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2009*

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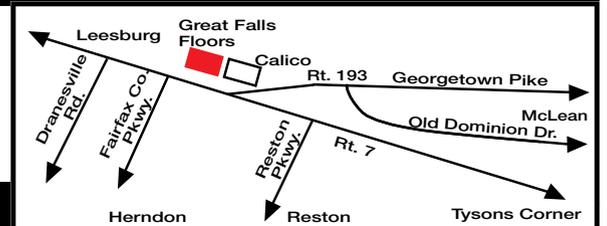
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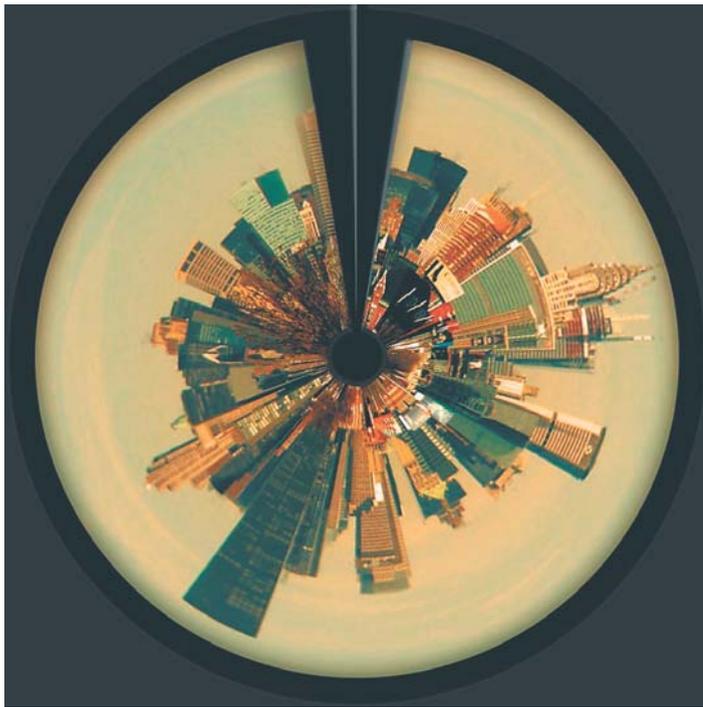
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2009

**Maggie Morris,
South Lakes
High School**



**Edyson P.,
1st Grade,
Terraset
Elementary**

Welcome

Dear Readers:

This week, the Reston Connection turns over its pages to the youth and students.

We asked principals and teachers from area schools to encourage students to contribute their words, pictures and photos for our annual Children's Issue.

The response as always was enormous. While we were unable to publish every piece we received, we did our best to put together a paper with a fair sampling of the submitted stories, poems, drawings, paintings, photographs and other works of art.

We appreciate the extra effort made by school staff to gather the materials during their busy time leading up to the holidays. We'd also like to encourage both schools and parents to mark their 2010 calendars for early December, the deadline for submissions for next year's Children's Connection.

Please keep us in mind as your children continue to create spectacular works of art and inspiring pieces of writing in the coming year.

The children's issue is only a part of our year-round commitment to cover education and our local schools. As always, the Connection welcomes letters to the editor, story ideas, calendar listings and notices of local events from our readers. Photos and other submissions about special events at schools are especially welcome for our weekly schools pages.

Our preferred method for material is e-mail, which should be sent to reston@connectionnewspapers.com, but you can reach us by mail at 1606 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 or call 703-778-9414 with any questions.

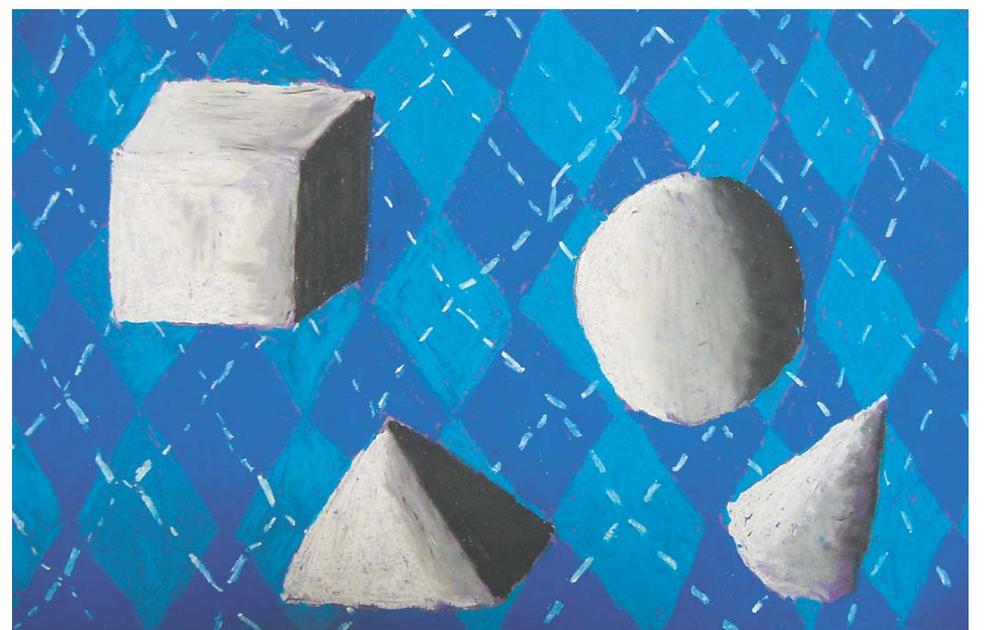
EDITOR KEMAL KURSPAHC



**Grace Frinks,
8 years old,
Aldrin
Elementary**



Malak Fakir, 2nd Grade, Hunters Woods Elementary



Sophie Howle, 6th Grade, Sunrise Valley Elementary

Voice

BY ROCIO SAFE
SOUTH LAKES HS/12TH GRADE

Looking back on my first day in elementary school I can still feel the clamminess of my palms. It was a dreaded day. It was exciting. It was nerve racking. It was new. It was different.

