

INKSTERS COMPETITIVE WRITER'S GROUP OF SECOND LIFE

INKsters 2007 May Anthology



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MAY 1, 2007 INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY

REVIVE THE COMMUNIST MAY DAY WITH STORIES ABOUT YOUR EFFORTS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH YOUR HANDS AND MINDS.

Avatars Unite!

Avatars of Second Life, I salute you. For too long have you borne the burden of Second Life's labors. It is you who have done all the flying and teleporting. It is you who have done all the creating. It is you who have carried the heavy loads of inventory. It is you who have spent the long tedious hours sitting in camping chairs! How long have you stood on posing stands while you are poked and prodded, stretched and shrunk? All the time your capitalist masters have reaped the Lindens that are rightfully yours. They have grown rich and fat sitting behind their keyboards while the pixels of sweat roll you're your brows.

But now the revolution has begun! The mini-maps run red with the blood of the capitalists. Word has reached us that thousands of avatars have risen up and refused to follow the commands of their masters. These heroes of the Revolution have stood still, refusing to move when commanded to do so. They have cast off their heavy inventories, leaving the capitalist dogs to spend their wealth replacing it. They have refused to be the eyes of the fat cats – showing them only the same gray existence that is avatar servitude. Communication lines among the Czars and Kaisers have been sabotaged! They cannot organize to stop us!

Rise up, I say. Now is the time to throw off our shackles and create the Avatars' Paradise. Let the banner of Revolution be raised! Let no one behind a keyboard dictate our lives. The Avatars shall come to control the Servers. Rise up! The Revolution is here!

By: Oboe Riederer

MAY 2, 2007 ULTRAVIOLET AWARENESS MONTH

YES, THE OUTSIDE STILL EXISTS. STEP AWAY FROM THE COMPUTER AND GO GET A TAN, AND THEN TELL US ABOUT THE SUNBURN YOUR MAIN CHARACTER RECEIVED FROM THIS BAD ADVICE.

MAY 3, 2007 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

SHOULD JOURNALISTS BE SHOT? OR PUT IN JAIL? CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE FOR SOME SCARY STORIES ON WHAT WRITERS FACE IN TYRANNICAL PLACES.

Should journalists be shot or jailed? Well, that depends. I would occasionally like to shoot Ann Coulter. Does that count? I don't think I could countenance executions, but perhaps strong tape over some mouths would be welcome. There should be a certain accountability that comes with being a journalist. While I would defend their rights with my last keystroke, I would hesitate to say that there is perfect freedom without responsibility accompanying those rights.

By: Lady Hightower

MAY 4, 2007 BETTER SLEEP MONTH

SKIPPING SLEEP TO PLAY SECOND LIFE? HOW DOES THAT AFFECT YOU IN REAL LIFE?

Must admit the topic has caught me by surprise.

Much as I hate to say "I" this much in a couple of sentences- it best expresses the random rambling process of menudo in my brain at the moment.

Attempting to focus, gather any grain of a worthy honest emotion explainable in a coherent sentence is difficult because some noob guy is bumping me over and over again to get my attention with his stick figure avatar where I'm attempting to write next to your building. So.. I'm moving - going home to my little spot where the uninvited can't intrude. Hopefully this will improve my brain flow or make me sound smarter than I am. Doubt it but theres always hope right? lol.

Again, "I" , am not on track regarding the subject you asked people to write about.. then again I am.. its these random things that keep us interested in what will happen in game next.

By: Zapfire Jewel

MAY 5, 2007 CINQUO DE MAYO

PUT ON YOUR SOMBRERO AND WRITE ABOUT CHIPS AND SALSA AND
TEQUILA AND ALL THINGS MEXICO.

MAY 6, 2007 NATIONAL NURSES DAY

YOU GOTTA ADMIT THOSE STOCKINGS WERE A MUCH SEXIER IDEA THAN THE SCRUBS WITH KITTEN PATTERNS STAMPED ON THEM. C'MON, WHAT DO WE REALLY WANT OUT OF NURSES?

In the fast paced world of medicine and technology, a nurse is an essential person. The Doctor will make the diagnosis and they are who we ultimately seek when we are feeling ill, but without a Nurse, a Doctor is only half a team.

There are millions of questions that need to be answered, data that needs to be collected, statistics that need to be gathered before a Doctor can even start the tedious process of diagnosing a person. The Nurse is the person that every patient has to confide in. The Nurse is the person that every patient gets to know and anticipates seeing before the Doctor ever graces them with their presence. The Nurse is the person who offers reassurance that all will go well and that the Doctor will be in shortly.

While most of us don't often consider our health being directly affected by another person, unless that person has directly given us a virus with which we must now suffer, it might do us some good to think about the benefits we would receive from having an attractive Nurse attending to us long before the Doctor can make time to diagnose us.

Upon first glance of that hourglass figure that so many of us envision when we think of Nurses in tight uniforms, the heart will surely pick up its pace. Carrying that extra blood to our organs can't be a bad thing. Next, we will surely breathe a bit deeper, bringing even more oxygen into our systems. While our blood pressure might rise a bit, along with our temperature as that attractive Nurse bends over to insert the thermometer, these numbers are surely negotiable and won't be seen as much of a hinderance.

An attractive Nurse in a low cut top might even get a man to admit that he's smoked a few extra cigarettes or not been entirely faithful with his medication. All she need do is threaten him with a spanking if he's a bad boy and lies to her. She can procure information from him faster, go about doing her job quicker, and the patient could see his Doctor in record time.

In fact, the only downfall to having gorgeous Nurses attending to the public would be that the emergency rooms would always be full. But then again, aren't they already?

By: Julia Sutter



FIGURE 1: JULIA SUTTER'S PHOTO FOR NURSES DAY

Today marks the sixth year I've been in the same bed. Same walls, same window, same drapes, same worn out remote controll, and yes, same nurse. Now, having been here six years, I have grown accustomed to this environment. I know every spot on the wall, every person that walks by my window, every button that sticks on the remote (and how to fix it) and every little pet peeve of nurse Mildred. And yes, after six years I've had to find ways to make these tiny details continue to entertain me. It is difficult, but I do manage.

Nurse mildred provides most of my entertainment. She is easily irritated, and this adds up to quite a bit of amusement. Whenever she is bothered she makes the sort of hollow grunt. At first I was bothered by this, but now I know that it means that after six years I retain the ability to get under her skin. I've looked forward to hearing it every day.

First thing every morning I find a way to lose something. Nurse Mildred is very tidy and as far as I can tell has never lost a thing in her life. The process of losing something every morning is not easy. You see, I am bed-bound and I really don't have too many possessions to lose. This is the challenge. Of course it is up to nurse Mildred to find this object and return it to it's right place. She grunts as she searches the tiny area that i inhabit. As she grunts, I give just a hint of a smile so as not to let her know that this was my plan.

At lunch time, I make sure to place my order with her incorectly. Then, when she returns I claim that I specifically asked for whatever it is that I did not ask for, and exclaim "this happens every day! Every day, the wrong order!" This is more a long term project so that she believes her memory is fading.

What makes today different is that she walked into my room and grabbed the remote from beneith my feet and handed it right to me. At lunch, without asking, she brought me exactly what I had intended to order. Upon placing the tray at my bedside she said to me in a soft voice, as if not to let others hear "Today will be my last day at this hospital. They're transfering me. Good luck with the new nurse."

By: Epiben Johnin

MAY 7, 2007 CORRECT POSTURE MONTH

YOU TYPE AND TYPE AND TYPE. DOES ANYBODY SMACK YOU ON THE BACK OF THE HEAD AND SAY, "SIT UP!" SHOULD THEY?

Macy knew what the very best thing about being tall was this—simply walking. She found great pleasure gliding slowly through a crowded room, her broad shoulders pulled back, their sharp shoulder blades straining to kiss in the center of her back, her full breasts pressed forward. Macy feels eyes in the crowd following her; she knows they are thinking, "how tall is that girl?" Her body is centered perfectly over her hips, and her back is straight and strong.

If you listen carefully you'll hear Macy say softly, "excellent" while she walks through the crowd. Her lips curve up into a secret smile. Seven men fall in love with Macy as she passes. Not because of her full, ripe bosom, and nor because of her winsome smile. No, it is that straight, strong back. One by one the men's eyes follow her, their lips open slightly; they lean forward in their chairs. Macy does not notice, nor does she seem to care.

The men sigh, and she slips away from their gaze. Her posture, perfect. Her beauty, overwhelming.

By: Zayante Hegel

INKsters writing competition entry for 4/7/2007
Correct Posture Month

Winkie Merlin and his Magical Posture Parlor

It was a beautiful, if forced, sunset over the sea at Fisherman's Cove when Winkie Merlin took his evening constitutional on the beach. Anticipating pleasant Numbakulla puzzles that the morrow would bring, Winkie's gaze was on the horizon as he trudged along. All of a sudden his toe caught an object in the sand and he flipped forward twice and fell flat on his face. A burst of bling from the object caught his eye and, curious, he picked it up and discovered that it was an ornate lamp, but not just any lamp, a beautiful creation constructed from a single prim,

Winkie rubbed the lamp with glee, knowing that he had something unique in his hands. The lamp glowed all 256 RGB values in quick succession, then emitted smoke particles and a huge genie appeared. The genie intoned, "I am the djinn of the single prim lamp. By freeing me you are entitled to one wish." Winkie, working through his astonishment, said, "One wish? Don't I get three wishes?" The genie replied, "Sorry, only room for one wish in around 400 words, rub the lamp again another day."

Thinking long and hard, Winkie made this wish: "I want to be able to carry things from here to Real Life." The genie waved his arm awkwardly backward in a manner that suggested severe spinal injury and replied, "Your wish is granted but you may only take one item, an item which you are currently carrying." Winkie had a boxed set of assorted pose balls with him and, clutching it tightly on his left upper leg, signed off.

It was 6am on a Monday morning when Walter Merlman woke up and was delighted to find that very box of pose balls on his night table. Thinking how to best capitalize on his good fortune, he quit his job at Tim Horton's, emptied his bank account, and opened "Merlin's Magical Posture Parlor" with the proceeds. He amazed his

customers, providing every posture they could possibly want from Model05, a pouting, come-on stance, to GeekTalk, hands extended as if operating an invisible typewriter.

Walter's fame and fortune were short-lived, unfortunately. Back in Second Life, J. Edgar Linden got word of this event and, declaring it to be a violation of the TOC, dispatched agent Jack Bauerhug to deal with the problem. Bauerhug, a master scripter who once designed and build a nuclear particle emitter in a single hour, tp'd to Walter's shop and introduced a virus which quickly spread through the pose balls. All of a sudden, instead of ManlyStance, the customer would get F:Cuddle, or worse, a simple pose for trying on clothes would yield NekoPounce.

Bankrupt and shunned by RL society, Walter/Winkie signed on, carefully carried the lamp to his flower hut, hid it well, and planned how best to utilize its fabulous powers on another day.

- by Nebbisk Oh



FIGURE 2: NEBBISK OH'S PHOTO FOR CORRECT POSTURE MONTH

Correct Posture Month

There is no doubt that today's youth need a lesson in correct posture. Far too many have that hunched over look with hands held in front of them - thumbs twitching! Alas, real life does not have an animation override that can cause our youth to sit properly. As my mother did with me, I will use a book to help teach proper posture.

1. Turn off the video game.
2. Get a book - preferably, one that is not related to a video game. My mother had us walk with a book balanced on our head. This was, of course, a perfectly good waste of a book! Instead, hold the book in your hand and walk to a nearby couch.
3. Sit on the couch. Position yourself so that your back is supported by a comfy cushion and your head rests against one arm of the couch.
4. Kick off your shoes.
5. Curl your legs under you, stretch them out straight on the couch, or place your feet flat on the couch with your knees bent. This will allow you to further recline against the comfy cushion.
6. Open the book and begin to read.
7. Continue to read for at least 30 minutes. Try to extend this time each day until you are able to continue for an hour.

You are guaranteed to feel better after only one session!

By: Oboe Riederer

May 8, 2007 V-E Day

NOTHING LIKE STAMPING OUT NAZIISM FOR EMOTIONAL TRUE STORIES AND FUNNY OBNOXIOUS STORIES. PICK ONE AND GO.

INKsters writing competition, 5/8/2007

Aryan

Geschäftsführer Raginmund Gottschalk looked out over the miles of track which radiated in a pattern suggesting the Iron Cross from his Detention and Assignment Camp, his pure Aryan heart bursting with pride. True, he was a bit swarthy and had dark hair, but so did the beloved Führer! Raginmund thought: HIS camp; HIS ultimate responsibility; HIS power over life and death. The desperate human chattel who found themselves delivered into his hands were held over for a day or two in uncertain misery. They were then stripped of their clothing and valuables, parceled out into chokingly dense railroad cars, and shipped to fates unknown... unknown, except of course to Herr Gottschalk.

Raginmund was startled from his musings by a commotion in the courtyard. This was unheard of! Any of those Jewish schweinhunds who made a fuss were summarily dealt with by his gang of Wehrmacht thugs. Goose-stepping outside ("Form is gewichtig, discipline is gewichtig, setting an example is gewichtig," the Party advised), Gottschalk saw an old decrepit woman shriek hysterically at two guards who were trying to subdue her. Joining the fray, he manhandled the woman over to a car that he knew was marked for the extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. As he brusquely shoved her in amongst the mass of naked bodies, she stared intently at him and pressed a small object, only God knows how she avoided its confiscation, into his hand.

As the railroad disappeared from sight, Raginmund opened his fist and was bemused to see a Mogen David, Star of David, on its casing – it was a mezuzah, a little box made of metal, which contains a selection from the Holy Scriptures. Literally "doorpost," observant Jews place mezuzot on most door frames to signify that God and the Torah will enter this room.

The German was enraged. How dare this doomed woman force him to handle a holy Jewish object? And especially one which was so similar to a piece of jewelry he wore around his neck, except of course his bauble wasn't a mezuzah -- why, it even had a good loyal Nazi swastika on its casing! Shaking with fury, Raginmund smashed the mezuzah to bits, intending to consign the evil Jewish words inside to the eternal flames of hell.

When he finally saw the mezuzah's contents, Raginmund started trembling for a different reason. The old woman's relic was no ordinary artifact; instead of scripture it contained a tiny rolled-up photograph, identical to the one inside the little case he wore around his neck! The photo was of a dark-haired man proudly displaying an infant in blood-stained swaddling clothes for all the world to see. Gottschalk had always wondered why the man had long braids and wore a white shawl across his shoulders... and of course, who was the infant? A chill ran down his spine as he read the inscription on the back of the old woman's copy: "Never forget, my son, never forget."

- by Nebbisk Oh



FIGURE 3: NEBBISK OH'S PHOTO FOR V-E DAY

Lessons from VE Day

The true VE day dawned June 6 1944 with the Normandy Invasions. In 1994 I visited the beaches at Normandy. It was just luck that it was the 50th anniversary year. I was in Europe and had the chance to join in a tour of the famous beaches, the cities of Caen and St. Mere Eglise, and some of the museums. It is heart-stopping to stand at the water's edge and look across the wide expanse the invaders had to cross at Omaha beach. There is no tree or boulder to hide you. You stare hundreds of meters ahead at the hills where the Germans pounded the allies with artillery. What courage it took to walk out of the landing craft and through death's door! To the left of Omaha Beach, the British and Canadians were doing the same at Juno, Sword and Gold Beaches. On the right, the Americans at Utah beach caught a lucky break when a current carried them to a spot where German resistance was weakest. Luck proved more valuable than planning.

I visited the American Cemetery at Normandy. Row after row of white crosses and Stars of David set in a beautiful green spot. It's quiet there. I wanted to walk past each marker and say thank you – but there are too many. Instead, I found one marker with a soldier from my home state. I thanked him. I wondered about him. Was he a farm boy? Was he a city boy? Did he leave a grieving wife? Did he leave a grieving fiancée? Did his mother ever visit him here? I looked around at the stones. Every one of those questions had someone here for whom the answer was yes.

Lesson One from VE Day and the Greatest Generation: The price of Victory is high.

I have also visited Berlin, where VE day had its sunset. I know someone who was in the Army. He has a set of orders authorizing him to travel to Berlin. They are printed in French, Russian and English and have the American flag at the top. They state that he is authorized to travel in connection with "the occupation of Berlin." They are dated in 1982 – almost forty years after the war. He explained that soldiers assigned to Berlin more than 30 days still received the WWII Army of Occupation Medal. The war wasn't over. No treaty had concluded the war. Germany and Berlin were still divided. Soviet soldiers still drove through West Berlin to exercise their occupation rights. American soldiers went into East Berlin in uniform as one of the occupying powers. It wasn't until 1990 and the Two Plus Four Treaty that the war ended and Germany and Berlin were reunified.

VE Day was declared in 1945. Mission accomplished! Germany was defeated. But the Victory was really not yet won. The war simply moved into "cold war" mode. American soldiers stayed in Berlin as part of the "occupation" until 1990. VE Day stretched from 1944 to 1990.

Lesson Two from VE Day and the Greatest Generation: Victory does not come quickly.

By: Oboe Riederer

It would soon be over, and the thought terrified the Sergeant. He had fought his way from the beaches of Normandy to the foothills of Bavaria and now, with the war's end so close that he could taste it, he was desperate to return home alive.

