those who teach are the weird ones and the students are the normal people in the lecture room.

Throughout my writing years, I have come across many different teachers with different teaching and writing styles, who all seemed to speak in their own language. In high school, there was the English teacher who inspired their students to write, the one who was anally focused on grammar alone, and the one who would rather share her opinions about the Bush Administration than assign us our next essay. I learned how to conform to what my teacher wanted rather than write for an audience. Because of this I was never sure of myself. In an in-class discussion in English 102, we were asked "How have past grades you received hindered you?" I wrote "I'm so

insecure when I write because I'm worried whether or not it will please whoever will grade it."(Writing assignment) I felt that I had to conform to the language of my current high school English teacher. It did change when I entered college. From what the English composition program has promised, they say they will keep an open mind when they read student's papers. When I heard this, I was very relieved yet apprehensive because I felt that sometimes my name and the fact that my instructor knew me had an impact on my writing.

Up until I entered college writing, I was expected to write a five-paragraph essay, turn it in and receive a grade. Because of this conditioning prior to college, I was very sure of myself thinking I could be able to whip up a decent paper and receive an A on it in no time. All I had to do was learn the language of my teacher and make sure they liked me, and I was guaranteed a good grade. These weaknesses stuck with me in English 102. Because of team grading, the reader does not know me. For some it may be an advantage, but for me, this was a weakness. (I got a lot of As because I was often a "favorite") Like I said before, I was always amiable to my teachers and when it came time for grades, I could always push my 88 percent to a 90 percent. With team grading, it didn't work the way I had always had it work out for me. Last semester, I received a nine on my portfolio leaving me with a B in the class. If this was high school, and the readers knew me, they would know how dedicated I was and just might have given me a ten on the portfolio, resulting in an A. However, that aspect of grading isn't given much attention here, so, instead I will have to try and understand this new native tongue of college writing.

This semester, I have become knowledgeable of what is expected of me in college writing. On the first day of English 103 we learned from our professor that the writing rubric scoring becomes more challenging in English 103. As discouraging as it sounds, I now realize the truth

in that statement. In the English 103 Syllabus, a goal is to "...practice in writing university-level prose."(Syllabus) In order to succeed, I have to apply the things I learned in class discussions from English 102 as well as 103. I feel that I have done this and I am paying very close attention to the expectations. Like I said previously, being used to quickly write up a paper won't do me well in college. So now, I am aware that I have to be very scrutinizing when I read over my papers.

In retrospect, I have learned the importance of editing my drafts so they are coherent with the criteria. I have carried the idea of English 102 which is to achieve the standard of university writing. I carefully make sure that whatever I am saying always relates back to the prompt. In the scoring rubric for the first year writing program at CSUCI, to have excellent writing I must "... respond effectively throughout." (Rubric)Also, I have to be sure that my wording is clear and precise so my reader will never get confused. I always tell myself "you're just a number, make the voice in your paper strong and heard." This idea has helped me understand the language of college writing. For example, one paper that was turned in with my portfolio last semester, looking over it now, I know what I could have done different. This was discussed when I met with my professor to go over my portfolio. In the intro, I write "I wouldn't be where I am today if the inspiration was never introduced to me at such an early age." (Literacy Narrative) I then go into my first body paragraph. Here is what my English professor and I concluded. According to Graff & Birkenstein authors of *They say, I say: the moves that matter in academic writing*, in order to write a good essay, you must have an "I say" and a "they say" "... in which you devote your attention to the views of some other person or group" ("They Say, I Say" page 51) A "they say" adds ethos and credibility to your paper hence, more enjoyable to your reader. It is a feasible

writing convention which adds “sentence variety”, an important part of the first year writing program according to the rubric for excellent writing. By doing this, I might have gotten a higher score. This example shows that it is important to understand the language and structure of university writing.

For most of us, we learn by trial and error. I can say that this year, I have certainly had my trials and my errors. While I was an A student in high school, where I could sense what my teacher wanted me to write and I could brown nose to get my A. Now, in college, to get an A, I have to work long and hard and understand the language. I understand college excellence in writing apart from excellent high school writing. It takes hard work knowing the language and being comfortable writing in your own skin.

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