The night before the big day, I stood in front of the small mirror in the half bath of my aunt's townhouse and practiced saying, "Hello, my name is Rocio." I often forget how difficult it was for me to pronounce those words, and I often forget that those were my first words in the English language. I was a baby being reborn, being re-taught how to communicate with the difference that I would remember every step of the way this time. Mr. Henry was the fourth grade teacher assigned to me. I remember shuddering to say my first sentence in front of a class as all 24 pair of eyes examined me. Every word was pushed out with force; every word hurt. The attentive faces in the room alarmed me. I was the center of attention but the feeling wasn't pleasant. My voice was tiny and unfamiliar. I searched for my confidence, but only found my hidden insecurities.

I focused on the sentence and repeated it a bit louder and the stress knots throughout my body began to untangle and I relaxed. The feeling quickly faded as my new teacher began to ask me what seemed to him like easy questions. I felt lost, scared, and above all I felt stupid. Had my cousin Stephanie not been there, I'm sure I would've cried. She proceeded to translate the question and I told her, "tengo diez años" and she spoke, "She is ten years old."

Mr. Henry asked a few more questions, he wanted to know where I was from and what I thought of the United States. Although the questions were directed to me, I noticed he made eye contact with Stephanie instead. This went on for about five minutes but for me the seconds stretched for miles and I was praying to God that this teacher's curiosity would end. I was begging God for the interrupted math lesson to continue. I had never been a fan of math, but if there was something I knew it was that math was universal. Two plus two was always four and it didn't matter if you were in Argentina, Russia, or India; two plus two will always be four. After the mini interview ended, I took my seat and began to complete the problems on the board on a fresh piece of loose leaf paper. Mr. Henry walked by and noticed that I had finished. He



Charleen O'Brien, South Lakes High School

smiled, took my paper, looked through it, handed it back, and gave me two thumbs up. The words from his mouth fell quicker than the powdered snow from above. My cousin caught his words and turned them into something I could understand and I responded. Yes, I had done this before; yes, I

knew how to multiply and divide fractions; and no, I hadn't learned it in the fourth grade because I had learned that in third. His words were a mystery to me that my cousin solved every time but his face, his face... was easy to read. He was impressed and I was ecstatic about it.

Later that day I met my two ESOL teachers. Mrs. Thomson was my morning teacher and Mrs. Anderson was my afternoon teacher. In the morning Mrs. Thomson taught me how to build sentences and in the afternoon I

SEE VOICE, PAGE 18

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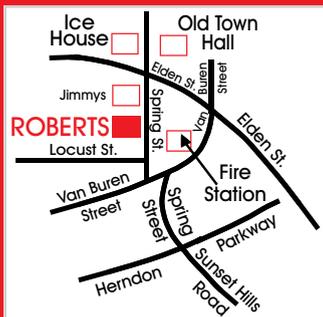
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SOUTH LAKES HS

Being Sick

BY NINA RODRIGUEZ
SOUTH LAKES HS/11TH GRADE

The pain ran through my body like it was a treadmill. The pace never changed. I could feel the thud of its spiked sneakers every time it sprinted to another part of me. My eyes were pasted shut. Like my lower and upper lashes had decided to lock together and create a permanent seal. I really had to pee.

The sun came through the window and set its gaze on my breakfast. You can have it, I thought. The pancakes moved all by themselves while the eggs stubbornly stood their ground. The congealed butter slowly inched its way along the ridge of the cracked plastic plate, suspiciously eyeing the bacon. As if it were deciding if it was worth it to mingle with the oil that was oozing from the pockets of fat. I took a deep breath, smelt the different medications, the pee, the

plastic, and the desperate attempt to cover it up with Lysol. Then I puked.

T.V. hummed in the background. Nurses scurried up and down the hallways, clipboards in hand and pencils stuck haphazardly in their hair. Machines frantically buzzed and beeped and I guessed that either someone had kicked the bucket or was about to. A little boy with his IV bag attached to one of those things that look like coat hangers raced by. He had climbed onto the legs of it and was racing down the hallway as if it was a scooter. He gained speed and flew past my room, dodging the nurses and their evil glares.

My mouth felt weird, the muscles around my lips were loose and relaxed. I was about to reach for the sticky little remote that called the nurses to your room but then I stopped. I slowly raised my hand to touch my mouth and realized that I was smiling.



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Ashley Nobles, 1st Grade



Saron Tefera, 1st Grade

When I Grow Up ...

First graders from Norma Morris's class at Hunter Woods ES respond to the "when I grow up" question.

Ashley Nobles: "When I grow up, I will work in a candy store."

Saron Tefera: "When I grow up, I will be a ballerina."



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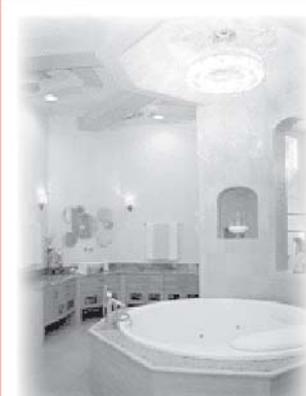
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— SATHIYA KANNAN,
1ST GRADE, ALDRIN ES



My Eyes
by Judy

The best part of me is my eyes. I chose my eyes because if I didn't have my eyes I couldn't write, read, or see. It is very important to have eyes. I like my eyes very much. They are dark brown. My eyes are round and small. I think my eyes are the best.