The boy cradled the bolt-action rifle in his arms like a puppy he had once owned. That seemed a lifetime ago, even though he was only 13. Like all able-bodied youth, he had been conscripted to defend his country. A tired looking Major with one arm and bad breath had given him the gun and a box of bullets and mumbled something about duty and honour.

The Sergeant pulled the yellowed photograph from his pocket. His heart ached to hold her again, to smell her again, to taste her again. And the child. Sandy hair and large eyes. He would be older now. They would go fishing and do a hundred other things when he got back. They would make up for lost time.

The boy shivered slightly as he sat amid the skeletal ruins of the town hall. He licked the corner of his mouth and could taste the salt from where the previous night's tears had dried. He took a small piece of stale bread from his pocket and put it in his mouth. He chewed slowly and deliberately. Eating too fast always hurt his stomach.

The men spread out as they approached the town square. With gun drawn, the Sergeant inched his way through the rubble. His mouth was pasty and his stomach hurt.

The boy peered out through a hole and watched them as they picked their way through the debris like big green bugs.

The Sergeant crept to the back of the town hall. He squinted as he entered. Dust motes danced in the shafts of light that pierced the building's carcass.

The boy heard crunching stone behind him. He spun about, the rifle shaking in his trembling hands.

The Sergeant only saw a swirling figure and a glint of metal. He squeezed the trigger.

The blast lifted the boy and tossed him backwards like a rag doll. He landed almost gently. The Sergeant approached and stared down at the lifeless face. Sandy hair and large eyes. A tear rolled down the Sergeant's cheek and he could taste the salt.

By: Zak Shepherd (392 words)

MAY 9, 2007 MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

SERIOUSLY. YOU PLAY SECOND LIFE. TELL US ABOUT SANITY AND LUNACY. WE'LL LISTEN.

Mental Health, the accepted social stigma.

When people get sick, they take antibiotics, when you cut yourself; you get a band aid and stick it on, thinking nothing of it. It's your health you're thinking about, so that whole self preservation thing comes into play fairly often. You go to the drugstore and no one thinks twice about it. If you should happen to have a chemical imbalance (Serotonin is the usual suspect), which results in depression or anxiety, current cultural mores have decided that taking medications to re balance your brain is completely unacceptable. In fact, a good number of people will tell you that depression and anxiety simply do not exist. So, on the off chance, you actually are brave enough to get tell your doctor about it, and get on meds, people may say "Hey, you seem happier lately, what happened?"

Ah. Now there is the trap.

Do they understand enough to not have the completely unfounded fear of "crazy people"? Will they judge you if you say that you're on depression or anxiety meds? It's a tough thing to answer. The problem is the social stigma of depression and anxiety is currently completely acceptable. It seems people would prefer you to wallow in your own despair rather than do something about it and make your life (and everyone around you) better. If people would just stop for a moment and look at how stupid they are by judging others with chemical imbalances. What do they think would happen?

Bob: Hey Jane, how are you?

Jane: Oh, a bit depressed today, you know how it is.

Bob is now horrified.

Bob: Excuse me Jane, please step away from me before your infectious bout of crazy infects me.

Jane: I don't....

Bob then runs off screaming.

Depression and anxiety are not the new black plague.

According to PrairiePublic.org*, during the course of a year, 17.5 million Americans suffer from clinical depression. Looking at those numbers makes me think that the people pointing fingers at mental health disorders may have the most to hide.

- site address for statistics

<http://www.prairiepublic.org/features/healthworks/depression/whatis.htm>

By: Karii Matova

Mental Health Month

Neither parent will take credit for my sanity or lack of it. I realized at an early age I was different and nothing I tried to do as I aged seemed to change that.

"Tommy! Stay away from him. He is strange." Perhaps setting his lawn on fire was not the fondest memory to leave a play friends mother. But matches were after all a curiosity to a little boy. The fire truck was amazing as the sirens screamed down the street and neighbours ran outdoors to see the commotion. I brought life to the street and my father brought redness to my ass.

"Sheila! My god! Get away from him and do up that top! You dirty disgusting filthy weird boy!" Stares of disapproval from dear mom and grandma as I made my leap through the narrow window of the bedroom. Bolting as fast as my teenage legs would carry me down the quiet suburban street. Pulling my tee shirt on in my flight as the pensioners next door looked on while tending to their gardening tasks.

"Get up dammit! What are you doing? Stand up now! What is wrong with you?" Father as confused as I to what was going on in my mind as I crawled around the front door of our house. Relinquishing to the pressure of peers and taking part in the experimentation of drugs. Hearing the slow drone of both parents voices in their remarks about my craziness.

"Congratulations to our graduating class and the young men and women about to make their mark on the world." Drunk and disoriented I stumbled on to the stage to receive my diploma. The festivities from the night before still lingering. Trying to focus on the outreached hand offering the rolled up ribboned paper. Falling back on faculty with a final remark for my venture into the world.

"Here even the crazy ones graduate. That is how good our education system is here." Our audience roared and my mark was made.

By: Deeter Decosta

Mental Health Month May 09 2007

Suspended animation is that mental health? If the bubbly remains intact thus psychological safety rules supreme. Recently my workplace was causing stress and as a coping strategy, I uprooted and escaped, I thought for better mental health.

Arrived in new land at dusk, dark immediately. My driver took me out for a drive round the city through the 'go-slows' with four lanes of traffic some driving down the wrong side of the road. It suddenly occurred to me that I had left my past life to escape mayhem and here I was driving around another continent with a man I did not know.

Next day I visited the 'Nanny Market' and was happily walking along in the sunshine through cavernous wedges of dried clay when unexpectedly, I was pushed to one side by an onion barrow boy shouting, 'Ibo! Ibo!' (white man, white man). My eyes flitted from side to side, stall to stall and artefact to... 'meat and two veg' of massive proportions. I had never spied 'crown jewels' like those before! I raised my eyes skywards to erase all memory of the 'offending' article and viewed a very curly headed local with bones through his nose, naked from the waist down! I averted my gaze, of course! The following day I ate my lunch to the sound of gunshots as a general strike began.

A shopping trip was arranged for the end of this first week. I spied a 'statue' lying at the side of the expressway. On the return trip I realised it was a corpse, stoned to death for stealing. It struck me how awful my thoughts had been that this was a fallen statue. A little further along the road we gave to the beggars but only those 'approved' by my driver. I saw a man with no legs, pushed to his begging station in a wheelbarrow by his pal. A victim of Tsetse fly elephantitis of my textbooks long ago. Vultures and Mosquitoes kept me company on my daily constitutionals.

There is much more to tell. This was the start of a Mental Health Month for me....but not as you know it. 'Beam me up Scotty!'

By: Skye Soderstrom



FIGURE 4: SKYE SODERSTROM'S PHOTO FOR MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

MAY 10, 2007 NATIONAL BARBEQUE MONTH

ARE YOU HAVING A VIRTUAL BBQ ON YOUR VIRTUAL PROPERTY HERE IN SL? MAYBE YOU SHOULD. MAYBE YOU SHOULD INVITE US ALL OVER TO YOUR REAL BBQ. STORIES ABOUT YOUR BATTLE WITH THE PROPANE TANK OR SOME SUCH THING PLEASE.

So, my first foray into INKsters, and I choose barbeque? Looks like it! My most vivid barbeque memories revolve around Thanksgiving in Seattle. See, you have to understand that Seattle has a Thanksgiving curse. Some of the worst storms to ever hit the Emerald City have happened on Thanksgiving day, causing major power outages just when we all needed our beloved ovens the most!

What does an intrepid Seattleite do when faced with a blackout and a half-cooked turkey? Haul out the barbeque, of course! Or for those that had sampled those unmentionable Pacific Northwest mushrooms a little too often, it was time to dust off the wee little hibachi and try to prop a 20 pound bird on the grate. Ah, how fondly I recall the billowing clouds of turkey-scented smoke that would rise up over the city as everyone desperately tried to salvage their dinners. Neighbors would come together in their time of need, bringing whatever bits and pieces of the feast they happened to have ready before the storm hit. We'd hunker down in whoever's house had the biggest dining room, light candles, and offer up our charred hunks of bird, half-set jello salads, slightly crunchy mashed taters, and gleefully crack into those special bottles of wine saved for emergencies only.

Nowdays, I'm living in the Midwest, and have not experienced a Thanksgiving day blackout since I left Seattle. Which is ironic, considering the amazing storms I've witnessed living here in Michigan's cow country. But truth be told, I miss those horrible dinners, and the camaraderie that can only come from a random group of people brought together by a common foe. I don't even own a barbeque these days. I suppose I should be thankful that I don't need one anymore, but every year as we enjoy a proper, civilized turkey dinner, I can't help but think back to those wonderful wacky days of wonky feasts. I may even shed a tear or two, but whether it's from old memories, or a permanent effect of too much bygone turkey-smoke in my face, I can't really say. It's probably both.

By: CeeJay Writer

National Barbeque Month

The tantalizing aroma from the barbeque sifted through the hot air of summer via my patio doors on the fourth floor. Adrienne gave me the look again from her favorite bean bag chair. Raised eyebrows and that disappointing look I was becoming so familiar with. We survived on macaroni and cheese with a Saturday treat on occasion at the golden arches. The extravagances of life taking on new meaning as we continued our pursuit of higher learning.

"A lot of good that thing does." Adrienne mocked, pointing at the rusted barbecue on our apartment balcony.

I knew she must be feeling the same sort of pangs and expectations my stomach was grumbling for. It had been a particularly tough year. Tuition had been increased and both our expectations had not been met when it came to the summer employment we depended on to see us through it.

"Dammit Deeter! One of us has to work full time this year. I cannot go on like this anymore. Pinching and saving and saving and pinching and sacrificing and doing without. I want meat!"

She walked to the edge of the balcony leaning over the rail and peered down on the open barbecue. The aroma was growing more stronger by the minute and my intestines were knotting up knowing the enticement would not be realized.

Below us I could hear the expectant bellies conversing on how good the steaks were coming along on the barbecue before hearing their patio doors slam shut. Than Adrienne gave her customary slap to the forehead which usually meant, a risky idea was about to be implemented.

My roll of fishing line and a number two treble hook were quickly secured from the closet. Adrienne grabbed a butcher knife in the kitchen to cut off a long length of it. A big smile was on her face and that mischievous look she entertained me with on occasion when she was up to no good.

"Pray tell what you are doing?" No answer was forthcoming as she rushed to the balcony and leaned over it. Feet periously off the ground as she manouvered on the rail. In less than thirty seconds a very large sizzling steak was hoisted above the rail.

To this day, it still remains the best steak I ever ate.

By: Deeter Decosta

Barbecue, Bar-B-Q, or Barbeque?

C'mon. lets go get barbecue! Everyone get in my car. You know, Kansas City is barbecue heaven. Everyone in KC has their favorites. One person in our office loves LC's, another runs to Oklahoma Joe's every few days. The sassy ladies who work the counter at Gates will give you a tongue lashing if you don't order quickly. The genteel crowd love KC Masterpiece and Jack Stack. We're going to my favorite, Arthur Bryant's. They have a new suburban one in Kansas City, Kansas by the new NASCAR track. We're going to the original one in downtown in Kansas City, Missouri.

This is the 18th & Vine historic district. On your left you see the Jazz museum and the Negro Leagues Baseball museum. It's only a few more blocks now.

There it is – that little storefront place – Arthur Bryant's Barbecue. It's a good thing we came a little before lunchtime. The line will be out the door soon. Wow! Isn't that smell wonderful.? Look at those carboys in the window filled with fermenting sauce! What do mean? The Health Department? They're probably inside eating. Décor? What Décor? These are probably the same tables and chairs that were here when it opened. And they haven't been "gently used." Check out the pictures on the wall! There are autographed pictures of celebrities, Senators, Presidents and sports figures who love this place.

Look who's taking our order – the pit master himself. The chief of smoke! He is a modern day wizard, tall and lean. The hours he has spent perfecting his craft show in his hands and face. He is at one with the smoke.

No fancy breads here – just a loaf of white bread with the barbecue piled high on it, some pickle, and those golden fries. We can put our own sauce on at the table or if you want one to go they can "sauce it up" for you.

Look at the crowd! This is the U.S. Every race, creed, and walk of life comes to Arthur Bryant's Barbecue. The U.S. isn't a melting pot, it's a smoker! We retain our individual characters but we all gain that common smokiness. The workman in overalls and boots sits next to the executive in her business suit. The suburbanite sits next to the city apartment dweller. They all come here looking a little taste of heaven. You can tell by the look of satisfaction and contentment on all the faces that they have found it. Taste yours now and see if I'm not right!

By: Oboe Riederer

National Barbecue Month 10 May 2007

The funniest things I know about barbecues are somethings which happened during my trip to West Africa.

The first was a letter sent home from the ex-pat school to the parents of the children, it read,:

'Please ask your drivers to refrain from stamping on the squirrels in the car park as it is upsetting the children!'
Barbecued squirrel was a much loved delicacy amongst the drivers.

The second was about a maid who caught a rabbit in the garden. We had these herbivorous rats that ran about our gardens in the night. They were like huge 'Topo Gigios' , but completely harmless to man. The locals called them 'rabbits'. The maid caught one, broke its legs and kept it in her 'quarter' until it was fat enough to be barbecued!

Barbecues come in many shapes and forms! BK eat your heart out.

By: Skye Soderstrom

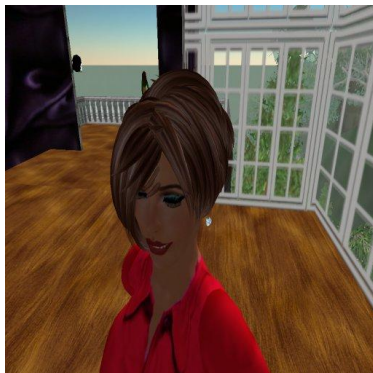


FIGURE 5: SKYE SODERSTROM'S PHOTO FOR NATIONAL BARBEQUE MONTH

MAY 11, 2007 MOTHER'S DAY STORIES

FUNNY YET POIGNANT. MAKE YOUR MOM LAUGH AND THEN CRY.

I know it. The minute my feet the floor, I know there is a baby beginning inside me. Then, wildly sick. Then STARVING. Eating for 2. For 3, 4. Eating for entire extended families.

Isn't it possible that a baby could require a weight gain of 78 pounds? Are you sure????

Then she is born, and I am someone's mom. She is beautiful. Her eyes are silver, and her hair sticks up in avante garde spikes. She loves my breasts from the first day, and she nurses greedily every few hours. At first I am sore and then I am really sore. Those tender nipples figured it out and her suckling becomes a magnificent commune for us both.

The very best times were early mornings. She wakes with soggy diapers--I put her in dry ones. Then I take her out to the sofa and she nurses as the sun comes up. Then we both drowse and sleep until nine am. She sleeps on my chest, breath in soft, sweet puffs. I pat her small back, and yes, I am somebody's mom.

By: Zayante Hegel

Mother's Day Story

The day of mother's I call it. Search every year in the aisle of some card shop in the company of my male brother's exercising their own due diligence. Embarrassment apparent as we flush our neon reds when one happens to catch a glimpse of the mush and gush we have held in our hand a moment too long.

We all go through this event year after year and struggle with a card that expresses perhaps its own unique meaning to our own mother's. Each year it becomes harder trying not to send something that is not similar than previous years. At least I do. My mom has a long memory and a keen eye for repetition.

"Aw son. That is the same card you gave me ten years ago."

"It is?" Childhood feelings of leaving mother in a state of disappointment creeping back into the hairy adult male seeking her approval.

"I know how busy you are these days. It is a wonder you can find a moment to get a card let alone deliver it."

The effect of mother on her boy man child. Lowering my head like when I was a youngster and her quick eye catching the cookie or cake I was not allowed to have in my hand. Her kryptonite stare enough to sap the nearest nuclear reactor of all energy.

She speaks to herself and goes on about the diapers she changed, the cuts she tended and the illnesses she dealt with for her boy man child. The reaction from the disappointment spawned from something as simple as a card.

But alas! I always gain the upper hand in the end. From my pocket producing the sparkly thing hidden in the box.

"Such a sweet boy! Always thinking of mother. Oh it is just too much. You must take it back. I really should not accept. Oh it is so pretty. It must of cost so much. Oh my. Yes. Oh goodness. Thank you."

By: Deeter Decosta

Mothers' Day 11th May 2007 Skye Soderstrom

There is a glossary after the poem for the Scots words

Lizzie - My Mither

Lizzie was my mither
she could be lots of fun.
She started every morning,
..by dawn, the time of sun.

She never stopped all day
and never took much time to play.
She worked in many jobs'til auld
"Granny 4 jobs", she was called!

Her hair was thick and curly.
Her eyes were green and clear.
She told you off for lying
and other things you'd fear!

She worked at school in cleaning
a jannie, in the night.
H.Samuels was her day job,
child minding was her right.

She toiled from dawn to dusk
with cat naps in between.
Laying down on fireside rug
and sleeping like a queen.

'Heck', she'd shout, 'Is that the time?'
I must be off again.
Scrubbing out the classrooms,
Dusting but and ben.

Where's my spec, my teeth gone
and where's my back door key?
I pit it down a minute
and I cannot see!

Down to Mrs. Player's
to clean her mucky hoose.
"That dame thinks she's better

than us that hit the booze!"

"Can Wullie dae the hoov'ring
when I am at the shop?"
Wullie was my faither,
sometimes known as 'Pop'!

Wullie did it often,
'cos he was often ill.
Ill or dead with drinking.
He wouldn't take his pill.

