

The
Lamplight
2004



Acknowledgments

Editors:

Ms. Jean Tweedy
Dr. David Partie
Dr. Brenda Ayres

This is the first issue of *Lamplight*. Thanks to Scott A. Brown, a Liberty DLP student who suggested the name *The Lamplighter*. The title was amended and voted upon by Liberty's English Department.

Cover design: Christina Olson
Layout: Dr. Brenda Ayres

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WRITER'S ANGST Amy LeBlanc.....	3
TRODDEN MILES Nicholas Harne	4
PAIN Darla DiAntonio.....	4
THE PERFECT PEARL Daniel Christian Bowden.....	4
JUICE Amanda Day Schreffler.....	4
LET US RUN Jess Cornish	5
DREAM HOME Kathy Turkington	7
BOSTON COMMON AT TWILIGHT Kenzie R. Avol	8
THE END OF OUR WATER SUPPLY Jenness Roberts.....	9
SLITHERING SNAKE WANTING TO FIND Kathy Connell.....	10
WEARY WRITTEN Taij Walker.....	10
OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS Christopher John Gaumer	11 Best Fiction
MY HANDS GRASP THE CHAIN Heather Morris-Lowery.....	12
CHEESECAKE OR CHEESEPIE? Josh Gomes	12
WHERE I SAT IN THE THIRD GRADE A J Wade	14
DAVID Maria Marsico.....	15
I CARRIED HIS CROSS Annamarie McCoy.....	16
THE ROAD HOME Corrie Emery.....	17
A YOU AND ME EXPERIENCE Amanda Martineau	20 Best Nonfiction
ON DALI'S PARANOIAC VISAGE Ryan Leaming.....	21 Best Poem
ANIMAL CRACKERS Frank Jacobs	22
MYSTIC Micayla Nelson	23
MEMORIES Sarah Allen.....	24

A Writer's Angst By Amy LeBlanc

Why do I say I cannot write?
When my soul is a text, my Author's delight?
Why does my writing struggle to communicate
When He made my heart His writing slate?

There is a blockade lodged in my intellect
Forbidding my thoughts and words to intersect:
A water dam ceasing the flow,
A wall as thick as those of Jericho.

Untamed thoughts rush through the current at full speed.
In one body they form a stampede,
Slam against the barrier, which remains un-shattered,
But the body splits, and a million thoughts are scattered.

Why do I give up? It's all a loss.
Close up shop, let it overgrow with moss?
My life has been made with a purpose Divine.
My times are in His hands, not mine.

My mind is cluttered, direction unclear,
With herds of ideas I cannot steer.
Please break down, defeat this Jericho fort.
Dig up the deep foundation and make me a port

Where ships can harbor and deliver at the docks,
My thoughts taken captive and placed in the stocks.
They will I import and export, bargain and negotiate.
They will I edit and revise, correct and manipulate.

Crews with Information cargo, declare not your mutiny,
Merchants of Thought, be prepared to face my scrutiny,
Pirates of Chaos, beware of the new toll,
To enter this port, you must submit to my control.

Heavenly Author, please fill my thoughts with words that hunger
To express in Nebuchadnezzar's pleasure, Your every wonder.
This king whose pride reduced him to grazing grass,
Yet, in time, You restored him to raise a king's glass.

Oh must I also be a beast of the field, a head of cattle?
Can I be restored, or will I always fight this battle?
Will I repetitiously chew my cud like thoughts I over-think?
Or from Your Word and cup that "runneth-over" may I drink?

My thoughts are straying from this subject of thought.
I strain to hold them here, but now I've forgot.
Once again, on this topic I've spent too much time,
Too much anxiety, and so I'll end (without a rhyme).

Trodden Miles

By Nicholas Harne

When Johnny went marching home,
The war went with him.
Whether the winter was cold or hot,
He knew not. His hatred kept him warm.

The life he had led before
Mattered to Mother—
Flung her aside. The seasons flew by.
As she cried, the war went marching on.

Johnny threw arms to the dirt
To save hallowed pride.
He spat in disgust, and miles he trod,
Miles of sod. The life he led before.