Judy A., Grade 3, Aldrin ES

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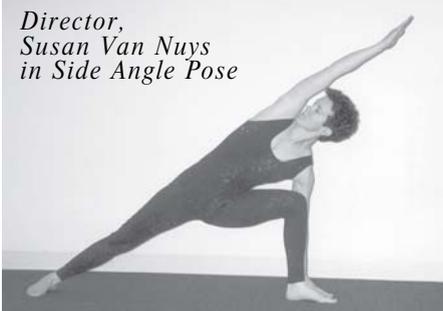
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

Winter Has Come and Gone Once Again

Once again winter has come

Soft, cold snowflakes as they melt on my cheeks

A vast distance of a white, thick blanket you see for miles and miles

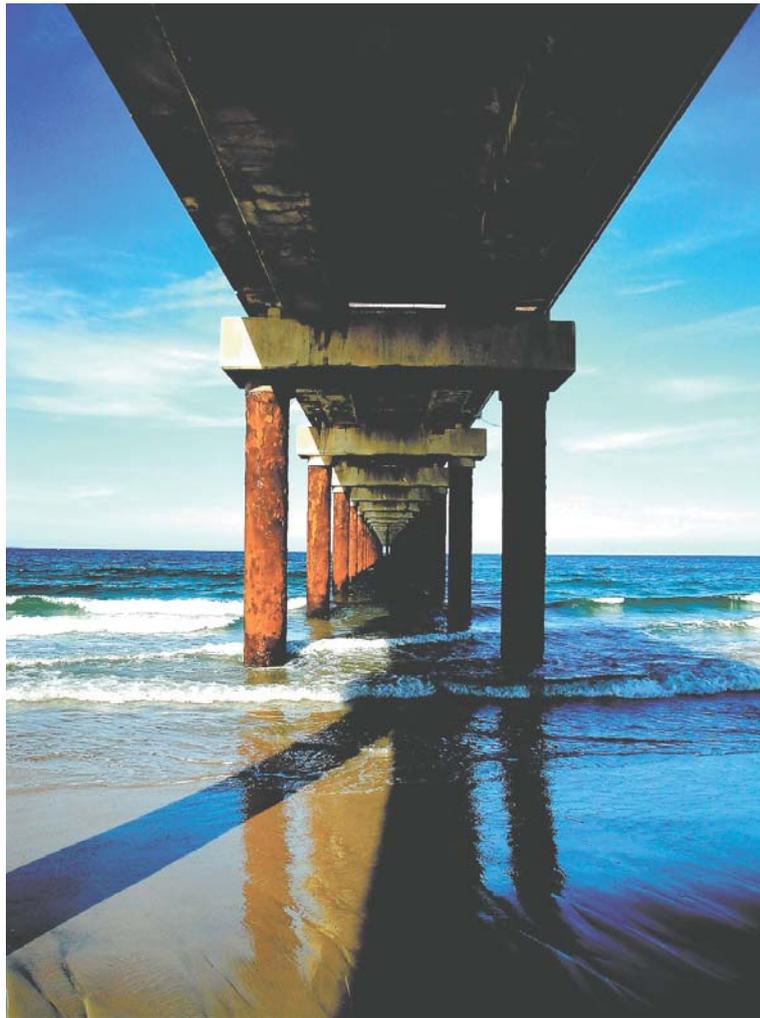
Merry carolers spreading the Christmas spirit

A Christmas tree full of glistening ornaments

The Crystal Ball drops and the crowd cheers

It's 2010 and another winter has come and gone again

—SASHINI PASSELA,
6TH GRADE, HUNTERS WOODS ES



Sara Kirsch, South Lakes High School

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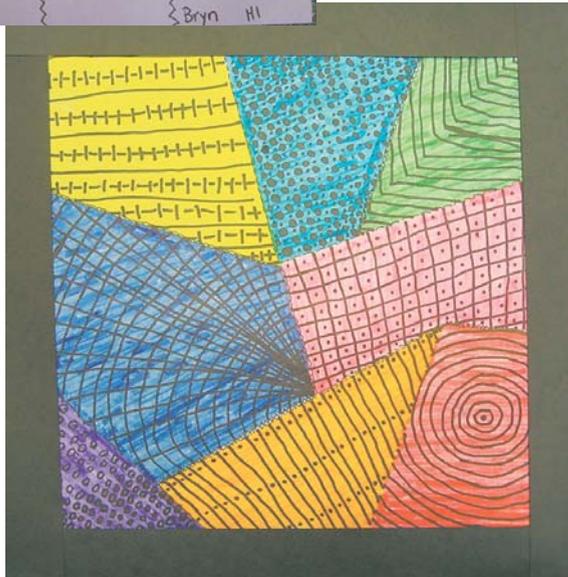
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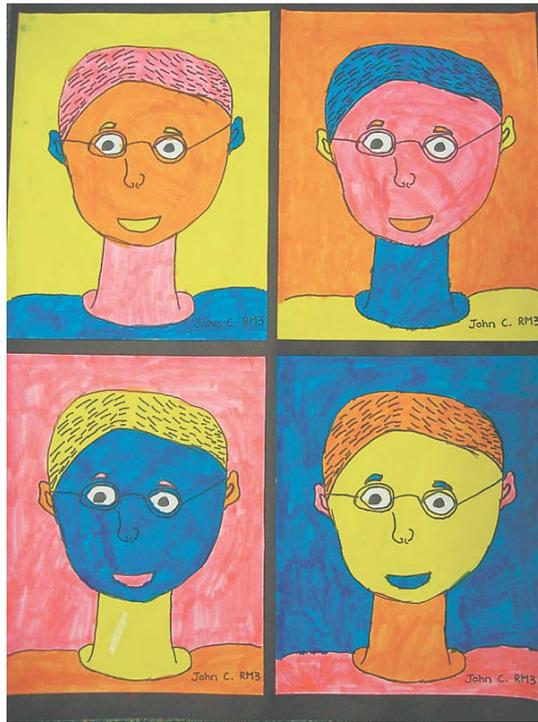
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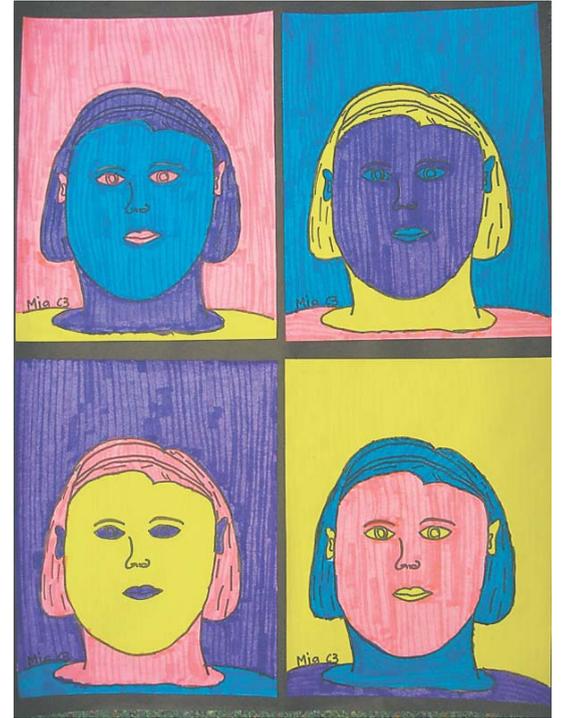
**Bryn Yenesel,
1st Grade,
Sunrise
Valley El-
ementary**