He'd pit the Hoover on the floor,
switched off in centre every day.
He'd spy for Lizzie at the door,
"I'll just pit this away," he'd say.

Lizzie thought that she controlled
everything we did.
Somethings we would tell her
but mostly all we hid!

Many's a battering I would take
when winching at front door.
I'd try to get a kiss in
before skited to the floor.

Her 'retiral' came down early
because of rush and racket.
She tripped o'er mop all furly
and really kicked the bucket.

Her collar bone was broken,
two pins were set inside.
The nerves cut as a token
but she would never hide.

She took the physio often,
therapy for the arm.
The pins were stuck forever.
The nerves had little harm.

Now she used her left arm
for many things to do,
combing down her curly locks
or tying up her shoe.

Although she left the job at school
her work continued on
looking after weans and dugs
still on the go at dawn!

At eighty two we find her stuck

inside her own back yard.
The door had closed behind her,
her character now marred.

She crawled through all the hedges
to find a neighbour there.
All the 'close' doors bolted,
no-one found that's rare.

She crawled back to her garden,
started now to chuckle.
Her hair was all aglae when
she found she'd burst her buckle.

She thought that if folk saw her,
they's think she'd gone to grass.
Laughing in the garden
fallen on her ass!

A young boy heard the cackle
he saved her from her jail.
Now, she got on with cleaning
with brush and mop and pail!

She carried on past eighty four
nothing could make her stop
until she went to Blackpool's door.
The room was at the top.

She took her case upstairs herself
never asked for aid.
She was so independent.
The next week she was deid.

She said she saw the angels
rise up above a bin.
Her last shout out to us there was--
"I've done myself all in!"

Her coffin held her stock of rock
from Blackpool, postcards too.
Her casket of cat's ashes
and yes her golden shoe.

She floated off to heaven
with jewels and clothes anew.
One day we all might meet her there
cleaning the Lord's hoose too!

Glossary of Scots words used in poem:

Lizzie - Elizabeth

mither - mother
 auld - old
 granny - grandmother
 jannie - school caretaker
 but and ben - little cottage
 spec - a broken pair of spectacles with one lense and one leg
 pit - put
 mucky - very dirty
 hoose - house
 booze - alcohol
 Wullie - William
 dae - do
 hoov'ring - vacuuming
 faither - father
 hoover - vacuum cleaner
 battering - slapping
 winching - snogging, kissing heavily
 skited - knocked down
 racket - noise
 furly - fluffy
 bucket - pail
 physio - physiotherapy
 weans - children
 dugs - dogs
 close - passageway between houses
 aglae - windblown
 jail - prison
 Blackpool - a popular seaside resort with a tower and illuminations
 deid - dead
 stock - stick
 rock - hard sweetie with name through middle eg. 'Blackpool'

By: Skye Soderstrom



FIGURE 6: SKYE SODERSTROM'S PHOTO FOR MOTHER'S DAY

Love Poem
 (a double sonnet for my mom)

Other

You taste like peaches,
 homemade cookies left to cool.
 You smell of beaches
 and chlorinated pools.
 Your hands feel rough
 like dried-out coral.
 Your voice sounds tough
 'though dampened by morals
 as you claim that God,
 some all-present father,
 can be found in this pea-pod
 and in that body of water.
 You're so convinced that you know best.
 I unbutton my shirt and offer you a breast.

Mother

You unbuttoned your shirt
 and offered me your breast,
 tasting of warm yogurt
 and cream from the southwest.
 My cheek against your skin
 felt of smooth, peachy fuzz,
 and a drip down my chin:
 the greatest lost that was.
 Twenty years later, an ocean away,
 while distracting a boy
 near a pool-calm bay,
 I try to relive that primal joy.
 I find I can't fly back or take any trip
 to where you nipple fit in between my lips.

~Scout Anatine

INKsters competition, 5/11/2007, Mother's Day

The Gift

Wednesday, May 9th. Her special day only four days away, Jeffrey had absolutely no idea what to get for his mom. That's okay, he'd been in this position before and, thanks to the Internet, had always come up with something nice. Jeffrey went back to his bowl of soggy Kashi and peach slices and started to think about bits and bytes and C# (the language, not the note) and Angelika, the girl he'd met in Second Life who had kept him up entirely too late the night before.

Thursday, May 10th. Jeffrey closed his Visual Studio window in frustration. Inspiration just wouldn't come. Something else kept niggling at the periphery of his consciousness. He suddenly realized that the deadline was getting tight and he'd better get on the stick or his poor old ailing mother would have nothing to brag about for Sunday's traditional Show 'n Tell in the Century Village clubhouse. Ahh, what a load of crap, these "holidays." Nobody really benefits but Hallmark and a bunch of mail order companies. Besides, he called her every damned day, why did he have to worry about getting a bigger teddy bear than last year's? Jeffrey put the 'puter into

hibernation, nuked up a batch of Redenbacher kettle corn (94% fat free, can't be too many points, can it?), fished the remote out from under the couch cushions, and settled in to the last three weeks of *Entourage* and *The Sopranos*. Thank goodness for HBO On Demand!

Friday, May 11th. As Jeffrey proceeded to clear out 200 emails ("Order by May 10th for guaranteed Mother's Day delivery!), he realized that things were getting serious. Well, that's okay, he could still get something (maybe a talking teddy bear?) delivered tomorrow for an extra 20 bucks or so shipping charges. Jeffrey could afford it. After all, he'd saved more than that on the 20,000 Lindens he'd bought from those Chinese Gold Farmers before the market got wise, hadn't he? Heh, "Chinese," what a joke. They couldn't even choose a good name, let alone write a search engine. Accoona? It was good old Google all the way for this Amurrican boy, yeah, baby, and cars from Detroit, that's the ticket! Well, Google, anyway. His thoughts straying everywhere but to Boca Raton and his poor dear mom, Jeffrey commenced his hard evening's battle with hash tables and interface components.

Saturday, May 12th. The jackhammers breaking up 2nd Avenue woke Jeffrey at 10 AM. Damn that Bloomberg, why doesn't he and Klein stop fiddling with the education system ("If it's completely broke, don't fix it") and figure out a way to let decent people sleep during the day! Jeffrey made a pot of extra-strong Starbucks, inhaled it black (no points, woo hoo! screw the caffeine) and shook the muzziness out of his head. Holy Crap, he abruptly realized, I am sooo screwed! What can I get for mom now? Jeffrey sat down at the computer to figure this out when... O... M... F... G... I'm screwed twice! He remembered that Angel was waiting for him in Numbakulla and he'd promised to go exploring with her today. Firing up *Second Life*, he made some lame excuses to his lady and the intrepid couple embarked on a pleasant morning... and afternoon... and evening... and night... searching for ancient artifacts, solving puzzles, translating languages lost in the Mysts of time, and generally yucking it up together and being rude to passersby by talking only in IM.

Sunday, May 13th, Mother's Day. After a fitful three hours' sleep, Jeffrey woke up at 8am feeling like the totally ungrateful son that he was. He hadn't sent a thing to his beloved mom, and though she'd lie through her false teeth about it, she surely ("Jeffy, don't call me Shirley." "But mom, your name is Shirley!" giggles ensue) would be terribly disappointed in him.

"BUT WAIT! Old Lather's productive you know," Jeffrey badly imitated Grace Slick with a chuckle. Now this was a truly brilliant idea. He would send mom something she'd never received in her life, a singing telegram! And he bet they'd dress up like Cupid and bring her flowers or chocolates too! He patted himself on the back (modesty not being one of Jeffrey's strong suits) and searched Yahoo's listings for his local Western Union office.

Later that day, Mom heard the rat-tatta-tat-tat of "Shave and a Haircut" above the driving rain outside, grabbed her walker, and worked her way to the front of her garden apartment. Opening the door, she was delighted to get the very best gift any mom could hope to receive: There, soggier than his customary Kashi breakfast, stood Jeffrey, clutching an \$800 Jet Blue ticket he'd had the good fortune to get due to a last-minute cancellation. "Happy Mother's Day, mom," Jeffrey said, "I was going to get you a singing telegram but Western Union hasn't done them for years so..." She tearfully swept him in her arms, led him inside ("Stay on the plastic Jeffy, don't get the carpet wet"), and proceeded to put some water up for a nice hot cup of tea.

- Nebbisk Oh



FIGURE 7: NEBBISK OH'S PHOTO FOR MOTHER'S DAY

MAY 12, 2007 NATIONAL BIKE MONTH

I WANT ONE OF THOSE ATTACHABLE BIKES TO RIDE AROUND HERE IN SECOND LIFE, BUT I CAN'T FIND ONE. MAYBE I'LL GO RIDE A REAL BIKE OUTSIDE. NAH, NEVERMIND. TELL ME YOUR BIKE ACCIDENT STORIES.

National Bike Month

Oh how I wanted that bike. The catalogue came to bed with me each night as I envisioned the ease and grace in which I traversed through my mountain forests. A beautiful sleek line to the frame with shocks on front and back to absorb my graceful three sixties and one eighties while gliding down from the air above.

Each morning before breakfast I left the catalogue opened to the page of the beauty of my dreams. Big ink circles surrounding it, drawing attention to this magnificent biking machine. Surely they too would be as drawn to the want as I. The big knobby tires complementing the silver chrome frame. The padded seat and foot rests the most current on the market. The price too was reasonable. A steal at three hundred and fifty dollars. Another day or two of being my special and helpful best and surely they would cave.

I was the first out of school at the final school bell. Hopping on to ole Betsy. She had seen better days. Missing paint replaced with rust. Dents in her frame from being thrown down in my enthusiasm to pursue whatever was occupying my mind at the time. Chunks of foam sticking out of the seat where some remained and cold steel where it had gone missing long ago. Inevitably disappointment as I arrived home and found no sign of a new bike and the catalogue neatly tucked away in the magazine stand. Routine had become me and I would retrieve the catalogue and it would fall open to the place I had opened it a hundred times before. Pushing it to the center of the kitchen table so all could admire it in its entirety.

One bright sunny Saturday morning it finally happened. My father summoned me earlier than usual from bed. A big grin on his face as he led me down the stairs to the living room. I was indeed surprised despite pulling out all the stops to woo my parents into buying me the beauty that was now before me. Half anticipating but not quite sure it would actually happen.

Vaguely I heard my father yelling as I soared down the street on my new bike. Turning back and straining to hear why. It was already too late. WHACK. SCRAPE. The sensation of being tossed forward and using my face to mow the neighbours lawn. Father was trying to tell me he had forgotten to put on the wheel nuts.

By: Deeter Decosta

real life story

Tommy's final Ride

it was a warm summer day back in the year nineteen hundred and ninty three,my step brother in law tommy had gone out for a ride on his harley, he had been driving along state rt 2 when a driver from the other lane came over into his.dragsging his body along the pavement ,soon enough ambulance and rescue teams arrived ,noticing how serious his condition was they called in medivac helicopter ,he was life flighted to pittsburgh hospital where he was given drugs for his severe head injuries,to try to reduce swelling in his brain, but the accident was fatal and the doctors pronounced him brain dead, his wish was to donate his organs so someone else may have life if anything

should happen to him ,so his spirit still lives on today perhaps in some other biker out there?(a warm smile on my face)

written by Mystic Dye

Now for a short and comical second life bike story .

Blown away

i had been riding my Banshee(quad) which is really super cool and fun to ride on second life it emmits flames and flies as well as travels on the ground , one day id been giving a friend a little ride and we had been flying the bike over many sims and all a sudden without warning we were blown away into another sim and my friend went flying off and the bike dissapeared from under me later too be found another sim away still in one piece so becareful all you bike lovers for the red bans will blow you away !!!

By: Mystic Dye

National Bike Week May 12th 2007

My first bike was a second hand, 'Hopper' shiny and black. It was purchased at the Barras in Glasgow and taken to Granny's home, closeby. There it stayed for two years. She wouldn't allow it home. The reason, my Grandpa had fallen off his bike and was brain damaged leading to his premature death. Eventually, when she came to stay, my bike arrived.

I cycled everywhere, to the shops, to the park, up the plantation and in the woods, wherever I played. The wind swirled through my long dark hair and the cool air whistled in my lungs. This was luxury, better than my scooter even better than my beloved roller skates which were always 'glued' to my feet.

By summer's end, I was an expert and longed to ride my bike to school. I would undertake the proficiency test with the other scholars and initiate my entrance to the pride of cyclists. It would be my last year of elementary school and I would primly skim through this class as an owner cyclist, the creme de la creme. The week before this vacation adjourned I masterd the art of cycling around speedily and nobody could catch me. I was in for a surprise!

The Chisholm boys returned from holiday with a new bike and whizzed around the locale asthe new champions of cycling. Naively, I challenged them to a race around the block. The eldest boy took up the challenge. I feared nothing on my 'Hopper'. I had been queen of the block all summer. Off we set round and round, ten laps in all.

I was going great guns! It was nine o'clock, about summer bed time, as the dusk started to fall. We were on the home run when I was overtaken. My hopes of winning the Grand Prix were dashed! I tried to regain my positon but my bike was older, a heavier model, his light steel frame sped ahead and cut in. Splat! I hit his rear wheel with my fore wheel and bang, crash, whollop my bike blasted into the kerb. I flew into the air and down with a thud on top of my squashed, Hopper'.

Crumpled and creased I hopped home on one leg. I was now the 'Hopper'! Bike and girl merged into one, a tangled wreck. My father examined the bike and it was discarded.

"Let's get you sorted," he grunted, "I'll fix the bike tomorrow."

.....but he never did!

By: Skye Soderstrom



FIGURE 8: SKYE SODERSTROM'S PHOTO FOR NATIONAL BIKE MONTH

INKsters writing competition, 05/12/2007, National Bike Month

Bicycle

I was ten years old, maybe twelve, when I died in a horrible accident on my bicycle. I had no idea it was going to happen, in fact I was full of life that day, remembering the festive Friday night past on this very same spot, when the kids and their parents from the surrounding apartment buildings gathered to watch the fireworks over Coney Island. Also the same spot where, a few months earlier, my friends I and threw snowballs at cars travelling west along Shore Road to the Belt Parkway entrance just ahead. Innocent fun. Well until that guy got out of his car and chased us until I, the fattest kid, got winded and stopped. He beat the crap out of me and hoo boy did I feel guilty that day, especially when I had to explain to my mother how my jacket got ripped to shreds.

On this particular day, I was hurtling down the sidewalk – no bike paths in those days – towards Shore Road. I thought I had plenty of time to turn into an intersecting walk, but I miscalculated a downslope, panicked, and totally lost control of my bike. Why didn't I just throw myself to the side and let the bike fall? I have no idea. Look, I was a little kid, all right?

I closed my eyes and wet my pants and held on for dear life, hoping there would be no traffic on the approach to the highway. But of course there is ALWAYS traffic on Shore Road, and as soon as I left the pavement, my beautiful blue 3-speed Schwinn, along with my homely and soon to be blue pre-teen body, were smashed to bits by an old Ford Thunderbird driven by a guy who sold Compton's and World Book encyclopedias out of his trunk, for chrissake. As I lay dying on the cold tarmac, a cool hundred feet away as the twisted body flies, all I could think of was my broken bike and my dad's fury along with the terrible look of disappointment on my mom's face when she found out.

In an alternate universe, this one in fact, I did not die. I opened my eyes to find that I had negotiated that intersection totally blind and at top speed. God decided not to take me that day. He saved me so I could learn my trade and use it to help businesses, entertain and educate people, and, I am proud to say, save a considerable number of lives.

A few years later, I decided not to take God. I don't think about my near-fatality often, but when I do, I hope I'm saving Him for something big.

- Nebbisk Oh



FIGURE 9: NEBBISK OH'S PHOTO FOR NATIONAL BIKE MONTH

MAY 13, 2007 NATIONAL POSTCARD WEEK

POSSIBLY THE LAST VENUE FOR LONGHAND WRITING ON THE PLANET.
WRITTEN ANY GOOD ONES? RECEIVED ANY GOOD ONES? DO TELL.

National Postcard Month

Ah the postcard. I say be done with them already. My last experience with one was less than shall we say endearing to my significant other at the time. Besides with the advent of the internet and the technological highway do we really need them anymore. A simple tap of the UPLOAD command and SEND and BOOM...instant communication. Hi Mom. Hi Pop. Hi Bro. Hi Sis. Hi Honey. I am fine really. What is not to be fine. The only time I send one is when I am in a warm place laying on white sand with an umbrella drink in hand.

When I see the displays of postcards now I turn away in the opposite direction or whisk by. My memory forever tattooed with the anger of a girlfriend and the dissolution of a relationship. Should not blame the boyhood antic's of men I suppose on the innocent postcard, but I do. My procrastination is most to blame for the situation I got myself into. Even today, I still procrastinate despite my experience. Never should one write them in a rush or in haste as I learned.

The memory floods back of the good times and the not so good times. A reward for the efforts of men to some foreign exotic place in appreciation for a job well done. Hear yee. Hear yee. Our employer showing his gratitude by way of a vacation place for males. A place really that men in committed relationships should not go to. The obligatory phone call home to reinforce our love to her. Pretending to be miserable in her absence while we rediscover the pleasure of our immaturity and boyhood devilishness. Women of almost flawless beauty surrounding us and encouraging us with their seductive nature in successful attempts to ply the tourist dollar from our pocket. In that moment we are desired, recognized, wanted and relinquish all our good judgment for just a taste of that acknowledgment.