The cacti were screaming for water
On this desperate **Pain** **By Daria Di Antonio**
But my naked feet were brave.

Across the jagged black barrier
I journeyed to meet my friends,
A soldier trotting in a minefield.

When all at once my owl eyes opened,
And my voice box released a high note—
A clay red nail, an enemy on my journey.

My unarmed foot it pierced with anger,
A raging stream released through red eyes—
Stinging pain, a child's first memory.

The Perfect Pearl

By Daniel Christian Bowden

To me
Your memory
Is a
Bit
Of
Grit,
So small
As to be
Inconceivably
Infinitesimal
But very able
To
Make me find
You agitating
To my mind.

Where around your
Bit
Of
Grit
Has curled

The perfect pearl?

Juice

By Amanda Schreffler

Aged and worn
Young and unpretentious

The rough aged wood
The fragrant spring flower
The intricate weave of old and new

Pure as snow
Every coarse strand
Joining the wrinkled mantle

Smallish in size
Delightful effortless joy
Making life ever so intriguing

Aged and worn
Young and unpretentious
Together they are life

Let Us Run

By Jess Cornish

The soft, sinking sensation of my sleep is broken by a sound I can't place at first. It sounds like a siren, or maybe a car alarm. "Why can't people turn off their alarms? I'll just ignore it and maybe I can go back to sleep by the time they make it stop," slurs through my mind before the realization strikes me like a dash of cold water that the strident call is my own alarm clock and I am the groggy sleeper unable to quiet it. Urgh.... as I force myself to stand.

Ten minutes later, teeth brushed, eyes almost fully open, attired in shorts and a wicking shirt, my shoes are almost tied. The words of my high school track coach come back to me, as they do every morning, "The first most important step is picking the right shoe. The second most important step is picking the left one."

I jump once or twice, to limber up my muscles. Just a mile down this road a trail waits for my feet. Soon, moving, my legs groan a protest I ignore this morning, though the groan is louder now than yesterday. I chant motivation to my legs, willing myself to go on, knowing that at the end of this trail is a euphoric, easy exhaustion. "The hardest day was yesterday."

Cold air clears my lungs. The same air that cleared my lungs when I was nine, when my dad woke me up at five o'clock, tied my shoes while my eyes were still bleared with sleep, jogged beside me on my first run. He had always been a runner and he could talk about it for hours. "The wind in your face, the mud on your legs, the sweat everywhere else... whew, there's nothing like it! I mean, there's this feeling of accomplishment, not to mention the endorphins released when you hit the point of exhaustion and push through it, hitting the wall. Did you know that endorphins are the purest form of morphine? Who wouldn't want that?" I would try to look at what he was looking at, with the faraway gaze, but I couldn't see it, not then.

But I kept running, too. And I found that endorphins were worth chasing, like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, hoping I would never really find it, hoping I could always keep on chasing it. I am chasing it now, running toward the dawn as if to help the sun break free of the mountains. Waking up slowly, in the first couple of miles of up hills and down hills and the road becoming a carpeted trail.

The huge redwoods become denser and bigger the farther I go from the house in the valley. Red bark, thick and impregnable, has protected these trees since ages before America was born. Bounding down a small decline, just barely touching the scattered leaves-covered stones and branches with my Adidas trail runners, I catch my breath suddenly, the warm aroma of rich, sweet wood and leaves, wet with fall rain fills my nostrils. My sister loves this smell. She says it's the best reason to get up before dawn and run.

Felicity is a natural. She doesn't have to be poked and prodded in the morning, but usually rises before her alarm goes off. I remember when she was fifteen and used to race her boyfriend to the hollow tree. The prize was a kiss, and he almost always let her win. Set wide in her pale face framed by dark brown curls, her hazel eyes come to me as I run past the tree we carved our names in, the littlest one in the ring of three, there to the left. Nostalgia bids me stop and find our names, but the trail races on ahead, calling louder.