**Ryan Smith,
4th Grade,
Sunrise Valley
Elementary**



**John Carney, 3rd Grade, Sunrise Valley
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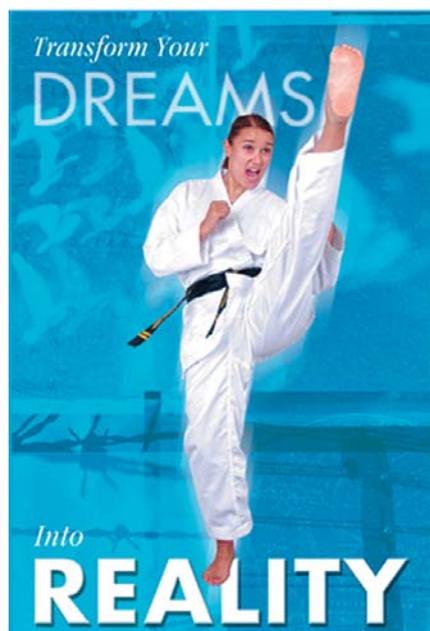
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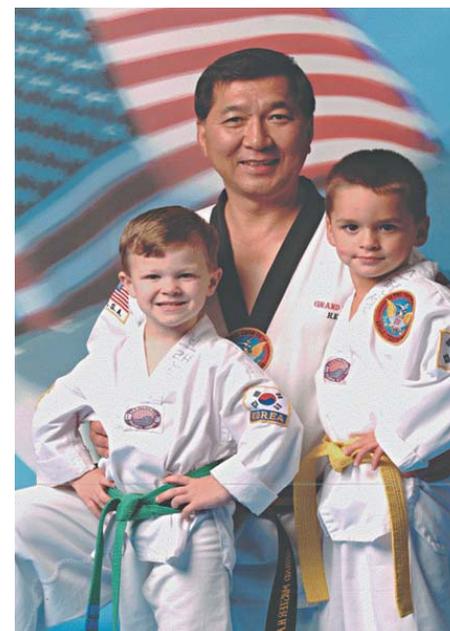


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Writing Thumps

By EMMA VOLPE
SOUTH LAKES HS/12TH GRADE

The pen hits the paper with a thump in the quiet room
 It skates up and down the white sheet
 Flowing, and rolling like ocean waves
 The author takes it back, and just thinks
 They hook up their heart to this pen
 And allow it to take over
 They're documenting themselves
 Expressing their being
 Love erupts through their words
 Fear plummets from the pen's pressure
 Birth is given to a story
 A piece of the author lies on the paper
 They look at it and smile
 They smirk with satisfaction
 Final touches are made
 The swift movement of their quill
 A signature to stamp the creature
 The fingers hit the keys with a thump in the quiet room
 Another author reveals their story
 Though their methods are different
 Their intentions are identical
 This one also leaves themselves on the screen
 They type away at a rapid pace
 Exposing their strengths
 Illuminating their weaknesses

SEE SOUTH LAKES. PAGE 13

TERRASET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GALLERY



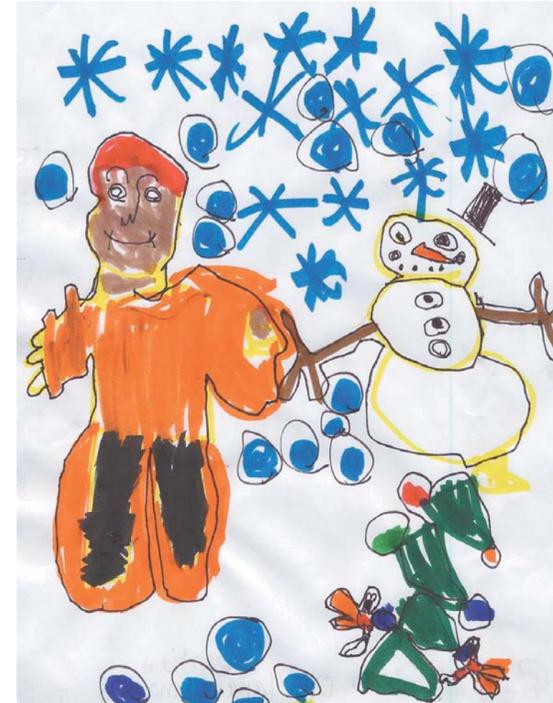
Benjamin F., Grade 1



William I., Grade 4



Victoria R., Grade 1



Sebastian O., Grade 1



Zakira M., Grade 2



Cameron S., Grade 3

FROM PAGE 12

Though their story is not meant to
 It shows the author more than the characters
 The mask can be seen through
 And all their make-up is washed away
 Both writers sit in adjacent rooms
 Pouring their souls into their work
 Aiming towards a common goal
 To craft a tale
 Though they both reach this goal
 It's not in the way they'd presume
 A tale is crafted
 But not an original one
 Their own tale is shadowed within
 Though they do not see it
 One lays down their pen
 The other stops the keys
 They're done for the day
 The writers walk away with thumps from the quiet rooms

I Am My Own Writer

By JORDAN CLARK
SOUTH LAKES HS/12TH GRADE

And I listen to the clicking of the keys around me,
 My mind starts to race and my fingers miss the correct keys.
 Presented with a new life situation,
 Putting my dreams and aspirations into my characters.
 That's life.
 Moving through the words,

SEE SOUTH LAKES. PAGE 19

At the Holiday Season
Our Thoughts Turn Gratefully to Those
Who Have Made Our Progress Possible.