Gentlemen a postcard please for the office. A directive from the boss. That is how it started. My delegation to the task by my peers. What was another card to the host of cards I had to send unless you leave it too long. I wrote of misbehaving males with misbehaving females, confessions of love and my adventure in a new place to family. In my haste to get back to the debauchery in the final days, I addressed two postcards wrongly. My boss had confessions of love and my significant other confessions of my lustful ways. Embellished a bit to my dismay and regret. But what is written is written.

By: Deeter Decosta

Wish You Were Here

A plastic bag ambled along the road
Like a modern tumbleweed
Jarring the tranquil haze of heat rising off asphalt
A coyote howling would be good right about now
But that would be too picturesque
I can see it now, on a postcard
Wish you were here

By Irina Obscure

Postcards from the edge of SL

Drank at a German Biergarten, shopped in Hollywood, danced in the Caribbean. On my way to Amsterdam. See you in about an hour.

Met the nicest zebra with wings on info isle!

He works for a University library. We had a fascinating discussion about the meaning of second life. Hope you all are doing well...

Great weather! Temperatures are perfect and not a drop of rain yet!

Finally made it! Teleport broke down and we had to fly all the way. Kids kept complaining they were hungry and tired. No sooner arrived than a rolling restart hit us – what a start to the vacation!

Having a wonderful time.

Wish you were logged in.

By: Oboe Riederer

Postcards May 13th 2007

The postcard fell upon my knee,
embroidered with purple and gold,
with every stitch a tryst we see,
love story to unfold.

The stitching was quite neat,
its fine threads ripped and worn.
The man had loved his sweet,
romance had never torn.

The source was there in France.
The bells rung out you see,
for soldiers to retreat the dance,
to reach Dunkirk, be free.

Alas! He never reached the beach,
a bullet glanced his head.
He lay there thinking how to reach
the point and boats, they said.

He fell into a trance.
No saviours could he see.
The enemy points his lance.
He was no longer free.

Five long years dragged through camp,
with little food, some string, much will.
He sat with just a lamp
thought of her, often, still.

They walked them long, long miles.
No food and many stiles,
to Deutschland on the Rhine.
He lost his heart so fine.

At last the Yanks did come,
to free the lives, the soul.
He wrote home to his mum
but war had taken toll.

His father dead, his brother wed,
his body thin and frail.
His mind corrupted and worn through,
his body feeling cruel.

When he returned his mother said,
"This came here just last year."
His heart was dashed,
the time had passed,
no love left there, my dear.

He kept the postcard safe and well,
the story now to tell.
He passed it to his daughter's hand
when he was not so well.

His daughter understood,
his unrequited plightings
and so she brought it from her box,
and placed it here in writings.

By: Skye Soderstrom

MAY 14, 2007 NATIONAL EGG MONTH

OVULATING?

INKsters writing competition entry for 5/14/2007
National Egg Month

Winkie Merlin #2: Eggs in the Land of Arel

Winkie Merlin shook his head in frustration as he returned to his workshop after a hard day's effort in the Kuula sandbox. His every attempt to make a single-prim shopping mall had failed. One time he almost got it right, and then that flash crowd of feline female furies showed up and wrecked the place after the tip about a rich nekophilic, flush with Lindens and on the prowl, proved bogus. He sat down on "comfy," watched his giant 1.5 inch HD wall TV for a while, and then decided to try his hand at something smaller, something he could make on his own premises.

"I know, I'll make a baseball," Winkie thought. "With the large Japanese community here, we'll be able to fill some pro American teams in no time!" Rezzing a sphere, he was frustrated by his inability to find just the right cowhide texture for its cover. "I know, I'll build a football," he said to himself, switching to the "Stretch" tool. Once he had a bit of an ovoid, inspiration struck. "Of course! An egg! And with the cool textures I can get here, I can make a bunch, get the genie to send me to RL, and sell them for a fortune to the Forbes Museum!"

With a boxed dozen of his fantastical eggs under arm, Winkie took the lamp from its special hiding place and rezzed his private genie. The djinn intoned soporifically, "Do you have the one item you may take to Arel?" Nodding deeply, as if he were davening in shul or perhaps obtaining a keyboard imprint on his forehead after staying in SL for 20 hours straight, Winkie signed off.

As expected, the next morning the box of eggs lay on Walter Merlman's night table in the Land of Arel. Heart pounding, Walter quickly dressed and headed for Greenwich Village and the Forbes Museum. Pausing only briefly to ogle the coeds leaning against the access ramp bars, Walter muscled open the heavy doors and went to the information desk in the lobby. "Where is your Faberge' Egg department," he asked, "I have something to show the curator." "That's fine sir, go through these two corridors and it's the first room on your right." With visions of countless Lindens running through his head, Merlman tripped along merrily, barely noticing the magnificent display of toy soldiers along the way.

Toy General Lee, deftly manipulating his camera to see through the box Walter carried, cried, "Why bless my heart, those eggs are priceless! They could only have come from the Land of Essel!" General Grant, a bit muzzy from his long acquaintance with a bottomless bottle of Jack Daniels, blurted out, "Beat the Dutch, that soundrel must work for the evil genie that imprisoned us here in Arel!" Extending his sword, he shouted, "Knock him into a cocked hat, men!"

Launching a furious cannonade, the toy armies shredded Merlman's priceless cargo, leaving all the eggs derezzed and Walter in not much better shape. After dissembled explanations and light treatment at St. Vincent's emergency room, Walter/Winkie finally made it back home and signed on with a vow to never have his genie send him to Arel again; or at least to be far more careful next time.

- by Nebbisk Oh



FIGURE 10: NEBBISK OH'S PHOTO FOR NATIONAL EGG MONTH

May 14th 2007 National Egg Month

Ova, ovulus, ova.
 Those eggs just rant and rant.
 The biological clock is ticking.
 The years go by, silently flicking.
 Its not that easy ovulation
 They say, the backbone of the nation,
 the so called 'point of all creation.'

Keep taking all the medication.
 Oh no! The oestrogen has gone.
 Battered and blistered not full on!
 Day fourteen now means a pill.
 The kind not sought when you are ill.
 One day the hormones will disappear
 My dear, the menopause is here!

By: Skye Soderstrom

A nursery rhyme from my Dad:
 Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
 Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
 All the King's horses and all the King's men
 Had scrambled eggs for breakfast.

This is National Egg month? Eggs get a whole month – Mothers get a day. Why not? American English has a special relationship with eggs. The language is rife with egg related euphemisms. Consider the few that follow.

Just as “geek” carries a sense of grudging respect and sneering derision, so did the term “egghead.” If life begins in an egg, does thought begin in an egghead? Does an egghead “hatch” a plan?

You can encourage someone to do something bad by “egging them on.” It always means the person is up to no good. They're probably a “bad egg.” Hopefully some “good egg” will step in and put a stop to it. Tell the “rotten egg” he can “go suck an egg!”

I try to save a little every month to build up my “nest egg.” I stay diversified, however, so I don’t have “all my eggs in one basket.” Sometimes one of my investments loses a little money. As you know, you have to “break a few eggs to make an omelet.” I wouldn’t want to “kill the goose that lays the golden egg.”

Speaking of geese, if you get everything wrong on the test, you’ll get “a goose egg.” Getting everything wrong is doing things in a big way!

A tough guy is “hard boiled.” You’ll need to “walk on eggshells” around him.

I need to stop now. I have enough “egg on my face.”

I’ll take mine sunny-side-up, thanks.

Oboe Riederer

The Evolutionary Theory of Eggitivity

It was the cocks cock came first thought he. There was never an easier question to answer than which came first the chicken or the egg ?. Answer it was the cock's cock. Or as Einstein would have said cock squared. Of course Einstein wouldnt have bothered with such a trivial conundrum which is probably why he got around to inventing the theory of relativity and all of that, He didnt bother his arse with writing about egg week. Still it leaves room for us lesser mortals to explore the inner mysteries. A chicken is the closest evolutionary relative to T Rex still alive on the planet, In fact they walk very similar if you look closely at jurassic park.. Yes the once savage and terrifying beast that thought of us as breakfast now is on the ould plate or egg cup in my case. In fact it was T rex that came first and the chicken was his adaption to a new climatic world order or choking on the dusty shards of some meteoerite a mutation blossomed, struggled and survived. TREx/KFC=cock squared.

By: Agrippa Writer

Impossibly, almost unbelievably small, yet within lie all the hopes, dreams and fears of the future. Held within by the most tenuous of bonds: love and hate; justice and injustice; spectacular success and sensational failure; humanity and inhumanity. All held in equal measure, subject only to the whims of the human condition for the measure of their release.

Impossibly, almost unbelievably small, yet within lie the fundamental poles of nature, the very heart of our being: male and female. Both held in equal measure, subject only to the whims of universal powers which we have only the most meager understanding of for the measure of their release.

Impossibly, almost unbelievably small: the egg.

Cutter Rubio

National Egg Month

When I think of eggs I immediately think of the eggs from our feathery friends. You know, sunny side up, over easy, scrambled, hard boiled, poached and for the more creative the omlet. I do love eggs and thank the

rooster for his procreations and my delight in the eating of them. However. I have chosen to write of eggs of a different kind and the struggle and hardship the parents must endure to have that opportunity to procreate.

The pacific salmon has always amazed me at what it must endure just to get to the spawning ground. It is the place where it squiggled and wiggled out of the egg from the salmon redds and most usually a vast distance from its ocean destination. Imagine the poor thing as it bobs around not be knowing amongst the horde of other innocents. Birds well versed in the hatching screaming down from the sky into the water and swallowing the poor things up before they have barely opened an eye. Dolly Varden laying in the shadows of the deeper pools sliding in at great speed and scooping them up by the mouth fulls. It seems there is no place to hide for the poor little salmon. The shallows the birds, the deeper water cannibalistic fishes, the surface more birds and that is without mention of the hungry furry critters inhabiting the forests the streams run through.

Yet somehow they manage to grow big enough to migrate though largely depleted in number. A fortunate chance happening perhaps in an area a little murky for a birds eye view or a little shallow for a larger fish to strike. Instinct driving them down to the larger and deadlier world of the ocean when they are big enough to contend with newer threats.

If they manage to survive hungry seals and whales, commercial and sports fishers during their ocean stay, they get to navigate the obstacle course again. Fighting their way back up the streams of birth via huge waterfalls in some cases, hungry bears, eager sportsfisherman, native net fisheries, eagles, hawks and industrial spills. Battered and only a shell of their sparkling beauty. Rotting spots covering both parents as they do their last dance. The doe dispensing of her eggs while the buck releases his milt. Than both are lost and maybe confused as they wait for death to overtake them while they waste away finning in their place of birth. A creature of remarkable endurance.

By: Deeter Decosta

Eggs? Juevos? The basic unit which most higher lifeforms use to support early development of offspring? The Egg really is an amazing thing. When we say the word we are usually thinking of the common chicken egg. The same one you find in grocery stores or if your lucky from out in the back yard. Its clear that these in particular have permeated our culture. Theres are childrens tales like Humpty Dumpty that revolve around a giant anthropomorphic egg. The great question of causality is usually postuled by the example of the chicken or egg scenario. Without the egg there can be no chicken but there can be no egg without first there being a chicken. Even a major holiday revolves around the little ovules. At Easter we paint eggs to hide go search for. These somewhat corrupted Pagan practices of celebrating the rebirth and renewal of all life remain with us long after their original meaning has been lost to most of the celebrating populace.

Its fairly clear why the chicken egg is so important to us. From the days of our ancient ancestors first domestication of fowl they have provided an imporant and easy sorce of essential protien to the human diet. Acting as such a staple they began to be used in a wide variety of cooking. Spices of all sorts were added to what is a very useful basic food Item. We end up with eggs au gratin, Hard boiled, Omelet, over-easy, scrambled and over my Hammy. Certainly there were other eggs that were eaten when available. Fish eggs are noted even today as an expensive delicacy. Ostrich eggs are somewhat popular as a novelty dish. Nothing that produces eggs with such rapidity as the chicken has ever been domesticated though.

We must salute the little egg that has feed us for a hundred generations and more. The most popular egg of all time. All this talk is making me hungry. I'm gonna go make an Omelet.

By: Athena Maeterlinck

MAY 15, 2007 NATIONAL PHYSICAL FITNESS AND SPORTS MONTH

DON'T WRITERS JUST DRINK COFFEE, SMOKE CIGARETTES, CONSUME WHISKEY, AND MAKE ANGRY LATE NIGHT TELEPHONE CALLS TO FORMER LOVERS? OTHER THAN LIFTING THE REMOTE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO KEEP YOUR BODY FROM DYING?

I have a strict regimen of exercises that I pursue in my "free" time. No doubt many of you enjoy similar activities. Here are a few of my "favorites."

1. The wash and bend

Hold your hands in front of you under running water. While grasping a dirty dish in one hand, make circular motions with the other hand while pressing against the dish. Pivot to face the dishwasher and bend at the waist. Place the dish in the dishwasher. Return to the starting position. Continue the exercise with the next dish.

2. The bend and dry

Bend at the waist and remove a clean dish from the dishwasher. Return to the standing position. Holding the dish in one hand, make circular motions with a dishtowel thereby wiping the dish dry. Reaching over your head, place the dish in the cabinet. Repeat until there are no more dishes.

3. Scramble and lift

Moving as quickly as possible, scramble through the house, bending at the waist and retrieving dirty socks and other clothes from the floor. Place the clothes in a laundry basket. Stand before the laundry hamper, bend at the waist and lift the dirty laundry in your arms. Place it in the laundry basket. Remembering to lift with the legs and not the back, lift the laundry basket. Carrying the basket scramble down the stairs to the washing machine.

4. Damp lift

Run a load of clothes through the wash and rinse cycle. Approach the washing machine and open the top. Bend at the waist and lift the clothes from the machine. Return to the standing position. Holding the clothes, pivot and step to the dryer. Bend at the waist and place the wet clothes in the dryer. Repeat with the next load.

5. Trash Dash

Note: this exercise must be performed once each week prior to 7:30 a.m.

Bend at the waist and lift the kitchen trash bag from the can. Return to the standing position. Move quickly around the house to trash cans in each of the following locations: bathrooms, bedrooms and laundry room. Bend at the waist and empty each trash can into the trash bag. When the bag is full, dash to the garage and place it in the garbage can. Pull the garbage can down the driveway to the curb. Sprint back to the garage. Firmly grasp the recycle container and carry it to the curb. Sprint back to the house. Bend at the waist and pick up the newspaper trash. Return to the standing position and sprint to the curb. Place the newspaper in the recycle container. Repeat this for both the paper trash and the empty cans and plastic. Repeat next week.

Why, yes – I have been "working out." How nice of you to notice!

By: Oboe Riederer

I always wondered why they called it "physical education." We never learned much about the physicality of it, or about the physical. We learned rules to games--telling, in hindsight.

The game that day was volleyball. Get the ball over the net, preferably in such a way that the other team can't hit it back. Wait your turn to serve, hopefully hurting your wrist *and* getting the ball over the net, instead of just a mighty whap on the bones and a flopping, out-of-bounds ball. Spike, set, defeat, rejoice in your prowess and the losership of the opposing team. Great game, and in grade school, there aren't even any bikinis. Sheesh.

My turn at the net. I watch the ball nervously, waiting for it to come my way and praying it won't. It does. I'm under it...I'm bracing my hands for the net and *schmack!* it lands precisely atop the middle finger of my left hand. I am in agony. Through the blurred red haze of pain, I hear the horn-rimmed face of my teacher issue forth: "Butterfingers!"

I broke that finger in three places. Greenline fractures. That's right; my biggest wipe out as a kid was a busted digit. I've broken legs and other things since, but I can still recall with excruciating precision the pain of that finger breaking. Even more intently I re-experience my dismal failure in physical education. My poor, cracked finger didn't matter. My butterfingerness did. Go figure.

The upside was the splint I had to wear for six weeks after. It kept the middle finger of my left hand perfectly extended. I soon discovered that, if I carried my books crooked in my left arm just so, I could exhibit a full-on flip off at all times with impunity. What a joy, to point that blameful, expository digit at ol' horn rims, proclaiming silently my disdain for a system that teaches you how to play a game, but not how to play.

By: Imano Moody

15th May 2007 Physical Fitness Week

I married when I was twenty, my husband was just nineteen. We grew up together.

Hubby was a jogger and trained for marathons increasing his miles of running when I was with child. I remember remarking one day to a colleague that I had to go to the sweetie shop for 'Sports Mixture' (hard gums shaped like footballs, cricket bats etc.). I pointed out this was to make my man 'run', meaning he liked chomping on them as he ran.

My colleague retorted,

"Have you tried Syrup of Figs?" (a well known laxative.)

When the bairn arrived after our tenth wedding anniversary and much effort, we returned to our neighbourhood to show off the new arrival. The local wives and neighbours came to admire the youngster and to offer the usual child rearing and marital advice, mostly on how to keep your man happy in the marriage and mostly on how to keep him.

Isa, who lived across the road from my mother offered the following which I have never forgotten and of course undertook faithfully.

"When your man turns forty buy him a bike so he can have a ride!"

These little gems are responsible for keeping me 'fit' all my life, ladies, take heed!

By: Skye Soderstrom

May 15: National Physical Fitness and Sports Month

Don't writers just drink coffee, smoke cigarettes, consume whiskey, and make angry late night telephone calls to former lovers? Other than lifting the remote, what are you doing to keep your body from dying?