It's no longer cold now, three miles out. I can see my breath in big clouds of steam around my face. My legs aren't groaning anymore, but are straining to go higher, harder. Sprinting up the incline, pushing faster, faster, as I used to do in high school, when I ran cross-country. Boy, good times. Slacking off in practice when we thought coach wasn't looking and then paying for it in track workouts and extra long weekend runs. He always knew how to get to us. And he was always right. Our starts were stronger, our kicks were like white lightning, and we won our meets.

My dad came to every meet and every road race, cheering and coaching, and dreaming it was himself. I used to have to run so hard to stay behind him, in those early days, breathing as if my lungs would burst through my ribs and the burn, baby, the burn. And then, one day, he was running behind me, laughing a little and asking me to "wait up for an old man chasing his glory days."

I climb now. There is no trail here, but I'm climbing, running on my tiptoes and pushing branches out of my face with both hands. Up, up, up. Always up, always. Does the world always go up? Maybe I should have known better than to take the left fork at the trail where I always go right. The right fork goes up too, but then it goes down. Oh, the glorious down. The left is still going up, and the trees blur the peak so much that I'm not sure I can see it. My breathing is almost sobbing. I know this feeling nearing hopelessness. The feeling that maybe I won't make it, after all, that maybe I should give up and turn around and take the trail I know. It's the same, but less intense, as the feeling I had in boot camp, the summer after high school. This hill evoked the feeling that I had, many times magnified, until I graduated a United States Marine. But here, no one was yelling at me from before sunrise to after sunset, no one was training me in spite of myself, no one was reminding me how weak I was. No

one but me.

Sweat trickles down my face and arms and torso, cooling my body as another gust of wind strikes me. It is a cooling, refreshing draught, but it pushes me back a step and I am forced to slow to nearly a walk up the mountain.

The sun has risen, peeping slightly through the branches of the giant redwoods. If it had been summer instead of autumn, today would have had a soundtrack provided by birds of all kinds. Furry woodland creatures would have been startled from their activities along my path, and I might have seen a turtle. I always seem to find a turtle or some trace of one. I think it's my lucky animal.

Pushing and grunting and gasping up the last fifteen feet of the hill, the blood pounding in my head, I reach for any thought that will get me to the top. And the minefield marathon rescues me. It happened while I was serving in the Middle East. There is something enormously amazing about standing on a starting line with scores of other service men and women on an early, overcast, winter morning. The sand stretches out in every direction—more sand than I thought could exist in all of the world put together.

Under cover of a military helicopter the gun went off and we took off like a herd of young buffalo. I was near the front of the pack at first, but soon the distance took its toll, and being in the front was an inconsequential fact to be considered in between hard-won gulps of oxygen.

Twenty-three miles later I had long ago ceased to wipe sweat from my brow. I was no longer distracted by the mine-sniffing dogs held back by the taut hands of their trainers or the friendly, toothless locals sitting on the sidelines casually gripping AK-47's. I had long ago ceased to notice the dogs and their straining trainers who were looking for live mines. I had even ceased to remember that on either side of me was a minefield and that I was now, at this moment, standing in a war zone in the Middle East. The only thing I kept doing was singing the "Star Spangled Banner" silently as I passed the American flags that marked each mile. I knew I would reach the finish line, but it was difficult to convince my legs that they would join me when I reached it. I was just glad that I hadn't had to run with my seven-pound Beretta 9mm as I had on my training runs last week.

We were all running rhythmically, hypnotically. We were focused. The sun was shining, but the air was still cold on this Middle Eastern winter morning. We runners kept running, some of us obviously struggling in our combat boots, others lugging our packs as if on a training march. The hardest part of the marathon was ahead of us: the last six miles, the miles that seem endless. Even the most experienced of us were reaching into our mental fuel tanks for the last drops to thrust our legs the one step at a time that soon turns into miles that are but a memory.

Now the memory of crossing that finish line bathed in sweat and dirt—with all the other soldiers bathed in sweat and dirt, clapping our comrades on the back, passing water bottles around in relieved and proud generosity—washes me with a glow as I stand here, finally upright, at the peak of my climb. I drink in the fresh air here at the top as if I've never tasted it before. Standing there, just for a minute, stretching my back and calves, I can see through a break in the trees that thunderclouds are rolling in. This means that a storm will hit, and soon, and hard. For me there's nothing to compare to running in the full fury of a coastal Californian thunderstorm in the fall. The power and anger terrifies and invigorates, soothes and refreshes all at once. And such noise.