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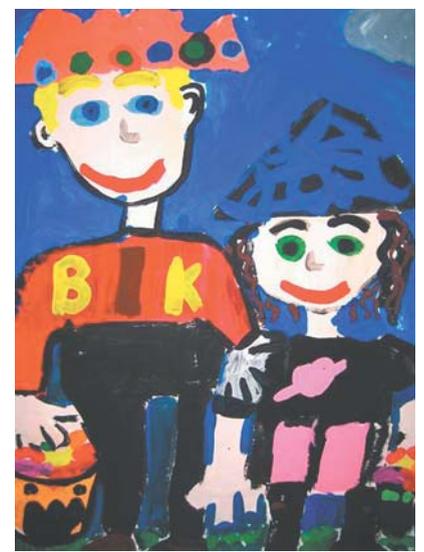
ARMSTRONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Nora Welland, 1st Grade



Leah Brown, 1st Grade



Imani O'Neal, 1st Grade



Allison Brown, 5th Grade



Megan Wolfe, 1st Grade



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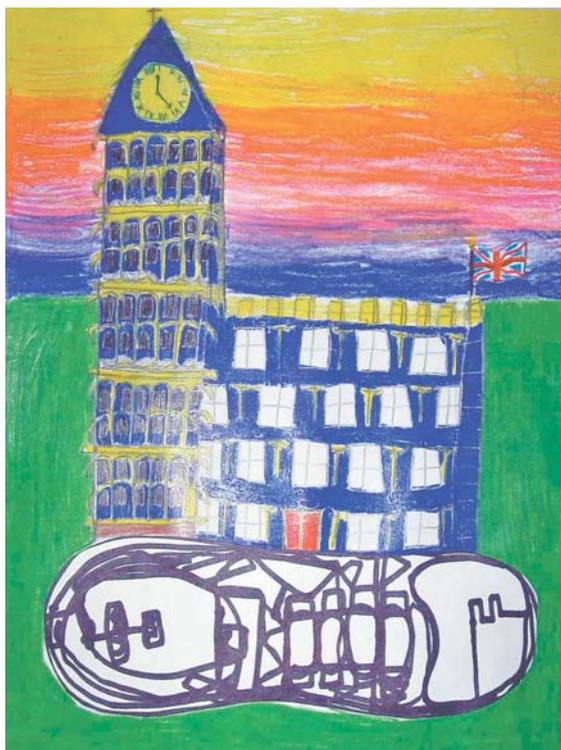
Students' Art on Display



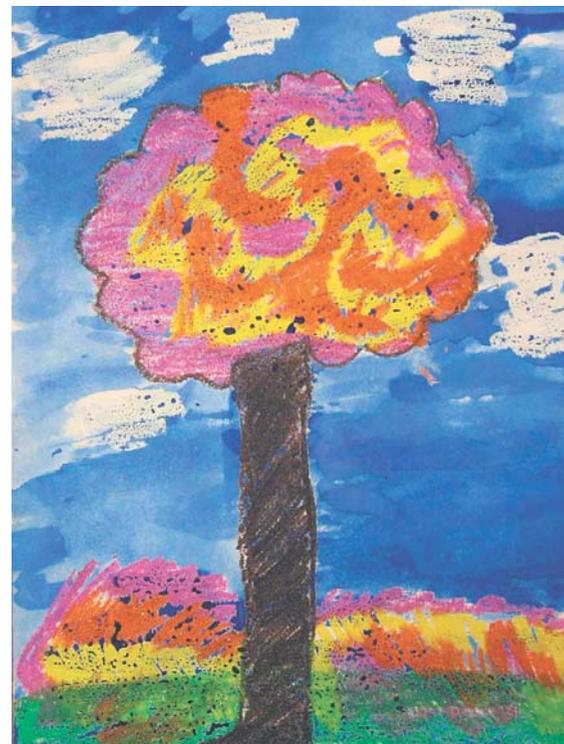
Brandon Pearl, 5th Grade



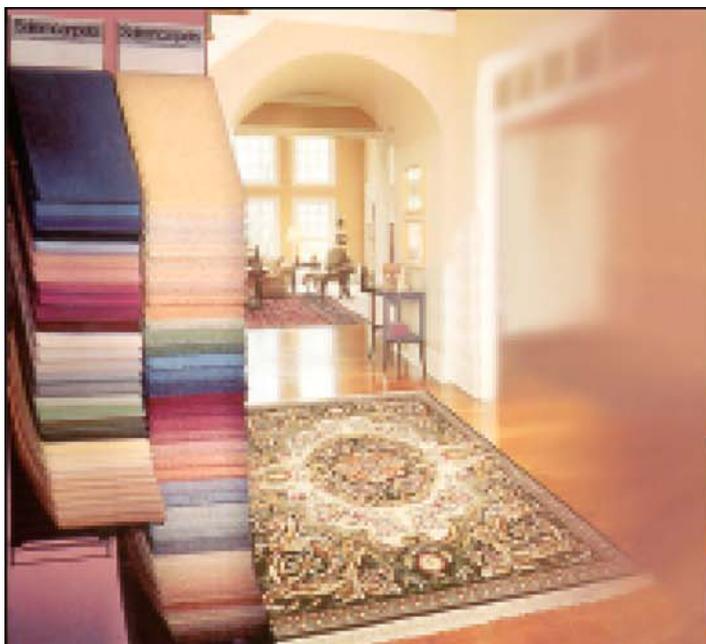
Bryce Kaplan, 2nd Grade



Jodie Beaumont, 5th Grade



Lisa Carlen, 1st Grade



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Allison R., Grade 1



Tess R., Grade 2

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19th-	9:45 am	&	1:45 pm
22nd-	9:45 am	&	1:45 pm
25th-	9:45 am	&	1:45 pm