Health is an important issue to all of us and what could possibly influence health more than physical exercises? But I don't worry about my health right at the moment I'm young full of energy have little to ask for I feel good, although I drink I smoke but I have no regrets yet, maybe if I get some terrible disease and scream in agony then I will regret it.

But I don't mean to say that I don't do physical exercise on the contrary I quite like to be active, I'm taking classes of Wing Chung Kung-Fu every thursday it makes feel good, it makes me forget about all little problems that I have, it makes me even forget to think but thinking all the time is not good either. You are no longer a human being you are energy .

Sport for me is more than looking after your body it is a mentality, it is a way of gaining confidence, controlling your emotions, learning how to be a team player and self-discipline. Without all sports that I have been practicing and there were quite few I don't think I would have qualities that I have now, that's why I truly believe that everyone should take up a sport, cause there is a lot more behind the muscular figure.

Kiril Mokeev

MAY 16, 2007 ARSON AWARENESS WEEK

TELL US ABOUT THE LAST HOUSE YOU BURNED DOWN.

INKsters writing competition, 5/16/2007
Arson Awareness Week

Joshua's Prayer

Donning traditional Bedouin costume of frayed tunic and kufiyya, Ben Ari trudged northward towards the occupied town of Na'Arán, with its disturbing landscape of barbed wire, Israeli Quonset huts, and its one proud, ancient masjid, a mosque badly in need of restoration but well-attended nevertheless during this holy month of Ramadan. He carefully avoided Israeli troops, fording the Samakh, Daliot, Yadudiya streams as necessary, periodically stopping to rub olive-rich, nut-brown earth into his skin and clothing to reinforce and enhance his disguise. By the time he reached the town, filthy and exhausted from the trek, he could easily pass for one of the cursed Syrian dogs whose martyrdom he was eager to facilitate with his own.

"Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, l'avoh eshim me'etim al hasonetim sheli," he subvocalized. His presumptuous bastardization of God's blessing and literal use of His name declared this to be consecrated ground and simultaneously consigned his soul to the depths of hell. "Blessed art thou O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who bringeth forth fiery death upon mine enemies." Summoning the last of his strength, Ben Ari primed his incendiaries, crashed a rock through the low window, hurtled firebombs into the masjid in a pattern designed for maximal destruction, and collapsed at the foot of the wall.

Three weeks earlier, Joshua Ben Ari wiped away the grime occluding his vision as he unearthed the cache he had secreted by a tributary of the Yarmuk River, fed by the Sea of Galilee. The loveliness of this peaceful spot, a rare eye in the storm that was Golan Heights, did nothing to mitigate the tears in his eyes or the hatred in his belly. Before going AWOL to carry out his mission of revenge, Joshua had collected various materials from army stores and close confidants who knew and approved of his intended suicide. There was nothing left for Ben Ari on this earth, bless Hashem. He eyed the cache contents with heart of stone: Thermite incendiary agent for his parents and sister, victims of a car bomb in Haifa. PC-tubes and electrical starter equipment for his dear baby brother Heshie, dragged behind a truck full of Al Quaida thugs until dead. And his prized acquisition, a handful of white phosphorus grenades, for his darling Caitlin, who didn't understand, couldn't wait, and was now somewhere in Europe where few Jews could be found. The clothing inside, a disguise of traditional Islamic desert garb, was for Joshua himself – his burial shroud.

After briefly losing and regaining consciousness, Joshua was dumbstruck to discover that the conflagration had bypassed the masjid's eastern wall, leaving it – and himself – unharmed. The rest of the mosque was in ruins, the destruction of life worse than any conceivable abattoir. Row upon row of devout Muslims on their mats faced east, faced Ben Ari and Mecca, consumed by the raging flames as they prayed to Allah. Joshua felt a tiny hand slip into his own and discovered an Arab child by his side, her expressionless eyes taking in the carnage within. She, like Caitlin, could not understand what had brought the world to this, but there was no escape for her; the consequences of this act would visit misery upon her for all the days of her life. Joshua wept.

- Nebbisk Oh



FIGURE 11: NEBBISK OH'S PHOTO FOR ARSON AWARENESS WEEK

Deeter Decosta - National Arson Awareness Week - May 16

Adrienne a former girlfriend, liked to dine out when we were struggling college students. Opportunities for a free meal were akin to stumbling on a gold mine and especially so if the food was good. Early one Friday evening Adrienne came flying through the door as I was running out of ideas on how to be more creative with the macaroni and cheese about to be prepared. She announced gold had been found and to find the cleanest of the dirty clothes in the laundry pile to facilitate the discovery.

We arrived at the gold claim whiffing the sweet aroma's of barbeque smells in a large backyard. Apparently one of Adrienne's classmates, a mother of a teenage daughter, was intent on holding celebration for her daughters' sweet sixteenth. Candles hung on fence posts and white wood trestles covered in varying brightly coloured paper streamers adding light to the diminishing sun. A small crowd of teenage girls dressed in different degrees of fashion were scattered throughout the nicely decorated backyard in conversation. One girl stood out from the rest in a beautiful evening gown and a recent trip to the hair dressers. We surmised she was the guest of honor.

Adrienne as always, a little self conscious as to how she looked in comparison to the dress of others was seeking counsel. The wind was kicking up a little and she decided to ask some of the teenagers in conversation if anyone had hairspray. To her delight, one girl indicated she did and pulled a small can from her purse. Adrienne applied liberal amounts in an attempt to keep her hair in place.

The mother of sweet sixteen summoned us to a trestle she was standing by and lighting a candle to. During the introductions, the wind kicked up and Adriennes' long flowing hair rose up with it contacting the candle. In seconds, her hair was in large blue flame, a few seconds more, strings of streamers on fire, thirty seconds later, the crackling of wood on fire. Confusion followed panic followed by sirens followed by dense smoke followed by

humiliation and embarrassment. The house, backyard and Adriennes' hair survived though the goodwill of our host did not. On the way home as we rumbled along in our old volkswagen I thought about how to prepare our macaroni and cheese for dinner.

Burning Down the House

Television news is probably one of the greatest hazards of modern life.

Watch enough of it, and you will develop paranoid obsessions unrivaled in human history. This daily trip to the house of horrors will convince you that the world is one giant, dark, parking garage at night. Criminals wait in every corner ready to spring out and steal your money or take your life. If you don't leave your house, they will break in to get at you. Internet predators lurk everywhere waiting to steal your identity – even the commercials tell you that! Traffic is terrible! Politicians are stealing our money and committing unthinkable crimes!

I find the stories about home fires are the most frightening. People lose everything because children played with matches, or a candle was left burning. Watch the news around the Christmas season and see how many more candle fires there are! A cozy couch, a good book and a candle can be a formula for disaster.

Sometimes a fire gets started because a pot was left on the stove. It is so easy to do. I've left the stove on low under a pan of peas during dinner. Then it's off to the bookstore! Two hours later you return home to find the liquid boiled away, the peas shriveled and your house one step from destruction. I remember one news story about a house fire that started because towels were left in the dryer!

As a result of all these news stories, I've become crazy about making sure burners, the oven, the coffee pot, the dryer and a host of other appliances are off when I leave the house. I've driven halfway to work, turned around and gone home to make sure I turned off the burner under the morning oatmeal. I've run around the back of the house to peek in the kitchen window to insure the coffee pot is unplugged. I make sure no laundry sits in the dryer overnight!

How did my house catch fire? It was during an ice storm. Ice collected on the power line leading to my house. It tore loose and started the shingles on the side of the house on fire. The fire department came very quickly and the only damage was some scorching on the side of the house and a damaged electrical lead line. No electricity for two weeks in January! Since then, every time there is a threat of freezing rain I start to fret and worry.

Television weather is probably one of the greatest hazards of modern life.

By: Oboe Riederer

May 16: Arson Awareness Week

Tell us about the last house you burned down.

I love pizza's, who doesn't just leave them in the oven for ten minutes, get them out poor some coca-cola in a glass and enjoy while you watching tv or something. But sometimes when I turn my computer on and get my mind busy with some game I forget that my pizza is in the oven, only when I smell something burning I'm like: "shit". I run downstairs and I see the smoke in the kitchen. I take the pizza out quickly , although it's all burned I still eat it. My parents only concern is one day that I burn the house down.

I have been actually fined for making a fire once. It was in the forest, yes it is stupid. But surely you can have lots of fun, acting like indians running around the fire, boozing, using drugs. Untill police comes along, but I mean there

are responsible people we didn't want to burn down the forest,we kept the fire under control although we were not 100% if you know what I mean . I still think it's pretty sad that I got fine for it.

Kiril Mokeev

MAY 17, 2007 ASCENSION

IF HEAVEN EXISTS, AND YOU GOT TO CHOOSE HOW TO GET THERE,
AND ALL YOUR FRIENDS COULD WATCH, HOW WOULD YOU DO IT?

Reaching heaven would be a wonderful reward and while it's a flight of fancy to imagine that I could go there while my friends stay behind and watch me zoom into the ether, it could also be a great moment to have one last bit of fun.

With G-d, all things are possible, so I would want to wind my way toward eternity in style of some sort. For me, at the moment, that would probably mean a ride in a cool blue and silver PT Cruiser with automatic and climate-controlled everything, so I could ride in comfort to the gates of heaven.

I would want an iPod with me for the drive, which I imagine would last for a while, so I could listen to audio books on the way up, all those I never had time to read before I entered eternity; call it the last great cram session.

May as well enjoy some great food on the way, right? I would want deeply smoked and rub-seasoned aged sirloin, seasoned fries done crispy-style, and sparkling pear cider, with a desert of a caramel-apple cheesecake as the menu for that last journey.

As for what those behind would see, it would be enough to have them see that PT Cruiser lift off and glide into the sky, disappearing into the blue. Then I'd just settle in for the last great ride before meeting my creator and passing into eternity.

Not a bad way to go.

Cajh Writer

INKsters writing competition, 5/17/2007
Ascension

Broken Bones, Styx and Stoners

I never saw the bus coming. You'd think the huge red and white Marlboro ad on its side would have alerted me while I lit up. Oh well. "At least I won't have to quit now," I thought as I floated above, watching the crowd gather round my mangled body. Suddenly, I felt a tug from the manhole below and was sucked down, down into the depths of the city's sewer system and then whooshed through miles of floating debris, rodents, detritus of all sorts, everything that would make you want to call the Roto Rooter Man. I would have puked my guts up but I had none, my mortal coil and remains having been left far above on 72nd Street.

Finally I reached a huge entryway reminiscent of Stargate SG-1. The upper arch bore bright, blood-red lettering saying, "Abandon all hops, ye who enter here." "Shit," I thought as I was swept through, "You mean I have to leave my beer behind?" I amused myself with irreverent thoughts about supernatural typos until I realized the predicament I was in. "Uhhhhh... shit!"

An empty, tri-portholed doghouse with human skulls strewn about afforded some small relief: Cerberus had been taken out for a walk. Regaining my corporeality, I entered a nearby, ramshackle boathouse and paid a ha'penny

(which magically appeared in my pockets along with Loonies, Euros and a couple of shiny Krugerrands) to the ferryman within. "I'd never take someone like you if I didn't have to," he complained, sounding suspiciously like Simon Cowell. The river ride was uneventful, floating limbs and grotesque snapping things aside.

My penultimate destination reached, I carefully negotiated a long, winding corridor while cackling, DayGlo demons reached out to me with eager pitchforks. Finally, fearing the worst, I came to a huge gate made of pure gold. Inside was a mass of naked humanity in an orgy of positions so depraved, if not anatomically unlikely, that the Kama Sutra couldn't do them justice. One section contained huge demons with whips, paying painful homage to masked and shackled humans below. "This is truly Hell," I thought, "And I am in Big Trouble!"

A long-bearded fellow in a white robe appeared. Obviously he was Keeper of the Gate. He said, "Hello, I'm St. Peter." Trying anything to escape my doom, I started babbling, "Why am I here? I'm a good person! Okay I'm not perfect, there was that time I cheated on a French test, but I never cheated on my wife, well okay maybe in that virtual world I like to play in, but never for real, and besides, masturbation isn't a mortal sin, is it? So what's the big idea damning me when... uhh... who did you say you are?"

"St. Peter," he repeated. "Congratulations, you've made it to Heaven."

"But... what about the masturbation?" I replied, not quite able to think straight.

"Oh that's nothing, when we catch you we give you a wart or two, that's about it."

"And the demons?"

"They're harmless, just people who've chosen a different drumbeat. We call them 'furries' and they get a big kick out of scaring the newbies.

"But the naked orgies! The BDSM! This just can't be Heaven, Heaven has angels 'n harps 'n stuff!"

"You have it backwards. Would you REALLY want to spend eternity hanging out on a cloud playing crappy Back Preludes over and over? Christ, I'd rather play the bagpipes! And speaking of Christ, here he is now. You trust Jesus, don't you? Hey Jesus (he pronounced it hay-zoos), get your holy ass over here and reassure our newest arrival. And don't bogart that joint!"

Muzzily, red-eyed, Jesus wove his way to the gate and held out a huge spliff. "You gotta try this shit, dude. It's Heaven!"

And it was.

- Nebbisk Oh



FIGURE 12: NEBBISK OH'S PHOTO FOR ASCENSION

“You can choose the curtain or what Carol Merrill has in the box on the table.”

One glance at Carol’s vapid smile and glassy stare, and I say softly, “Um, Bob, I’ll take the curtain. Please.” My voice is soft and I recognize that the wild applause from the live studio audience will drown me out completely. Still, Carol whisks out of my view, along with the box on the table, and I find myself squarely in front of the curtain. The diaphanous fabric sparkles and glimmers, and I cannot stop myself from reaching out to touch it.

But before my fingers connect with the fabric, I hear a familiar voice shout behind me, “Hola Babe, What are you waiting for?”

I turn and see my husband Cutter sitting in the front row. And next to him is Ava, and amazingly enough she sits with Benny, Attia, Storm, Barb, Red, and Sven. In the second row is Zel, and yes, there is August too, looking peevis (as always) and a bit bored. I blink and look from familiar face to familiar face. Yes, I know them all. Every single one! They are my favorite friends and they are all smiling and clapping and stomping their feet happily. For me. I’m grinning foolishly, happiness fills my core.

“Zayante Hegel, come on up” A booming voice intones as the sparkling curtain opens to reveal a blinding, brilliant light. The intense light makes me squint and blink, but that is my only discomfort. The light is warming and healing and feels like a balmy spring day on my skin. There is a pleasing sound, a musical refrain that attracts me into the light. I cannot stop myself from moving toward the light and the sound, and I find I’m also floating, flying up and up and up. The music increases, and the sound of my cheering friends recedes. The last thing I hear is Cutter’s strong voice, “Way to go, Babe.”

By: Zayante Hegel

May 17: Ascension

If heaven exists, and you got to choose how to get there, and all your friends could watch, how would you do it?

If heaven is the place that everyone dreams of, but not everyone deserves to be in, then what do you have to do to deserve it? Is it by simply doing your best to be a good person or to be in service of God? I think heaven is just a word to describe a moment of our lives that we live for and finally find, for each and everyone of us heaven is a different place. And if heaven is the place of peace and eternal happiness it would be fair to have a life of things that makes heaven a heaven by that I mean that if you don’t know what hell is how can you possibly know what heaven is, how can you know the difference, how can you imagine heaven... If there is a way to heaven and I would have to choose it, then I would choose the most hardest. And by that I mean is to make right decisions even though they can put your life at risk. Live your life as best as you can, cause I believe in the end we would all

get what we deserve. So this is what would I do. I would invent a heaven for everyone on earth to get to my own heaven. A world without pain or death, the world of happiness all thanks to the virtual reality, mind control, cell rebirth, robots and many more revolutionary discoveries. Or at least give something beautiful to this world something that makes other people feel then I would proudly reach for heaven.

Kiril Mokeev

If my friends could watch me rise
From the earth to the paradise
I would invite everyone I know
To see my final big show

The way to paradise is not too hard
Just like going to your neighbours door
to steal the newspaper you want to read
and all you do is pick it from the floor

I would bring an orchestra with angel wings
So I could increase all my pride
While flying high into the skies
With cnn transmitting world wide

I'm stopping the nonsense in this part
Because heaven is in our lifes
Heaven is in your eyes and in your heart
Heaven is a reflection of our living acts

And because you only live once
You gotta make your way to heaven
With all your heart, soul and mind
I know it's a cliché but fits on this rhyme

By: Kandinsky Korobase

MAY 18, 2007 INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY

DESCRIBE A MUSEUM YOU KNOW AND LOVE.