The wind crackles through the trees with the sound of volley of gunfire. I have to put one foot behind me to brace myself against the thrust of it. My face is numb by now; the sweat feels frozen to my skin. A distant roll of thunder echoes the beat of my heart as I take a deep—to my toes and back kind of deep—breath and plunge headlong down the side of the mountain, breaking branches, tripping on loose leaves and rocks, one long mad race with death as one false step could bring pain and blackness.

Almost to the bottom, my legs running on their own volition, I am struck by the first raindrop. It's a large one, stinging my cheek, and a dozen more follow it. As water begins to drench my clothes and drip down my neck, I reach the bottom and careen to the left, following a trail I only dimly remember. And there I see it, pale and narrow against the thick undergrowth of the forest, twisting around trees and through clumps of bushes. I know my legs are covered in scratches, but the rain will wash the blood away in a hurry.

I can feel the sweat mingle with the rain as my shirt absorbs more water. The thunder is near deafening by now, as the storm moves closer. My legs are cold and tired, but I can't feel that. I can feel only the pull of the muddy ground beneath my feet and the tenseness of my body as I try to keep my balance on the uneven trail. My arms pump like a metronome, settling my pace solidly. Just a few more miles, just a few more miles. Up this embankment, spring down the other side, dart around this grove of redwoods, as always amazed at their massive size and strength. I nearly catch my foot on a hidden branch, just barely catching myself with a quick wave of my arms and a sharp intake of breath. Keep running, just keep running. "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"—Philippians 3:14 is the pace-keeping mantra that helps the miles melt away on this run.

As my thoughts range from the trail to the storm to the rabbit trails in my mind, a chance moment with Felicity

flits into thought. We had been sitting in front of our stone fireplace, sipping coffee and green tea, a runner's best friends, and discussing running, of course, and our futures. "You know, Scott, I have realized that it isn't important enough to win a particular race or beat a particular time on the course anymore. I mean, sure it's a great feeling and I can live on the afterglow for days, but—it's just not enough, you know?" She paused, sipping her tea meditatively. "I think—the race is merely the means to the end, and the training is the end, not the other way around. I mean, there's never gonna be any one race that is the ultimate, the be-all end-all of races, the one that is the end goal of my running. No, my running is the end goal. I think life is like that, too. Ya know what I mean?"

My sister always expressed my thoughts for us both. During class the other day the prof quoted Blaise Pascal and he said it so much better than I can: "The struggle alone pleases us, not the victory. We love to see animals fighting, not the victor raving over the vanquished.... It is the same in gambling, and the same in the search for truth.... We never seek things for themselves—what we seek is the very seeking of things." She finished her tea and went into the kitchen for more.

I have been on the hunt all my life. I followed my father as he ran through the forests in search of the never-ending run. I earned a place in the USMC by struggling for the sake of struggling. I ran a marathon in Middle Eastern minefield because it was new struggle, a new quest. And I'm running now, in a wild Californian thunderstorm, because it's a journey that never has to end. Yes, Felicity voiced my thoughts, as sisters are wont to do. We will always run for the sake of the struggle, the sweat, the pain, and the chance to do it again the next day.

My fingers are numb and every inch of skin is frozen into one giant, running icicle. The miles of leaf-covered, evermore waterlogged, soggy trail blends with the miles of yesterday and the days before. I am wet with sweat and rain, frozen by the wind and cold, and exhilarated by the sheer effort. The endorphins have kicked in and the adrenaline is pumping hard. I am running faster, faster, down the final stretch to the road toward home, a warm shower, and a hot breakfast. I can't wait for tomorrow, when this will happen again, on another trail. Just let me run with endurance this course set before me, wherever it goes.