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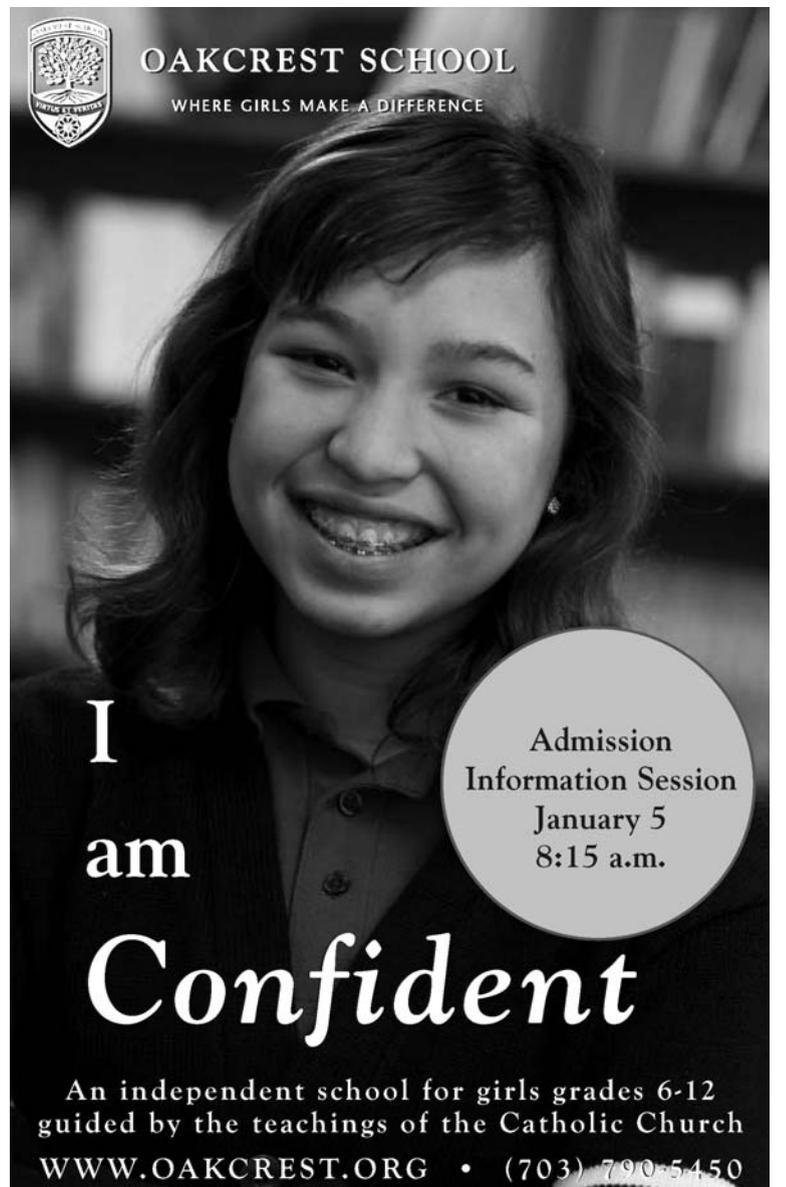
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Voice

FROM PAGE 4

learned vocabulary and how to read. I was the only one in the ESOL program and I had no one to talk to except my two teachers and my cousin. A couple of months went by and I observed how Stephanie changed. At the beginning, translating seemed like a game to her, she enjoyed it. Two months in and I could tell she wanted to call it quits. I didn't want to have to ask her questions or have her speak for me anymore but I couldn't do it on my own. It was aggravating not being able to communicate with words; all I could do were gestures like a small child.

I was in Mr. Henry's class for math. Mathematics was easy and I was the quickest in the class. The only thing I dreaded were the word problems, those I had to ask to be translated by Stephanie. I remember the day that she had to go on a field trip with chorus and I had to go to school alone. At first everything seemed to be going well. I went to my morning class with Mrs. Thomson and then I went back to the classroom for math. I was pleased to see that there were no word problems so I finished in a flash. Then it was lunch time and as we lined up to

go to the cafeteria as a class. I was at the end of the line and it was not moving because my teacher was reprimanding some children in the front who were misbehaving. Little did he know that the extra two minutes it took us to leave the classroom changed my entire perspective on life.

There were four boys in front of me who spoke amongst themselves but kept looking at me. I knew one of them spoke broken down Spanish and I was tempted to ask him why they kept staring, but I was afraid so I didn't. One scrawny boy took a step closer and said one word. My mind searched through the vocabulary that I had been taught by Mrs. Anderson but found no match. "What?" I asked shyly. He said it a little louder this time and the boys behind him began to snicker. Another boy took two steps forward and said another word that I did not understand and they all laughed again. The remaining two kept chanting the words and I knew that they were mocking me. I bit my lip so hard that I tore the skin and tasted a drop of blood on my tongue. I didn't want to cry, I couldn't allow myself to cry in front of them. The line finally began to move and Mr. Henry hushed everyone. As my class silently made its way downstairs I asked to go to the clinic.

The nurse was an elderly

woman who looked warm and welcoming. Once I was inside the tiny room I said, "Hello, my name is Rocio. I want to go home." She asked me if I was feeling ill, I lied and shook my head yes. I placed my hands on my stomach and made a face. "Ahhh," she said, "your stomach hurts." "Yes. I want to go home," I replied. She took my temperature and scribbled something down on the clipboard in front of her. Her fingers glided through the keypad as she dialed my uncle's cell phone number. I was told to wait in the office for my uncle to come get me. When he arrived so did my language, "estas enferma?" he asked, and I had to lie to him also; yes, I felt sick.

That night, I grabbed my books, my vocabulary lists, and all my worksheets to review them. I yearned to learn but the desire was much stronger than before. I did not just want to be able to communicate. I wanted to be able to defend myself. My aunt had told me to study hard because my words would become my weapons. I followed her advice and learned English in six months. By fifth grade I was in the classroom the entire day, just like everyone else. I had friends and I could read and write at fifth grade level. I could rely on myself and I regained my confidence and most importantly... my voice.