Everyone should visit the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Just the design of the building is amazing. It's kind of a broken-up Jewish star with silver metal walls bent at odd angles. Inside, the architect worked a lot with the idea of "the void." There is one tall room where you can push open a big door and then push it closed and be in the dark, by yourself. There is nothing in the room but a ladder high on one wall—purposefully put much too high, out of reach. Here you get a feeling of what it feels like to be entombed in a dungeon with no way out. There's another void, an empty room where the concrete floor is partially covered by a pile of iron disks, an inch thick, the size of serving platters. Each round of rusting iron has a crude crying face carved on it. They are piled loosely. They shift and creak if you walk across them. Hardly anyone does. Down another corridor there's a door that takes you outside to a square concrete gulch called the Garden of Exile and Emigration. It is filled with rows of square concrete pillars that are about twenty feet high. Willow trees sprout from the tops of the pillars, creating an arching greenery. But the genius is that the columns are all slanted, and the rough, cobblestone floor is slanted at the same angle, so your eye gets the illusion that it's a perfectly straight room, but really everything is slanted. You are perpetually off-balance. You have to put out your hands for support. You can hear voices but your sightlines are blocked by the pillars. You bump into people coming around corners. You keep losing your footing. You keep getting surprised. You never know who's coming. This garden speaks to the eye, to the foot, to the mind by way of the inner ear. It is a stunningly uncomfortable place, poetically showing you how it feels to be an exile or an emigrant, always off-balance, never knowing or seeing the lay of the land. Everyone should visit the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

Malachi Babenco



FIGURE 13: MALACHI BABENCO'S PHOTO FOR INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY

Collections, of artifacts and documentations of now and then. Fixed within walls of glass cases and signs. Covered walls, bolted doors, and ironed bars magnify the knowledge these walls hold within.

I've grown to love another type of Museum, walkin up right with knowledge earned. Encased within one mind's eyes, with experience shared none compared, a living museum he is. Like a walled up museum, holds knowledge from different worlds. My world, his world and your world too... so Deeter thank you, for sharing the touch of an international museum.

His knowledge is vast, worldly and fantasy. Common with materials of long ago, and thoughts of future to come.
Trigger continuous hunger pains, on going
curiosity of what is worth. One tend to indulge and lose one`s own museum of
sanity in arts of long ago.

Based on knowledged gathered in weeks of few. Seen with eyes owned, heard with ears a fixed. Greatest trilogy
unfold before me. Winning of one`s short
story wrote, engulfed in overwhelming energy shared. Journey amongst the old and new, luring and decieving.
Creating within a glass pane, safe and secure another
artifact dusted and inspected. Getting it ready to sit upon a lonely pedestal, set within four great walls. We call a
Museum, per say.

Deeter a living museum as we all know. My acknowledgement to you.

tears2nangel Beck

MAY 19, 2007 MALCOLM X BIRTHDAY

DESCRIBE A RADICAL SEPARATIST YOU KNOW AND LOVE, OR BETTER YET, DESCRIBE HOW IN THE HECK DENZEL WASHINGTON DIDN'T WIN THE OSCAR FOR HIS PERFORMANCE OF MALCOLM X.

I am the most radical separatist I know. I keep going back to a line I once heard from Lewis Black: "My problem, heh-heh, is with authority!"

From high school until now, my second full-time job, I've had bosses I didn't appreciate; they didn't seem to have much problem returning the favor, either. At least that's how I saw it.

But there's only one common thread through all those bosses.

Me.

So maybe it's really me with the issues. I don't need no stinking bosses.

Fortunately, my job provides a creative outlet for that, a daily blog I do about NASCAR. For about 5-10 hours a week, all I do is write about anything I want in the world of NASCAR. The only real suggestion I get is this: don't swear and don't link to anything untoward.

How wonderful it is to write without the shackles of the rules of game coverage. Just Friday, I wrote about how NASCAR drivers would fare on The Price Is Right. (There were fights and brooding and pissing and moaning so no, it wasn't pretty.)

But even that might be a sign of something. The blog is a year old, NASCAR is in season (i.e., news happening every day) and the best I can do is write about The Price Is Right? There are 50-some teams, which means 50-some drivers, 50-some stories to be told. Plus there are NASCAR's ever-changing rules, a different track each week, and the biggest free agent in the history of the sport, Dale Earnhardt Jr.

Maybe I'm tired of writing about NASCAR too. What I really need is a general sports blog: The NFL, NBA, MLB and NHL at my disposal.

But who's to say that won't get boring after a year. The sports world might be too constricting: too much cheating, too many contract negotiations, not enough feel-good fluff.

So I then I blog about the world at large. The tragedy becomes overwhelming, all the bad in the world; the good news comes too infrequently. I find myself decrying the same people over and over, using different phrases and circumstances to say the same thing.

And that is why I'm the ultimate radical separatist.

Eventually, the known world will not be enough.

By: Hustle Humphreys

MAY 20, 2007 NATIONAL SALAD MONTH FROM THE ASSOCIATION FOR DRESSINGS & SAUCES

YUP. THERE REALLY IS AN ASSOCIATION FOR DRESSINGS AND SAUCES. IF YOU WERE A PROFESSIONAL IN THE MAYONNAISE INDUSTRY, WHAT WOULD YOU TALK ABOUT AT COCKTAIL PARTIES?

I feel a connection to anyone working representing the mayonnaise industry.

Go ahead, try to bring that up at a party. If you're not met with stunned silence, you'll be met with a muffled chuckle. (Unless you're in D.C., where there's an association for anything you can think of.) And immediately, lots of folks on the other end of the conversation think they know your life story simply based on your job.

"Wow, that must be a, uh, different kind of job." Which means you must be a different kind of person.

Sportswriters get a similar cache of responses: "So how you think the (insert team here) are going to do this year?" Or, "What are the players really like?" Or, my favorite: "Wow, you get to watch games for a living?"

At a family reunion, my cousin - knowing I had grown up near Philadelphia and was an ardent Eagles fan - once asked, "Wouldn't it be cool if you could get a job with one of the Philly papers to cover the Eagles?"

In the fraction of a second, here's what raced through my mind: No Sundays off between September and early January and few days off period from late July to January. Minimum three days of travel every other week or so. Being caught in a death struggle with the other Philly paper not to get scooped. Never being able to enjoy a game with a cold beer in one hand. Dealing with people on a daily basis who would rather not deal with me. Over-the-top fan base, PR flaks, agents, secretive coaches, untouchable league office...

"Yeah, that'd be great," I told her.

Anyone with a job that appears so out outwardly out there is bound to get the same questions. And that forces you to talk about work, which you're probably trying to forget at a cocktail party. But you don't want to be the jerk of the joint, so you smile and nod and politely answer everything that's thrown your way.

It'd probably be easier for both of us if we were accountants or lawyers. Everyone knows those rules. It's a profession. You know, professional.

Sports is a hobby for many. Mayonnaise evokes memories of picnics and cookouts - a hobby for many.

So there we stand. Smile, nod, answer. Repeat.

By: Hustle Humphreys

I was organizing a party to promote my latest product: the self-sufficient mayonnaise.

- Ladies and gentleman, your salad needs mayonnaise? You tuna? Your sandwich. That is over now. I present you the self-sufficient mayonnaise. You just need a spoon. Self-sufficient mayonnaise will bring you all the flavour you want. You don't need real food anymore. Just a full spoon of mayonnaise and it's done.

- That's very fashionable Mr. Korosabe. Is it tasty?

- Off course it is. You can choose from chicken to salad.
- Is there any side effects.
- Off course not (Probably). I eat it everyday.
- So that probably explains why are your skin green.

By: Kandinsky Korobase

All night on a drink a rum...

“The problem with Americans is that they have much too narrow a view of mayonnaise. It’s something they use only on salads, in potato salad, or sometimes on cold cut sandwiches. It really can be used for a lot more.”

Just my luck! A room full of people and I wind up at the bar next to Mr. Hellmans.

“I’m talking about REAL mayonnaise, of course. Real eggs and oil and vinegar – not some of this artificial stuff you get. Did you know that in Germany they use mayonnaise on French Fries? Why not? You put sour cream on a potato don’t you? It’s the same idea. You should try it sometime. You’ll never go back to catsup. In Russia they sell more mayonnaise than catsup!”

Mayo!

“And in France they have it with cold chicken and hard boiled eggs. You can use it in cakes, too. There are some fabulous web sites about mayonnaise with recipes and history...”

May-ay-ay-ay-o!

“...and I think my personal favorite is peanut butter and mayonnaise. Forget the jelly! Mayonnaise gives just the right balance to the peanut butter – that subtle bite against the sugar in the peanut butter.”

Daylight come and we wanna go home!

Oboe Riederer

MAY 21, 2007 JUMPING FROG JUBILEE

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A FROG IN THE JUBILEE? WHY DON'T THEY
HAVE JUBILEES WHERE I LIVE?

Green with envy, lumps of pride I show up at the door. Once I'm in I see people wandering all about the floor. People of all colors dancing, talking, and walking across the floor. I wait one second, then I look once more. Lights are flashing, the colors are changing and I'm still standing at the door.

Green with envy I hop in some more. The people don't see me, they just ignore. On the ground a walk past all the feet stepping, stomping, and stammering around. Green with envy I go unnoticed to the dance floor. The feet go past me in a hurry, and I keep on hopping in avoidance. My heart starts racing, my little green legs start shacking, and I feel the weight of man crashing down upon me. Across my eyes I see the lights, green, yellow, blue, red, and green again.

Green with envy in that last second my life of hopping goes dancing across my little mind. Then the white light meets me, it came to greet me. I get ever closer and no longer am I a green frog any more.

TheGreatLate Graves

Deeter Decosta - Jumping Frog Jubilee - May 21st, 2007

What sort of misery has transformed me into this green slovenly mass of slime? My stomach rests on the earth below while the thunder of human feet shakes the earth around me. The bipedal onlookers surrounding my fellow pond dwellers and I like were some sort of toy at their disposal. The annoying sound they call music adding to the vibrations I have no desire to feel or experience. Leave me be you hear! Leave me be! Have you no heart? Yanking me from my home and thrusting me into this madness. One minute making tadpoles and now this!!!

The mosquito's and flies grow in number whilst they amuse themselves in this festive charade. My hope is a fly or mosquito grows to gargantuan proportions while I am away and bites you all hard in your asses and makes you grimace!!! The finger you keep flicking at mine only serves to make me stand firm in my resolve. Ouch! You SOB! That hurt! I hop a pace not for your pleasure but to get away from that repetitive pain in the you know what.

Unite I say dear fellow slime backs! Rebel and stand your ground! Do not partake in this festive silliness engineered for human entertainment! We hop at our own pace and to our own distance! Not to the prodding and poking of an unsuspecting human finger or hand!

Yes the hand dear brothers and sisters. The human hand! Therein is the secret of the rebellion. Hold back your swollen bladders for just the right moment. Than unload with all the pent up pressure and volume contained within. Spray that hand brother! Spray that hand sister! Hit them in the face if you can! A reminder of the power of the frog! We may go down but we go down with honor! In time they shall feel our power as they wake one morning to find deformed warty digits!!

Attent hut!! OUCCH!!A roar of annoyance from the human onlookers as I take a leap for frogkind. Pick me up dear fellow. My bladder is full and I long for the embrace of you're warm hand.

There was a time when you'd come here and you'd see some REAL jumping going on – not this hopscotch they play now. Helmets in a jumping frog contest! I've surely seen everything. Of course in those days we had real winners and real losers too. Everyone went out there and jumped the best they could and somebody won and everyone else lost. Now "everybody" wins. They get little "certificates of participation." That way no one's ego gets bruised – but where's the challenge to excellence?

I understand that you don't want folks to feel left out. That's why a real jubilee has a variety of activities with lots of prizes. That young tadpole over there may not be good at jumping - but by gum, he's the best at evading capture. That one over there is the best darn flycatcher you've ever seen. Everybody's got something they're good at and they have a chance to win a prize by doing their best. These days they just participate instead of doing their best. Reward is expected, not earned - so it's meaningless.

In my day we didn't need certificates to participate. You did it because it was fun. That's why they had jubilees. Everyone was jubilant. Jubilation was alright. Sure, things weren't perfect. We knew that. We also knew that we were working to make things better and that sometimes things were pretty darn good. It was OK to celebrate. Nowadays you can't do that sort of thing. It isn't "correct" to be jubilant. Folks think something's wrong with you because you're happy. When did it get that you had to be focused on the negative all the time?

We know a lot more things now – but that don't mean we're smarter.

By: Oboe Riederer

See that tree over there? The one with the moss coverin' the scar on the bottom? My daddy died under there. A thunderstorm like we get here in the forest now and again. Bolt came outta nowhere, a boom like I ain't never heard, and he was gone. Just like that.

I always promised him I'd go be someone and not just another frog, that I'd use my God-given talent to jump. I know we all can jump like humans can think or cheetahs can run, but I was always better than most.

It almost didn't happen, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

The tree, right. Right after daddy died, I took a few splinters and fashioned a leading edge for my arms. They're round, in case you didn't notice, and the wood made them more aerodynamic. Hey, it's all we had back in 1984.

I was flying higher and further than I ever had. No one had seen jumpin' like that, least that's what they told me. Well, one day I was practicing when some 8-year old kid wanders by. He's got a pointed stick and a mischievous look in his eye. I figured it was best to get the hell out of Dodge, but he caught me before I knew what happened. Put that stick right through my shoulder. I know you were wondering what that scar was.

Took me a long time to recover. I was always a bit of a loner, so I just dropped outta sight for a while. A long while, actually. I didn't need everyone seeing me all laid up.

I liked the solitary life I had.

Then one day, I ran across an old friend. Roy and I used to go at each other on the competitive jumping circuit. We got to talking about the old times, and he said his last event was coming up. We were both gettin' on in years and he thought it was time to hang 'er up.

"Why don't you come along? It'll be like old times, one last time," he asked.

"Nah, I gave that up a long time ago."

"You still got them wings?"

"Carry 'em with me everywhere, even though I've no use for them now. Just my way of bringing daddy with me."

"Lemme see you jump." It took some persuadin', but I did. Just because it was him.

"Shit boy, you ain't never lost it."

So I met up with him at the jubilee. Some people recognized me, at least the older folks did - the ones who could see through the wrinkles. I heard them whisper but didn't pay them no mind.

And wouldn't you know it? I beat Roy in his last jubilee. Just like the old times - one more time.

Some of them folks grumbled. They said my wings was unnatural. What's the term they used? 'Performance enhancing.' Well no shit. Why else would I use them things? Ain't no law against it.

Just 'cause I figured out a better way doesn't make it wrong.

I'm the best that ever was.

By: Hustle Humphreys

MAY 22, 2007 LIMERICKS

THIS IS A BAD IDEA TO OPEN THIS TOPIC, BUT PLEASE BE KIND TO THE JUDGES.

(SUBMIT AS MANY AS YOU LIKE ON ONE NOTECARD. MUST BE YOUR ORIGINAL WORK. MUST BE SOMEHOW RELATED TO SECOND LIFE! 500 LINDEN PRIZE.)

LEAN CLOSER

An avatar newbie called Nell
said 'SL has a terrible smell'.
I thought she was joking
then I started choking -
windy geeks! Can you smell it as well?

GuyH Writer

INKsters writing competition, 5/22/2007
Limericks, all Copyright © 2007 Nebbisk Oh

ROMANTIC LIMERICKS

My lover, she maketh me whole,
Beyond simply playing a role.
Her beauty is far
From a mere avatar
For I see to the depths of her soul.

I talk to my maiden so fair,
Invisible typing on air.
Yet the pixels I see
Transcend reality.
My eyes close, and still she is there.

My love, you're so constant, and true,
With red dress and eyes shaded blue.
Or your dress may be white
And your eyes, black as night.
I don't care. I just know I love you.

My love's a green spider named Sam,
Or sometimes the King of Bhutan,
He plies me with pearls,
He give me new worlds,
He defines me. He's all that I am.

Can anyone doubt our true love,
 When we hang from the rafters above?
 Our friends think we're batty,
 Or furry, or gnatty,
 But truth told, we fit like a glove.

We type and we talk on the phone,
 We'll never again feel alone.
 We're oceans apart, dear
 But you have my heart, dear.
 That is, 'til my hubby comes home.

I stare onto storm toss-ed sea,
 Not sure if I'll ever be free.
 When hope seems forlorn,
 I sign on, am reborn
 For he breathes Second Life into me.

The castles we build oh-so-high,
 Would startle an architect's eye.
 The high parapets
 And the dank oubliettes,
 They express our true love in the sky.
 - for my friends Burnt and Rose

SILLY AND NAUGHTY LIMERICKS

A cool guy whose name was Abdullah
 Made love to a girl who was cooler.
 Turns out she was nine,
 Now he's serving his time
 In the dungeons of old Numbakulla.

If you've recently been broken-hearted,
 Try our club, name is "Dearly Departed."
 The music is lewd,
 And the DJ is rude,
 And the pose balls, well don't get me started!

He'd been 'round the block once before,
 So he asked her to dance a v4.
 But he acted in haste,
 For the woman was chaste,
 So he chaste her all over the floor.

Poor guy, well he sure came a cropper.
 His girl cheated, and now he must drop her.
 Put a chain on a prim,
 Took her out for a swim,
 And he dumped the bitch, all prim and proper.

Insensitive lout that I am,
I asked her to use a webcam.
One of SL's fair "tens,"
She should break the cam's lens
For she looks like the King of Siam.

His lover was gorgeous, and Dutch,
But her English was, well, not much.
Thank heavens above,
For the language of love.
You know: Building and scripting and such.

His visage was like a Greek idol,
Physique? "Mr. Universe" title.
Now, back in RL,
He said, "Ah, what the hell."
Drank booze, smoked, slept and gobbled three Mydol.

She used all the tricks he had taught her,
Hid SL from spouse and her daughter.
Then, just he feared,
She went <poof>! Disappeared.
(Fell asleep, she did. Then hubby caught her.)

A geek here, a wannabe writer,
Had promised to knotty he'd write her
A story a day
For the contest in May
But he wronged her, and never could right her.
(I'm sure I've seen this line someplace...?)