Dream Home

By: Kathy Turkington

**Sleeping through winter to be awakened again on the first warm day
Scent of newly growing flowers and fresh green leaves filling the air
We could taste the new season like fresh fruit
Paths were discovered once again like secrets**

**Sharpo jagged clippers snapping at crisp branches and snapping at green branches
Forest was covered with soft hard dirt and swept clean paths
Edging the front of the forest
A thin line of weak trees scattered across boundaries**

**Uniquely shaped sticks created new found treasures
Rocks piled high together like puzzles for walls
Pockets in the dirt formed kitchen ovens
Arched tree branches presented the doorways**

These became our springtime homes

Boston Common at Twilight



Frederick Childe Hassam.
Boston Common at Twilight.
Museum of Fine Art, Boston.

By Kenzie R. Avol

Little Girl, clad in darkened clothing,
Like all the rest around you—
But standing all alone,
What keeps you held down to the path,
When you can go and roam?

The men behind don't look at you,
Though plenty are there,
There are but few
With faces—
And without eyes they cannot judge,
Despite your mother's claims they do.
It is she who holds you back
From the birds
Who might fly from the scene,
But, instead, as if in a painting,
They flock to the girl with the wheat colored hair.

See, even they, the tiny birds,
Must return
To you
In order to be fed.

And the people are drawn from the trolleys
By the magnets of their homes;

Even the sun returns to the earth
After the heavens call its bluff,
And order its decline.
You, too, Little Girl,
Are surrounded by the rituals of daylight,
And so it is that you cannot
Vanish into orange-tinted snow.

The leaves that extend their arms to the sky
Are grounded by the roots,
And so rely upon them to live,
To feed,
To breathe.

So turn around, Dear Child,
To your mother's stare,
Your mother's hand,
For can't you understand that you stand
In the same posture as your mother?
You've already begun to be
What it is you're expected to be,
And you cannot run off
Through untrodden snow
When the path which you follow
Has already been trodden for you.

The End of Our Water Supply

By Jenness Roberts

The water was gone.
The mad man took it from us.
Surging water from the Euphrates first quenched the desiccated soil around this village.
The water was our life.
It was a place that we could encounter stars reflected in dark water.
It was the stillness of a world that never knew an engine.
He tried everything he could to kill us.
You cannot recover from that right away.
We could not fish or farm.
There was no way to sustain life.
We had no choice but to leave the only place that we considered home.

Slithering Snake Wanting to Find His Home

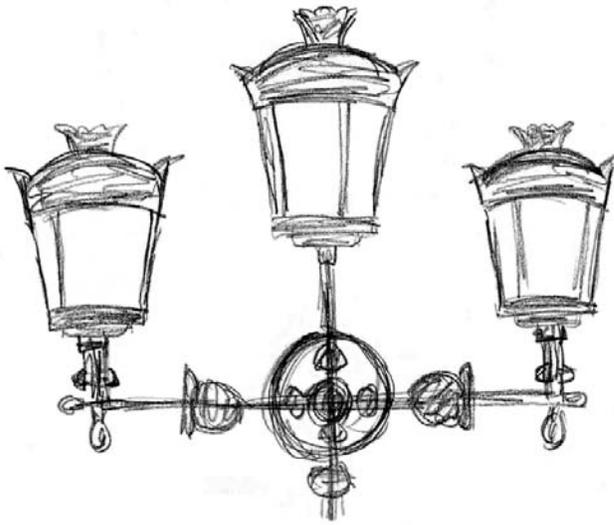
By Kathy Connell

With eyes on me he crosses the road.
Just to think that I will stop.
He slithers, steady and quickly.
And fearfully sees the indentations on my black rubber tires.
Eyes wide with fear, he hisses and curls up like a turtle in its shell.
I drive over him, not feeling a bump or dip.
Fearfully, I open my door.
Not wanting him to attack.
All curled up in crossing coils.
He looks up and tastes the air,
Knowing I'm on his side.
He slithers to his home of tall weeds and grass.
I feel for this little sliver of skin.
His black snake scales have probably fallen off
In the last few seconds of terror.
Poor little snake.
He meant no harm.
Just tending to his simple slithering life
He was just a black little snake looking for his

Weary Written

By Taij Walker

The workload
Is like a bag of sand
Weighing me down
I can clearly understand
Twenty pieces of trees
Due week after week
My river is flowing
Rather swiftly, I think
Into Multiple Choice
Short Answer and True or False
The combustion of the logs
Meets the wick
At the end
Of a burning candlestick
Tic-tock, tic-tock, tic-tock
I can no longer withdraw
Tic-tock, tic-tock, tic-tock
I must assay forward.