FLOORS & MORE

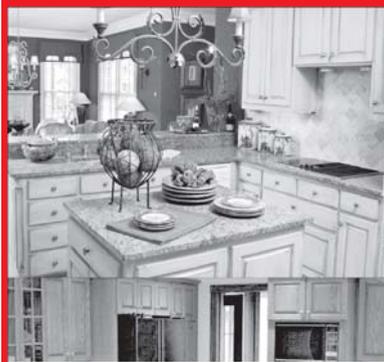
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SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL POETRY

FROM PAGE 13

I slowly get through temporary mind blocks.
My mind lets loose.
Moving through the story with sufficient ease.
I continue on.
I am presented with character flaws,
Not only of the characters I created but also of my own.
Describing them to the best of my ability,
Then finding something about myself in the hidden meaning.
I use no discretion, I do not hold back.
I write from my heart,
Using feelings I couldn't before explain,
Expressing them through fast typing and over exaggeration,
I somehow find it soothing.
For this is what I was meant to do.
I've tried for years to forget the past,
But it always comes back through my words.
Unintentionally I write the things that have hurt me the most,
And yet it still shows who I really am.
These words define me.
I am nothing more than a writer,
Trying to move through past mistakes,
Which only begins to lead to more frustration.
So I just stop.
And I listen to the clicking of the keys around me.

I. Hate. You.

BY FRANNY GOODING-SILVERWOOD
SOUTH LAKES HS/12TH GRADE

I wish I hadn't said that.
I can see her frustration masking the tears that creep into her eyes like dew drops appearing on a waking blade of emerald grass.
God I wish I hadn't uttered those words.
It's amazing how her kind words of pink compassion and our endless memories like an eternal scrapbook can be erased by three. simple. words.
Three simple, dull, meaningless words, that together have the power to change the course of a violently raging river.
They can make a ship disappear straight out of the water, plunging into the depths of the dark cerulean un-known.
They can drop a plane straight out of the sky like a bird rendered motionless by the cold steel bullet from an unknown rifle.
They can stop a high-speed train charging at the zenith of its speed, untouchable by the surrounding air, dead in its tracks.

SEE SOUTH LAKES, PAGE 20

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The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra Board of Directors
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SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL POETRY

FROM PAGE 19

That power, that clout, that censure, came from
 my ugly dry catacomb of a mouth.

I am recklessly in possession of a weapon I can no
 longer operate,

Yet the trigger is wrapped by my own detached
 and trembling fingers.

Disarm my spitting irrepressible revolver; three
 words, sharp and lethal, have shot my target down

No Control

BY CASSIE MILLER
 SOUTH LAKES HS/12TH GRADE

There's a book somewhere in my head,

Floating amongst the worries and the dreams.

I can't seem to get the words from mind to manu-
 script.

I've tried everything from handstands to stomping

Around like a troubled toddler.

So many words, so little time and much yet to do.

Deadlines inflict a strangely familiar feeling of anxi-
 ety.

I dread doing my other work,

But I feel panicked if I continue writing.

If I finish it won't I bring more pain to people's
 lives? Will I bring pain if I don't finish?

I dangle my fingers, expertly, over the keyboard
 and instantly,

Flashes of dark scenes fill my head instead of words.

First, a husband and wife fighting side by side in
 the never-ending

Struggle between good and evil.

Then, I'm stormed onto a gory and horrific scene

of a battlefield strewn with men and boys alike.

One of the bleeding bodies calls out to me, at least
 I thought he did.

He made a last request of me to tell his wife that
 he loves her.

I move to answer but am jolted to another

Vision before I find my voice.

The next vision is a beautiful forest that

Has just been through a rainstorm, because every-
 thing

Is still dripping, but the sun is brightly shining

Through the undergrowth.

Flowerbuds are beginning to re-open,

Showing off their vibrant colors.

Creatures are beginning to stir, beginning to con-
 tinue

on their way as if nothing had occurred.

Just as quickly as I had been thrown into this vi-
 sion of beauty,

I was thrust from it to another depressing scene.

The colors went from bright to dull,

Green to gray and brown.

This was the same forest I had just been in,

now it was its own battlefield.

Not on the surface so much, but underneath the
 rubble

You know those roots were trying to

Revive the trees to which they were

Connected to.

Just as I reached out to what was green,

Not 2 minutes ago,

I was forced into the worst vision of all.

I was back at my computer but the screen was
 blank.

I sat there in utter shock.

The many days I had spent on this stupid assign-
 ment,

Were all for nought.

And suddenly I was out of my head and back into
 reality.

My story was back on the screen a foot from my
 face.

Maybe I'm not meant to write today.

Maybe I can't just force the words on the page.

I guess I don't have as much

Control as I thought I did.



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What are you thankful for?

I am thankful for mom because she takes care of me. My mom always cooks for me. My Mom always plays with me. And mom is the best mom I ever had.

— CHADDWICK

Your Favorite Animal

My favorite animal is a cheetah. I have a puppet stuffed animal. It is a cheetah. I like to play with it and ride my razor scooter with my stuffed animal cheetah. I like to play the recorder with my cheetah. My cheetah is like a good friend, he always listens to me.

—JAMAL, 3RD GRADE

My favorite animal is a rhino because he is fast, strong and big and has a big horn. His color is grey. When he runs he stomps. Rhinos break everything with their horns. Their horn color is white. Rhinos are too, too strong. Rhin's are so fast nobody can beat them. Their bodies are strong. Rhinos are tough.

—HASSAN, 3RD GRADE

Your Favorite Gift

My favorite gift my mom gave me was my baby sister named Aiysha. I didn't have any brothers or sisters. I help my mom and dad with my little sister. My sister likes my toy bear and I share it with her. I put it in her swing when she rests. I like reading my books to my baby sister. I love my sister Aiysha.

— CHYNA, 4TH GRADE

The best gift I can give my mom and dad is cleaning up after my dog Bandit. I will clean the mess on the carpet. Bandit went plop on the carpet. He is a bad dog when he does this! It shows that I am nice to my mom and dad.