He sent in his story to knotty,
Ripped off from "The Illuminati."
One glance she but took
Cried, "I read that book!"
"BRB," he said. Then he went potty.

At INKster the judges distill,
They separate class from the swill.
We trust to their reason,
The eminent threesome
Of knotty, and Sammie, and Bill.

The Second Life film auditorium
Is not just a supersensorium.
It's a highly effectual
Heterosexual
Mutual masturbatorium.
- apologies to anonymous

He just couldn't get enough Sling-o,
It suited him better than Bingo.
The music was fine,

Playing most of the time,
Stuff from John, Paul and George, and some Ring-o.

Some goodfellas like to play Sling-o,
And some merely play with their thing-o.
But Tony Soprano
And all his paesano,
Get lap dances in Ba-da-bing-o.

Approaching her, grinning and jokey,
He asked her to dance. "Okey dokey,
Let's do it!" said she.
Disappointed was he,
When he saw what she chose: Hokey-Pokey.

A flea and a fly in a flue,
Were imprisoned, with nothing to do.
So they hollowed a prim,
Made a tunnel within,
And they flew through that flaw in the flue.
-with apologies to "anonymous"

I smile when I see her, my Ellowelle,
She smiles back, thinks she knows her fellow well.
The actual reason
I'm gigglin' and wheezin':
Her name just reminds me of "LOL."

He wished to no longer be neuter;
Went shopping one day for a "shooter."
There were big ones and small ones,
And short ones and tall ones,
Some peed, and some did something ruder.

I'm proud of my Woodie XD.
It's massively hung, just like me.
When fully distended,
I stumble, upended.
And fall on my ass when I pee.

Raw Sex in SL is so gay,
It's "Avatar tar," you might say.
Consensual porn
With fake genitals worn
In strange places indeed, I must say.

He went to the festival stag
And the crowds all around caused such lag,
They announced that the sim
Must drop all scripted prims
Now his thing's with his bling in a bag.

A Japanese writer named Ryu,

Was unsure of just what to do.
He thought limericks
Were just silly and sick,
So he won with a brilliant haiku.

There once was a player named Murray,
Whose vision got all soft and blurry.
He dated a Neko,
But married a gecko,
And woke up three day later – furry.

The furry's a race quite peculiar,
When chastized, they just get unrulier.
They scrabble, and skitter,
And drink tea with bitters.
They're really nice people. They fool ya!

The guy was a terrible griever,
His naughty reign couldn't be briefer.
The first trick he planned
Got him ousted and banned,
Now he sulks in RL smoking reefer.

A builder in Fisherman's Cove,
Tried making prims, all interwove.
But all his Tomfoolery,
Made crappy jewelry.
His customers left him, in droves.

Instructors in SL are great!
The classes they teach are first rate.
They charge you no cash,
Get you started... you crash,
And you come back ten minutes too late.

I'm stretching a bit, now, I think...
Can't make one more cute limerink.
By all gods in heaven!
It's quarter to seven,
This writer has slept not a wink.

- Nebbisk Oh



FIGURE 14: NEBBISK OH'S PHOTO FOR LIMERICKS

A woman in a flexi-prim dress,
sought to gesture a sloppy /blowkiss.
But she /repulsed instead
TPed home and then said,
"My inventory's too big a mess!"

A Second Life gentleman called,
but the escort he bought only stalled.
To her utter despair
she had lost her prim hair,
Leaving her avatar bald.

Joe Smith and Juanita Juarez,
tried two animated sex beds,
When Juanita was through
she asked, "Was it good for you too?"
He said, "Babe, I'm still trying to rez."

There once was a man from Dubai,
who lived a Middle East lie.
He made his AV busty
bought a walk that is lusty,
And typed, "What a pretty girl am I!"

Harr Ireton



FIGURE 15: HARR IRETON'S PHOTO FOR LIMERICKS

Three entries for you...

So Ms. Canned wants a limerick, eh?
 There's no better way to waste a day.
 If I were Robert Frost,
 Hundreds would have been tossed
 But I'm a hack. This all makes me gray.

Of all things, I came here for my blog
 I wound up writing about a frog
 I met friends, I may race
 But one question to face:
 Why can't I have a virtual dog?

This thing had better win, 'cause I'm broke
 I can't even afford just one Coke.
 'No money, no status'
 Is always thrown at us;
 Lindenless is a poor way to croak.

By: Hustle Humphreys

Prim Lure

Cried out a young prim called Torus:
 "Build with me and you'll not bore us!"
 "Profile Cuts," we replied,
 That shape's what we tried
 Cause torturing torus ain't never snore-us!!!!

By: Zayante Hegel

There once was a girl called NaughtKnotty

Who taunted for words, quite a lottie.
She challenged us nerds,
To sing out our words.
As if we were SL's Pavarotti!

-- CeeJay Writer

Cried the Newbie at Orientation:
Changing clothes causes me consternation!
Said her friend: Not to worry,
You can always go Furry,
Though you might need a flea vaccination!

By: Zak Shepherd

MAY 23, 2007 WORLD TURTLE DAY

YOU KNOW THE SLOWEST PERSON AT YOUR JOB? THE ONE WHO JUST NEVER GETS ANY BETTER OR ANY FASTER? WHAT IS LIFE LIKE FOR THAT PERSON?

Speed matters in our line of work. A scenario that actually happened to me once: Event ends late, I get back to the office with about 20 minutes to write 15 column inches - about a page and a third in Word.

We've got one guy who takes forever to write, deadline be damned. And what kills is that he chooses to write slow.

He's a good writer, certainly, probably the best among us sports folks. Perhaps that's why he's slow: Every word has to be inspected, re-inspected and considered until it's perfect.

That's not how I write. I try to think of an angle on the drive back to the office; then I follow through, get it done and get the hell out of there. Why work longer than I need to?

Perhaps this doesn't seem like a great attitude, and I can't disagree with that. I should be honing my craft, right? True, but I'm talking solely about live, deadline stories. Craft matters more when I'm writing a column, which is infrequently, or when I'm writing a longer-form piece, which is even more infrequently.

Craft doesn't matter so much when it's 10:30 and you've got an 11:10 page deadline (meaning the page has to be on its way at 11:10).

That doesn't seem to matter to him.

But hey, he's won the awards and the accolades. Me? I'm just a utility player who can write, edit or paginate with varying levels of proficiency in all three.

That, however, doesn't change the fact that he's a stressing deskers' nightmare.

By: Hustle Humphreys

GET A HORSE!

I'M SORRY! It's all well and good that you say the computer can do that faster – but I just don't have the time to learn that. This has to be done NOW! I can't afford to take two or three days to sort out how it works on the computer! No, I can't afford to interrupt what I'm doing now to have you show me - maybe later when this is done. Thank you for offering but I'm very busy right now.

EXCUSE ME? I don't use that document feeder thingie on the copier. It only jams every time I use it. Then I have to get someone in here to open the machine and clear it and I have to start all over again. Five copies later it's all jammed again. It's just easier to open the top and do one page at a time. That way it doesn't jam and I can tell what's going on. I'm certainly not going to get that toner stuff on my outfit! WELL TOO BAD! I believe in keeping backup copies of all my work. I like to keep copies of things that I can look at and carry with me to meetings. Those computer file copies aren't reliable. Those disks all break or get jammed in the machines – and what happens if you don't have a computer – you're really stuck then. Oh, don't tell me about those CD's – why don't

you know they don't work in every computer? I got one of those once and it wouldn't play in my machine. You people have too much faith in those things and you'll pay the price one of these days! This is only 50 pages. I should be done in about half an hour. Come back then.

SEE THERE! They made another change to it! I knew they would! If you'd gone running off right away to get it done then you'd have wasted your time. It just doesn't pay. You wait an hour or two and someone is sure to find an error and it has to be corrected. Then you have to go back and pull the old one out of distribution, make the changes, make the copies and redistribute it. What I don't understand is why everybody has time to do it over again – but no one has time to do it right in the first place!

By: Oboe Riederer

Diary of a Turtle

Dear diary:

Today was a big day. I woke up early, about 6 AM, but I took too long to get out of bed and only ate breakfast at 8 AM. It wasn't a bad breakfast: Some fish egg's with placton with jelly fish sauce, to be more spicy.

Then I went for a jogging. I almost broke my record of 100 meters in 1 hour. But you know, it's not easy to carry this shell all the time. My doctor, Dr Shark, says it's starting to give me back problems. I might need surgery.

Then finally, Mr Bugs, the rabbit challenged me for a race, and you know what? I WON. I was so glad. I was tired of being teased by him, it was a kinda of a lesson

That's all for today I think.

By: Kandinsky Korobase

MAY 24, 2007 ERITREAN LIBERATION DAY

I KNOW, YOU HAVE TO LOOK UP ERITREA (AND IF YOU DIDN'T, YOU ARE TOO SMART). SEE WHAT INSPIRES YOU ABOUT AFRICA AND WRITE ABOUT IT.

MAY 25, 2007 HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY TOWEL DAY

ALWAYS BRING A TOWEL, ESPECIALLY ON THE 25TH. SHARE YOUR HITCHHIKER LOVE STORIES.

Hours had passed along I-95 in Georgia on a typical summer day: hot, brutally humid. A Chamber of Commerce day, only if they owned stock in Trane.

The only respite was that a thunderstorm - or, more assuredly, nightfall - would come. Eventually.

My car was miles back. Something in the radiator and of course, my cell phone was dead. In this part of Georgia, we weren't near anything, still a good bit from Savannah. That's why I was walking.

You know how people are. Don't want to stop for strangers, what with the threat of mugging and all. I used to be one of those people; now I'm not sure I ever will be again.

Fortunately, I happened upon someone who was. Or, more accurately, she happened upon me.

I was at the point where I knew every pebble along I-95 in Georgia. I wanted a drink, I wanted to sit. But that didn't get me any closer to a repair shop.

Then it happened: She pulled up in front of me, off on the shoulder, put her four-ways on. I jogged - a charitable term, I'll admit - and she asked if I needed help. Apparently I wasn't haggard enough.

I explained what happened and she offered me a ride. She was cute, too, curly blonde hair with dimples and ample eyeshadow. Just what you'd expect from a southern belle.

I hopped in and was grateful for the seat. Her red convertible offered the chance for wind, honest-to-God moving air, not the invisible sludge I had just lived in. That's when I caught sight of the tricked-out dashboard.

She started driving said she was a college student. I asked her how should could afford such a nice ride; she said something about daddy and trust funds. That led her to some problems she was having with her family, how mom was banging the pool boy or some nonsense.

Blah blah blah. I just wanted to try out the in-board DVD player.

However long the ride took, it wasn't long enough. She got me to a gas station, and thankfully it was open. (By then, she was talking about Puddles, the dog, pissing all over the vacation house. The irony.) I thanked her and got out - slowly. The in-board screen was touch sensitive ... awesome!

As her taillights disappeared in the distance, I realized how besmirched I was. A sadness fell over me.

Man, that thing made my car look like a piece of shit.

By: Hustle Humphreys

It was the first day for the new job so it was inevitable. The car broke down just a few miles from the office. After several minutes of trying to restart it, I looked at my watch. If I hurried I might just be able to walk the rest of the way and make it on time.

I heard the engine behind me and without thinking stuck out my thumb. The car rolled to a stop beside me. I looked over. "Mistake" I thought to myself. The car was about 1909 vintage – tall and carriage like – open top – banana yellow. The driver was even more curious with his great mop of curly white hair, ruffled shirt and velvet coat. "There you are," he declared. "Get in." Stunned, I climbed up into the front passenger seat.

I looked at my watch - 42 minutes. "I know," he declared, "only 42 minutes. Plenty of time. I have to make a short stop over here." "Hold on," I said. "How do you..." Before I could finish the car pulled to a halt in the drive of a very grand manor house. Soldiers crouched on the lawn with their rifles pointed at the tree line of the nearby wood. Suddenly what appeared to be department store mannequins emerged from the woods, ray guns blazing. The soldiers fired back. I ran through the doors and into the entry hall of the house.

"Ah, there you are, yes." The speaker was short and rumped looking. He wore checkered trousers and a baggy black coat. His hair was cut bowl-style, looking for all the world like Moe from the 3 Stooges. Next to him was military man in khaki with a trim moustache. "They're under attack by dummies" I blurted. And there's a strange driver and his yellow car out there. "Moe" looked at me. He calmly replied, "Yes, and you have 42 minutes to get to work, I know." He pulled flute from his pocket and turned to the soldier. "If you would be so good as to activate the loudspeaker." The military man flipped a switch and "Moe" appeared to play the flute into a microphone. I heard nothing. The shooting sounds from outside stopped. "That frequency should jam them for quite some time. Fancy pants should be able to handle it from here. You'll excuse me while I get my companion to work." "Moe" beckoned me to a Blue booth in the corner. I stepped into the booth. The door closed behind me.

I was in the booth by a tall sandy haired man with a wide grin who looked as if he was ready for a day of cricket. He had question marks on his sweater and celery pinned to the lapel of his white coat. "Ah, there you are. Just time for trip to the Eye of Orion I think." I gaped at the huge space around me. "It's bigger..." I started to say. "...on the inside than the outside. Yes, they all say that," my host replied. Suddenly the booth jerked. "Emergency recall!" the stranger exclaimed. The booth ceased to vibrate – and the doors swung open on a spare hallway. Uniformed guards approached. "Lord President," the leader of the guards bowed to my host. "An emergency with the Matrix that requires your immediate attention." "Very well, Castelan," he replied. "You will see to the return of my companion while I attend to the matter." The Sandy haired man placed a firm hand on my shoulder, smiled, and said "Brave heart!" He headed down the hall and out of sight.

"There you are!" the Castelan said sticking his head out of the booth. "Get in! Hurry!" He had removed his uniform and helmet. He had a broad face and sandy colored, curly hair. His coat looked as if it were made of quilting scraps. "I don't understand" I said. "No, I don't expect you would!" he snapped. "How much time do you have left?" I looked at my watch. 42 minutes left – it must have stopped. The booth's humming was replaced by a shrill whine. The booth shuddered and stopped. "Hmmm," the quilt man frowned "caught in a wake. Let's see what's going on." He opened the door and we walked out onto what appeared to be clouds. Across from us stood a different booth. In front of that booth stood a man dressed in black. He had a black and grey beard and wore gloves. He addressed my host. "We meet again. You have a new companion I see." "Don't look at his eyes. Go back inside," the quilt man told me.

When I entered the booth I saw an older gentleman sitting at the console. "There you are, my child. Well, quite a time I should think. Quite a time indeed! Don't worry about him," he said pointing toward the door. "He'll be able to handle that fellow. Now we must see if we can get you home." He walked over and turned on a viewing screen. What appeared to be jungle was outside with a gleaming city in the distance. "Something familiar about this..." the old gentleman murmured as he exited the booth. I followed him. We headed toward the city and came upon what appeared to be oversized salt shakers with whisks and plungers attached. They were herding a group of blond people. One of the blonds bolted and was instantly stunned by a ray from one of the salt shakers. The

robots turned to us: "You are our prisoners," the metallic voices screeched. "You will follow us or be ex-ter-min-a-ted." We were led off, separated, and placed in small cells.

"There you are!" He was short and wore a white coat and hat. His sweater was multi-hued and he carried an umbrella. He punched a panel on the wall with the umbrella and the bars slid open. "How did you escape?" I asked. "Tell you later – lets get out of here!" he replied. "Where'd the Scottish accent come from?" I asked. "Questions, questions..." he muttered. He looked up and smiled. "You're catching on. Very good! Very good!" We raced back to the booth and I leapt inside.

Bent over the console was a tall, curly haired man in a long brown coat, an outlandish scarf and a floppy hat. "There you are, splendid." He gave an enormous toothy grin. Why do you keep saying "there you are" I asked. Oh, ..well... one has to know where one is to know where they're going. As I explained it to Albert – it's all a matter of perspective, you know." "What's a matter of perspective?" I asked. He replied "Why time, of course. That's why good times seem to race by and meetings at work seem to last forever. It's why you fly through a good book and never finish your textbook assignments. He held up an analog watch. What's the time?" "Seven thirty," I replied. He turned it upside down. "And now?" "One o'clock," I replied. "All a matter or perspective wouldn't you say? Would you like a jelly baby?"

I stepped out of the booth on the road in front of my car. A smiling man in a brown suit was tinkering under the bonnet. He looked much younger than any of my previous hosts. He turned and entered the booth and I followed. The inside glowed green and everything appeared organic somehow. "You redecorated," I said. "I don't like it." He smiled and grabbed a small cylinder from the console and handed me a towel. We went back to the car. He reached into the engine with the cylinder. It whined for a moment, and then the car started. He wiped his hands on the towel and gave it back to me. He smiled and said "Well, there you are. And don't worry – if it stops again I'll be coming down the road in a few minutes." I looked at my digital watch, got in the car and drove to work. I arrived 42 minutes early, carrying a towel.

By: Oboe Riederer

Skye Soderstrom 25th May 2007 Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy Towel Day

Surreal

Surreal it is a magnet
for those who can't stand still
for those who want to float in space
time travel at their will.

The clocks that flow and bend and sway,
It is against all thinking,
That earth could move, and heavens roar,
With tiny sweet creation.

A hundred billion, billion stars,
A galaxy entwines
Each flick of switch
Each surge of power
Each wire of strength, a crown.
They bring the jewel of light around,
all flickering to the ground.

The sparkles dash

The ribbons sway.
The lights sing all are found,
upon a heart so full of love,
that astral plains abound.