BEST FICTION

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

By Christopher John Gaumer

I was sitting on the window ledge in my dorm room, just figuring things out—you know, trees, ratios, my pending homework, and pecan pie fat content—when there was a loud knock on my door. Startling me a bit, I slipped off the ledge, almost falling out, but I managed to crawl back up and into the room in time to receive my stranger. And who would have guessed it. Tom Brokaw (anchor man for NBC's primetime news hour) was standing at my door. "Hey Tom!?" I said, still in my quasi reality filled with the concerns of an average layman who worries too much about his sit-ups, magazine subscriptions, and yes, fat content.

"Hey Chris, not too busy are we?" Tom asked.

Now on a normal day this visit by the cover boy of the news world would be a surprise to mark my whole week, or even month, but today I really could have dealt without this interruption to my cog session.

"So what's up Dan?"

"That's Tom." Brokaw answered. "My name is Tom Brokaw." He hates it when people call him Dan. Not because of his rival CBS counterpart, but because when he was still in grade school, he had never missed one question on any homework or quiz or test ever. Trust me, I know this stuff. Tom studied during his off time, his down time, and his whatever time. This educational giant unsuccessfully attempted to form an honors program for Sunday school. Never a date, never a prom, never an unnatural substance was permitted to defile his body. 100% squirrel-fur underwear. But during a geography exam in the fifth grade, he labeled the Danube River "Dan." in an attempt to curtail his test-taking time. The teacher saw this as a gaffe in his knowledge and marked it incorrect. This is why Tom thinks "Dan" is unacceptable.

A tongue-tied pause proceeded. My mind began to wander back to the pecan pie.

"So, I came here for a reason," Tom said, finally getting over his mental hedge. "What are you doing later tonight?"

One pecan pie made by the Lance Company has 10 grams of fat, which could easily be purged by a mere twin set of super sit-ups and a four minute upper body workout on my Chuck Norris machine. But that's not of great concern. It's the extra six minutes of work-out that could override any good that comes of it by putting me over my total body stress maximum for the week. So the pecan pie issue comes down to a mere probability of risk. "Like from 6-9 pm tonight?" Tom said, ignoring my wandering contemplation of nothing.

"Well, I kinda have plans." I said, obviously implying a lack of commitment to those plans.

"See, Chris, I'm going to be out of town tonight. I'm making a trip back to the old elementary school to finally get that test score misunderstanding worked out. Mrs. Greenleaf has since passed on, and so I'm going to go down there and...."

My plans were with Mary Stallworth. She's the girl who fit best into my schedule. Gorgeous. Perfect nails, eyes, smile. She always wore blue and she always said she'd "had a good time," and that, "we should do this again sometime." I didn't like her too much, but I always caved. My friends never understood why I didn't fall hard for her. They'd always say, "Why aren't you out with Mary tonight Chris? Didn't she call earlier today?" Mary is a case of "love at first sight, ruined by a second glance." I came up with that myself. Mary is indecisive. "Whatever you want Chris." Always a little too worried about that charming exterior. Always a little too carbon copy. Always a little too nervous to laugh.

"Yeah, I'm good to go tonight." I answered Tom. Tom looked at me. Apparently he was still talking and I'd just cut him off.

"I haven't even explained what I want you to do yet."

"Oh well, no matter what, I'll do it." I love Tom Brokaw. I'll do anything for him. I never miss an episode of *Dateline* or *60 Minutes* or *Nightly News* or whatever his show is called. Tom is my journalistic idol. Just his presence in the dorm room makes me feel like someday I will accomplish something.

"Chris, I want you to stand in for me tonight on the show. I know your experience is limited to stints in the high school paper sports section and custodial work, but that's why I want you. You're an underdog, and America loves an underdog." What a nuisance—I left Mr. Coffee on again. And that was the last of the Brazilian Chocolate beans.