—ROBERT, 4TH GRADE

The best gift I have ever received was a transformer. My transformer is Octimus Prime. It is blue and red and transforms into a truck. He has a gun and is taller than other people. Octimus Prime is the leader of the Autobos. My cousins Madeline and Gwendy gave this to me one Christmas. I play with this toy every day.

—JOSHUA M., 3RD GRADE

Your Favorite Toy

My new favorite toy is a penguin. It is a stuffed animal. I named the penguin Leah. It has a cheerleader dress. My sister saw it at sears and told my mom that I would love it. Leah sleeps in my bed with me. Leah has pink skin. Leah's hair is blonde and she has pigtailed. I play at home with Leah and with my brother. We play hide and seek with Leah. I am so happy that my sister found this penguin for me.

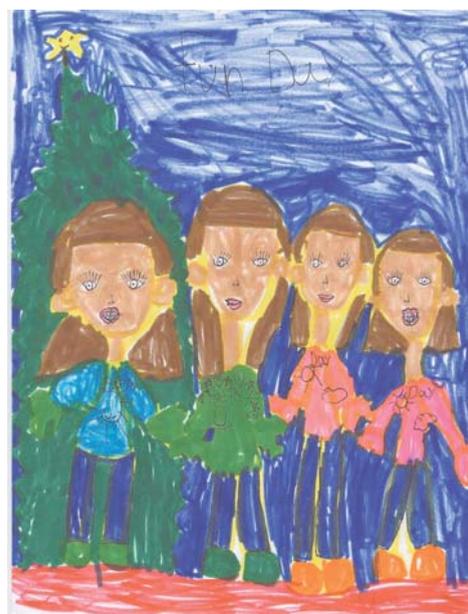
—LESLY G., 5TH GRADE



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Oil's Well That Reads Well



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

In the pantheon of things (subjects) with which I have absolutely no knowledge (and even less interest) are cars and more specifically – and especially, their repairs. The head of a pin would likely provide sufficient space for that knowledge. So when something as routinely simple as an "Oil" light illuminates on my car's dashboard, my immediate reaction/assessment is "Oh...! Now what do I do?" What little I do know to do, reactive though it may be (as opposed to proactive as it should be), is to consult the owner's manual provided by the dealer/manufacturer. However, since there are 352 pages in that manual, I'm not instinctively able (even though oil begins with the letter "o") to seek and find the answer to my question. That question being, as simply as my limited knowledge can determine is, "What kind of oil do I put in my car's engine?"

Knowing what information I wanted though, did not assist me in finding it as I flipped through the hundreds of color-coded and headline/categorized pages/sections, so I went to the back of the manual, the glossary of terms if you will, to see if the very specification information for which I was looking was somehow identified. Sure enough, it was. Oh boy, was it!

The terms are listed alphabetically so I scanned/flipped the pages until I found the grouping for the letter "O." And there, to my nearly uncontrollable joy, I found the exact answer I was looking for. And found it in such Kenny-level English that I thought it worth mentioning and focusing on as fodder for this week's column. Reading the listings under "Oil," from top to bottom I read, "Oil Changing;" "Identification Symbol;" and then the *pièce de résistance* and the choice I could not actually resist – or believe my eyes – which enabled me to find the answer to my oil question, was printed the following: "What kind of oil do I put in my engine?" Can you believe that? A manual written just for me, and a category/answer to my question that was so perfectly suited to its owner's minuscule level – and total lack – of knowledge, that it prevented even a "Bozo" like me from clowning-up this much-needed repair/replenishment. You can't imagine (although maybe you can) the sheer joy and relief I experienced, when after stressing-up the usual anxiety brought on by these kinds of car-related conundrums (the appearance of an "idiot" light; aptly named), and then holding this voluminous owner's manual in my hands as well with a simple answer apparently not in the offing, that I was able to, in relatively short order, find the answer and find it so obviously stated that, my usual mental anguish concerning this mechanical mishmash was completely eliminated.

When I saw in the owner's manual that the section/page that I needed to get to was in fact the exact question to which I was desperately seeking a simple – and quick – answer, I busted out laughing and said, "Finally, a manual that I can understand."

Simple pleasures for a simple person. Now that's what I'm talking about!

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION



Kelsey Linke/South Lakes High School

Happy Reminiscences

BY KAELE ROSE MURDOCK
SOUTH LAKES HS/11TH GRADE

The slam of the front door was confirmation that I was free and the world was my playground. Early morning meant careful planning, a prison break of sorts for the neighborhood gang. First order of business was Kayla from across the street. A soft tap-tap from me told her it was time to fly the coop. She slipped through the front door, being mindful not to upset the temperamental screen.

We were off together, sprinting toward the field. Beneath us the ground streamed by in a constant blur of color and texture. The first one to the flat rock won! The only problem was that we could never find the flat rock buried in the forest of parched grass. Into the woods we tumbled, down the steep, rocky hill. I always glared back at the mound of dirt, challenging it to a battle of wills, the next time we faced each other. By ten o'clock we were dirt spattered bandits, or perhaps wild cats, having a fierce battle in the deepest and most dangerous reach of the jungle. The age old themes of love

and betrayal, death, redemption, and re-birth raged forever on in the delicate psyche of our childhood minds. There was so much adventure to be had in one small section of woods, so many corners of imagination to explore. We ran wild through the field beyond our houses, untamable and treacherous. We walked the tightrope of best friends and worst enemies, reality and the innermost folds of our own minds.

Next to be sprung from his cell was Matt, the only boy and my first best friend. He was the last consistent member of our motley crew. He grew up in a personal hell, relying on Kayla and me to be his escape route to the world of sane persons. Serious family issues posed serious mental ones, sending our friend into a sad, unstoppable downward spiral. The three of us would sprawl about in his mother's garden for a few hours and then our small procession would break for lunch. We'd reunite in the later part of the day, our Buddha bellies full of a hot meal, bodies rearing to go. Age had no room to matter in our "family," nor did gender, or race. Thick as thieves we were, with nowhere to go and no one to stop us from getting there. Time was our only enemy.

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