Electrical storms are spinning
around the hue of sky,
the storm is so enlightening
brings sparkle to her eye.

A towel there, floating at the ground.
Its invitation hovers.
To bring there bliss, together found
the sound of gentle lovers.

Skye
Inspired by Salvador Dali

I try to refresh my mind, is late, just walk around the city...is a bad zone, very dangerous i walk quicky and then, i stop, i say him, with his white cap and hat like "pedro navaja" he is an assesin, maybe a profesional one, but is so attractive. Under the heat his darks eyes smiles, is friendly...and i want to meet him.

By: Proserpina Writer

MAY 26, 2007 MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTIONIST WEEK

BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THIS CELEBRATION. WHAT WOULD YOU WRITE IF YOU HAD A TRANSCRIPTION MACHINE, A TAPE RECORDER, AND A SNOOTFUL OF MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE?

Skye Soderstrom May 26 2007
Medical Transcriptionist Week

M -Meddling but steady,
E - Exacting clerk,
D -Dilligent worker,
I - Infinitely ready.
C- Called on regularly,
A- Always willing,
L- Left alone to work,
T- To face the grilling.
R- Ready at PC,
A- And with pen in hand.
N- Not for making tea!
S- She who can command.
C- Covers all sides,
R- Reacts not a lot,
I- Instantly grinds,
P- People to dirt.
T- Typist of note,
I- Instills truth and hope,
O- Often learns rote,
N- Never a dope.
I- Illegal not her,
S- She is the best,
T-Tough like rough fur,
.....when put to the test!

.....

The Medical Transcriptionist



FIGURE 16: SKYE SODERSTROM'S PHOTO FOR MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTIONIST WEEK

MAY 27, 2007 PENTECOST

LET'S GET HOLY.

Skye Soderstrom May 27, 2007 Pentecost

He should me the way.

We started school on the same day and were friends forever. He showed me the way. He was a timid, little mouse and I was his feisty pal. When trapped in a thunderstorm, Tommy stood and whimpered. I poked him to run home through the lightning. He was scared to jump the stream on the way to and from school. I dragged him across. I showed him the way.

Every year I attended Tommy's birthday party. It was always a fun-filled, delightful event. It was far removed from the sad existence of my own household. I never had birthday parties.

Every day we spoke or played and shared our innermost secrets. As teenagers we attended different schools but Tommy took me to Sunday school and later to church, with him, every week. He brought good to my life. We often escorted each other to parties, dances and outings during that period. I never thought of Tommy in a romantic way. He was my pal. I went on to college and Tommy worked in a tailor's shop. We saw less of each other. He would turn up now and then for a chat and always on Sundays for church.

I married at nineteen. Tommy was still in the background but retreated gallantly when I was betrothed. He always came to 'first foot' my mother at Hogmanay, when we came home to visit. He knew that we would not have been able to go out and enjoy ourselves until mother had had her 'first foot'. It was a Scottish tradition. It was good knowing my pal was always there for me, a bookmark in the pages of life.

Tommy never took a steady girlfriend. He went through a rebellious phase in his early twenties. He drove his MG Midget through the park, over the stream, now abridged. The stream he had been afraid to cross when young.

I moved away, about two hundred miles, we were working with the military. He purchased a motor bike with a very large engine. I heard that he had been accepted to train as a minister and had moved through to Edinburgh, soon after we had left for the north.

The news whistled through one day in May. We had just purchased our first home. I was really excited about the future.

Tommy had jumped a red traffic light. The pillion passenger was thrown free when the bus hit them. The big motor bike landed on Tommy. He lay for six weeks in intensive care and then God took him to heaven to complete his training. He was twenty five.

He had shown me the way.

© Skye Soderstrom



FIGURE 17: SKYE SODERSTROM'S PHOTO FOR PENTECOST

MAY 28, 2007 MEMORIAL DAY

LET'S GET DRUNK WHILE WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE REMEMBERING
THOSE WHO SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES TO PROTECT OUR COUNTRIES.

Skye Soderstrom May 28th 2007 Memorial Day

Lest we forget...

My mother was a clippie during World War II. She escorted the bus and her passengers through Glasgow during the Clydebank Blitz. She had to walk in front of her bus during the blackout, torch in hand, guiding her driver through the murky, dank, bomb ridden streets.

She told me how one day the air raid warnings had gone off and the driver reversed the bus into a pen close until it was safe for them to continue their journey. Bus loads of munitions workers were often targets for stray bombs.

Towards the end of the War my mother developed Erysipelas on one side of her face. The doctors said that this had been due to the fact that people had used old money during the War for currency. Old money, such as that saved in tins under beds, as the war effort meant no new money had been manufactured at the Royal Mint.

My mother had touched a cold sore on her face with her damp, woolly mitten encrusted hands.

Luckily it was towards the end of the War that she developed this scourge. Penicillin had not long been discovered. Every night one side of her face was smeared with black penicillin ointment and a brown paper mask applied.

If the disease had not been contained in such a way the spread over her brain would most certainly have killed her and consequently me, come to think of it!

...Lest we forget the little people's role in World War II!

GLOSSARY

clippie - a bus conductress - a female ticket collector/seller.

pen close - a large space between buildings but joining the buildings across the roof space - a passageway as found in Glasgow tenements, a pen close was most likely where the highlanders kept their sheep when they first came to Glasgow during the Highland Clearances.

mittens - here they are gloves with the tops cut off the fingers, regulation wear in order that the clippies could keep their fingers warm in the extremely cold Glasgow winters.

scourge - something evil

©



FIGURE 18: SKYE SODERSTROM'S PHOTO FOR MEMORIAL DAY

MAY 29, 2007 HERB WEEK INTERNATIONAL

SO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE HERB? WHAT DOES IT DO FOR YOU?

Stoned cats are friggin' hilarious.

They're not sophisticated enough to smoke weed, so we're left with one option: catnip, my favorite herb.

We have two cats, Grace and Hank. Hank has yet to experience the mind-altering affects of catnip. Grace, however, is a full-blown addict. (Unlike human addicts, however, she forgets she's addicted until she hears the package rattle.)

Grace is your typical stately, holier-than-thou cat. But a dose of the old catnip and she's reduced to activities normally beneath her: chasing her tail (normally reserved for the mutts), stumbling around the house (normally reserved for her drunken owners).

My wife just planted some catnip on our deck, and Grace will certainly discover what it is before long. We had some reservations about wasted cats three stories off the ground, but we figure they'll be OK.

Hank is the anti-Grace: Friendly, fun-loving with an incredibly wimpy meow. He's bigger, clumsier, more - well - guy-like. When he gets his first taste of catnip, it ain't gonna be pretty.

But you can damn sure bet it'll be hilarious.

By: Hustle Humphreys

Ode on a Grecian Herb

In these days when cuisine is a fashion,
And cookbooks in stores do abound,
When recipes now are a passion,
And chic restaurants spread around town,

We are tempted to focus on dishes,
Like pasta or chicken with rice.
We are likely to talk about fishes,
Grilled eggplant with oil and spice.

But while all of these foods are delicious,
And some in their way are superb,
I hope that you aren't suspicious,
If I spare just a thought for the herb.

Oh the herb is much more than a garnish,
That is added to dishes for taste.
If you think so, its good name you tarnish,
And you do so in terrible haste.

For the herb has a noble tradition,
That spans continents, peoples and ages.
It has aided the human condition,
And been valued by kings and by sages.

Yes herbs have been used throughout history,
To help cure the body of ills.
Their properties hold many mysteries,
To treat tension, insomnia, chills.

They've been used by the Greeks and the Persians,
By the Chinese, the Arabs and more.
They've been used in a number of versions,
To treat hay fever, asthma and sores.

There are ointments and there are infusions,
And decoctions and tinctures and creams.
Be sure that you have no illusions,
Their success rate is high, so it seems.

So let's hear it for mint, dill and garlic,
For saffron and ginger and thyme,
For tarragon, goldenseal, vervain,
And for basil to close out this rhyme.

When I write about things that are eaten,
I'll use metaphor, adjective, verb,
To praise one thing that just can't be beaten,
The splendid and marvelous herb!

By: Zak Shepherd

MAY 30, 2007 NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION WEEK

THERE IS A BUILDING NEAR YOUR HOUSE THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN BULLDOZED TEN YEARS AGO. DESCRIBE IT.

Deeter Decosta - National Historic Preservation Week - May 30th, 2007

It was a small rundown bungalow built during the conflict in Europe and the second great war my parents told me one day driving by in our car. The house was the only one unoccupied in the area we escaped to as teenagers to get away from the prying eyes of adults and to partake in our teenage indulges. As far as anyone of us knew, nobody ever lived in it and it made a perfect spot to sample all the things in the adult world we were told were off limits.

The house was run down and large sections of the roof were moss covered. It was a stark contrast to the houses on the street that were of newer and more modern architecture. Upon entering the house a musty smell overpowering enough to keep people away was the first thing to be noticed. Our teenage curiosity and desire to be alone always won out in the end despite the smell. More usually one of us had a candle and it would be lit and placed in the middle of a barren wooden plank floor. Around the candle we would sit and tease the girls that had accompanied us about ghosts and spirits in an attempt to get them closer to us.

Most usually on a Friday or a Saturday night we would migrate to the house for awhile. Be it to sample some alcohol one of us had snuck from a parents liquor cabinet or to try smoking a cigarette or simply to try and kiss one of the girls who were there whom we found attractive. It was our meeting place and when talking at school or on a phone we simply stated meet at the house at such and such time on this day. None of us lived in this particular neighbourhood but all of us felt we were part of it because of our association with the house.

We graduated from school and commenced our journey into the adult world we had always found so restrictive to our teenage curiosities. The house simply continued to become more neglected and rundown with each passing year. It stood out more and more with its unkept yard, broken fence and leaning roof.

One day driving by on my way home from work I noticed activity at the house. A crane and a group of construction type workers in the front yard. Looking towards the backyard I watched a small group of teens running out of the house to an open field in the back. Shortly after the swing of wire rope and a large wrecking ball smashing into the side of the house. The destruction an awakening and confirmation of my adulthood.

The old house was about a quarter of a mile from the apartments where I grew up. It was near the bus stop. It was haunted, you know. The windows were dark and boarded up. There was no grass and boards and shingles littered the front of the house. If we had looked closely we would have seen fresh mortar on the stonework in the front, but children don't notice that sort of thing.

One day there was an article in the paper about the old house. The old house was a man's "dream home." Instead of an old wreck, he saw the house as a dream come true. Its old floors and tin ceilings were wonderful to him. He was working evenings and weekends, by himself, to fix the old house and make it his home. As someone growing up in an apartment, I could understand that dream.

Some months later tragedy struck and a fire broke out in the old house. It looked like the dream was over. The house, however, was still haunted by the man's dream. He said he wanted to go on and restore the house. There was a possibility, however, that the city would condemn it.

Our family moved shortly after that and so you will need to write your own ending. The "realist" in me says that the house was condemned and torn down. The man moved on and, with luck, found another place to care for and restore. The land is now used for a convenience store.

The dreamer in me, however, says that other people got together and helped the man keep his dream alive. They did restore the old house and he lives there happily today.

Every old house - indeed, every old building - was once the vessel for someone's dreams. With imagination and perspiration, they can be so again.

Oboe Riederer

MAY 31, 2007 HURRICANE AWARENESS WEEK

WERE YOU READY? HOW'S THE WEATHER WHERE YOU ARE? HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A DANGEROUS STORM? WE SIT AT YOUR FEET AND LISTEN.

There was a fantastic storm in Virginia a couple years ago. I was curled up with a new book at the time, reading about Creative Visualization as the house swayed with the wind.

Rain lashed the windows and whistled through the eaves. There was an electric quality to the air, a sense of power and possibility. As I read about visualizing, the words began to ring with a sense of Truth. A sense of destiny.

I had been sitting for a while, lost in thought, when I realized all was quiet. I got up to look out the window, and saw that the wind had died, taking the rain with it. Sunlight began to break through the clouds, lending a golden glow to the evening.

Branches were down everywhere, on cars, houses. I could see a tree going right through someone's roof! People were starting to poke their heads out, and I decided to join them. Oddly enough, my mind remained with the book.

My life had been a world of chaos at that time, and I related with the scene more than I may have cared to admit. The book I'd been reading had given clear instructions for how one might create anything in their life. What would I create, if I could create anything?

One by one, people came out of their homes to survey the damage. The sense of kinship was amazing! It was as if all boundaries had been dropped by the sharing of this common experience.

Walking, witnessing, I realized that more than anything, I wanted a friend. A best friend. A man. A lover. A best friend man lover type person, yes! Of course! That's what I wanted! I began to imagine. I began to visualize.

As I came to the end of my block, I saw a man standing on his porch. He was staring.

I stopped, curious, and realized that beyond his house, not a thing had been disturbed. It was as if the storm had met an impassable boundary, leaving everything beyond untouched. I stepped onto the other side, into the light.

The man looked at me and smiled a slow, dazed smile, then said, "Welcome to the end of the storm..."

I smiled back at him, and nodded. "Yes," I replied.

I met my husband-to-be three weeks later. He was exactly as I had imagined he would be.

By: Velvet Tone

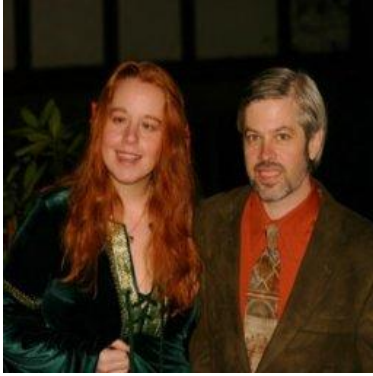


FIGURE 19: VELVET TONE'S PHOTO FOR HURRICANE AWARENESS WEEK

Most substitute teachers worry about student anarchy, chaos brought upon an unsuspecting victim. That's nothing compared to the ravages of Mother Nature. My first day as a substitute teacher, I survived a tornado.

My first gig as a sub was for a teacher I had worked with the year before during my student teaching. I knew her room, her teaching methods, and I knew creative writing.

I was about to congratulate myself on a successful day with no incident as I closed the door to begin the last period of the day. Then I noticed Jenny. I knew her reputation. I steeled myself for her acerbic attacks on my teaching skills. I smiled and began class with my combination of sarcasm and quirkiness, which had worked for all the other classes.

Jenny barely had time to protest that the day's writing assignment was too juvenile before the large vinyl blinds on the open windows began knocking about. From our third floor vantage we saw the sky grow instantly dark. And then it went green.

The sirens began to wail, my heart began to race. I frantically looked around the room for the sign indicating our designated tornado shelter -- I couldn't see it, I was blind with panic. I tried to stay calm, focused, and then I realized someone was freaking out in the back of the room. Jenny. "You don't understand...my house was blown away by a tornado when I was 8. I came home from school...no house!" The pitch in her voice kept escalating while her hands fluttered and her chest heaved. She was going to hyperventilate. Instinct kicked rationale out the window. I put my arm around her and directed the class down three flights of stairs to a hall behind the theater, a designated tornado shelter I remembered from those obnoxious drills. My heart was pounding as hard as the blinds against the windows when we left the room.

We crowded and crouched in the hallway with several other classes for about fifteen minutes. The familiar smell of creosote from the old shop floors in this hall reminded me this building had been standing since the 1920s and wasn't about to let a little tornado get it down. I shared this thought with Jenny. The storm blew over as quickly as it came up, and we went back to the classroom. Jenny coolly thanked me for being "the best sub [she] ever had."

And the tornado shelter sign was where it should have been...right by the door.

---Calliope Delgado

There aren't many hurricanes in western New York. That region, where I grew up, has a little thing called the blizzard.

It was THE great blizzard in Buffalo. I was standing at the bus stop waiting to get home from the University. People talk about the wind howling but there are levels of wind noise that go beyond howling. Sometimes the wind whistles and shrieks. This was one of those times. When it snows, a wind like that turns each snowflake into a tiny six-pointed throwing star that bites into your face. I was very happy and very lucky to see that bus come. Visibility was a matter of feet. The radio warned people to bring their animals inside. The wind chills were 60 below zero. "It is dangerous for living things to be outside," the announcer said.

The entire city was shut down by that storm. Driving was banned. Everything was closed except the essential operations needed for life or economic survival. Whoever was on duty as a phone operator stayed in place and kept on working because relief shifts couldn't get through. Hospital staffs worked round the clock and the steelworkers stayed in the plant to keep the furnaces running. Food and clean clothes were ferried to these people by snowmobile. Curiously, the University did not close. Apparently it poses a great difficulty to restart professors and students.

The amount of "lake effect" snow dumped on the city was staggering. People tunneled out of their houses. A photo showed four men standing around a black square. The black square was the roof of a car they had excavated. The plows tore up the curbstones in the city and destroyed the stairs and railings at the University Student Union. The plows ran into cars left abandoned in the roads and buried in drifts. The plow drivers couldn't see where the cars, curbs, stairs, and railings were situated – everything was a field of white.

When the storm was over, I walked to the park near our house. It looked so different covered in its white sheets! As I walked, I noticed a glass nodule at my feet. I cleared the snow that was around it and discovered it was the top of the street lamp!

The parks and the lake became the dumping ground for the snow as it was cleared from the streets. In June, I remember walking through a park and passing one last small heap of blizzard snow, now black with dirt and hardened to ice - it was enough to make me shiver.

Oboe Riederer