"So what will it be, 'Mr. Nightly News'?" Tom asked as though it was my birthday.

I heard my boy Sean calling me from out the window. I turned and walked over. Sean and I had been through most everything together and he knew me better than my own mother. Sean made sure I was voted the "most non-opportunistic" in my high school yearbook.

"Hey Chris, me and the boys are going for pecan pies later today." Sean yelled to the second story window I was now sitting in. "Wanna come?"

I was trying to answer him but a loud holler from Tom kept interrupting me. Sean soon left, assuming I was passing up this opportunity. The yelling from behind eventually died out as I sat and stared out the window for a few hours. Mary, my journalistic career, and Mr. Coffee were still unresolved dilemmas in my continuing mental boxing match.

I adjusted my belt so as to avoid it digging into my side and then determined to resolve these issues with the hopes of not wasting my day.

*
*
* my hands grasp the chain
* while my feet dangle in the air
* I push myself forward on this swing
* and the wind blowing against my cheek takes me back ten
* years when everything I knew was honest and lily-white
* when my friends were far from maturity and simply chaste when I
* was a grain of sand in the catastrophe called "real life" a
* time when cartoons were the delight of the day and peanut
* butter and jelly was eaten at every meal I've tried so hard
* to stay in those days when I could dream naïve ideas and
* believe they'd come true I try to pretend I'm still there
* with my lunch boxes and Kix cereal I still watch cartoons
* and munch on peanut butter sandwiches in between
* commercials how I wish I could go back and get stuck in
* those days when polka dots and stripes matched when
* climbing trees was the epitome of adventure and clumps of
* dandelions could cure the blues
*
*

By Heather Morris-Lowery

Cheesecake or Cheesepie?

By Josh Gomes

I recommend that if you are extremely hungry, or if you are on a diet, then read this article at your own risk, but do not say that I did not warn you. This paper may cause serious drooling. Well, with all that said, the topic that I have chosen to expound upon is not for the light of heart. This is a very serious issue. No, I'm not talking about terrorism; I am not talking about Democrats or Republicans; I am talking about "Cheesecake or Cheesepie?" or "Cheesepie or Cheesecake?" Okay, I know you're thinking to yourself who cares what cheesecake is really called. I have some news for you—this issue is slowly tearing our nation apart. This is not something to joke about. I am going to let you know right off the bat, Cheesecake is not a CAKE. Cheesecake is a PIE, and therefore, I will only refer to it by its one and only true name, cheesePIE. I happen to believe that cheesepie is the single greatest dessert of all time. I think that it is pretty much understood that apple pie is the most famous dessert in America, but cheesepie is something in itself. It's just one of those things that we have to cherish while we are on earth. I speak for the millions of cheesepie lovers in this great country, and believe me when I say there is nothing better in the world than an unreasonably massive piece of strawberry cheesepie washed down with a tall glass of milk. I know you are probably thinking that your mom makes the best cheesepie ever, but they have actually conducted studies that have shown that my grandmother makes the best cheesepie in the world. Sorry to crack your eggshell, but that's the truth.

Cheesepie is believed to have originated way back in ancient Greece. The Romans actually spread cheesepie from Greece to Europe. I consider that the greatest accomplishment of the Roman Empire. The first recorded recognition of cheesepie is found during the original Olympics, which took place in Greece (776 B.C.). It was actually served to the athletes during the inaugural Olympics. How good would that be? You just got finished participating in some rigorous Olympic events and you come to the sideline and you have some cheesepie waiting for you. I think we should bring cheesepie back into the world of sports. I can almost see it now, the coach taking questions for a post game interview about his star player having a horrible game.

"So coach, what do you think the problem was with 'so-and-so'?"

The coach would reply with a straight face looking into the camera, "Well to be honest, 'so-and-so' just didn't have enough cheesepie this week.."

Or maybe a player would get seriously injured. I can definitely hear John Madden screaming on Monday Night Football, "someone get the guy some cheesepie, BOOM, and get me a piece while you're at it." Okay, maybe I am getting a little carried away with this whole cheesepie thing but it IS a thought.

The first question that you have to ask yourself is "what exactly is the definition of a pie?" According to Webster's dictionary a pie is a baked dish consisting of a pastry shell filled with fruit, *cheese*, meat, or other ingredients and usually covered with a pastry crust. You have to analyze that definition and compare it to the alleged cheesecake. The first thing that stands out about the definition is the fact that a pie contains cheese. Shockingly one of the main ingredients in cheesepie just happens to be cream cheese. Coincidence? I think not. When you think of a cake, the first thing that should come to your mind is your standard birthday party cake. A birthday cake is generally four-sided with different leavening agents to make it rise such as flour and yeast. None of these products are found in your standard cheesepie. Most cheesepies also have a graham cracker crust. The definition clearly says that a pie has a crust. The majority of your common pies are circular and placed in a nice little pie plate. This is no different from the very popular apple pie, blueberry pie or pecan pie. SO, how can you still refer to a cheesepie as cheesecake?

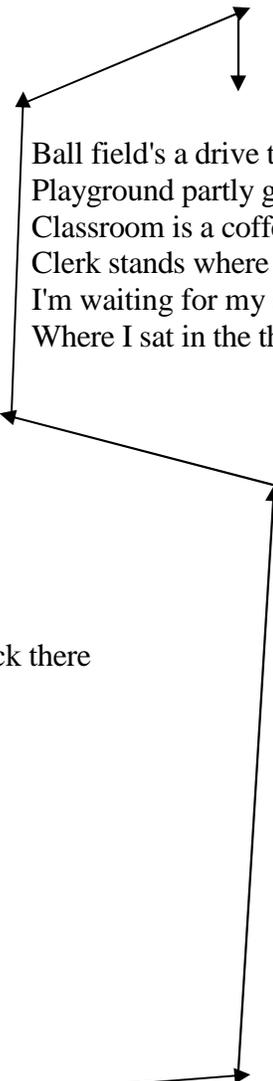
Clearly the issue at hand is that people still refer to cheesepie as cheesecake. I have found it easier to sell crust to a whole loaf of bread than convince people that cheesepie is not a cake. In most cases this originates at home. It starts when little Johnny asks Mommy what kind of pie is on the table. Mommy tells little Johnny that it is actually a cheesecake. So what is Johnny to think? He has already seen an apple pie and that it looks just like the "'cheesecake.'" Therefore, you really cannot blame Johnny for calling cheesepie a cheesecake. This is negligence on the part on the part of the parents. Everybody wants to overlook this issue but you simply cannot do that. All you have to do read the Webster's dictionary definition of pie. You may not even be a fan of cheesepie, but that is not important. The fact of the matter is that a cruel injustice is being placed on cheesepie. How would you feel if someone was always calling you by the wrong name time and time again? More than likely you would not enjoy that very much.

In conclusion, cheesepie has always been a pie and it will continue to be a pie. These parents and restaurant chains can continue to attempt to brainwash the youth of America, but you can only hide the truth so long. Maybe you were one of these kids. You are saying to yourself right now that all these years I have been eating a pie and not a cake! This can be devastating to some, but I encourage you to stop eating that cheesecake and start eating cheesepie. Cheesepie is not a cake and it should not be called a cake. I have always felt that this has been a serious injustice in the classification of food. Just the fact that certified restaurant chains have made tremendous amounts of money with the title "cheesecake" in their names is a mockery. The most famous of these would have to be the Cheesecake Factory.

Therefore, I believe that cheesecake is clearly a pie and not a cake. If it looks like a pie, smells like a pie, tastes like a pie, then it probably is a pie!

Had Ms. Sater then—
Brittle lady who looked sickly—
Sat in front of Tiffany
She could run faster than any one in the class
She was athletic, she was perfect
Sea monkeys are found in creek water
Kind of like a parasite or fungus
In the 80s they were sold on TV infomercials
Tiffany gave me hers— spilled them
Right then in class—they would have died anyway
My brother had Ms. Sater Didn't like her either
Had a lot of homework for 3rd graders
Was Mt. Herman Elementary School
Lived in the County Jonny and I
Went to county schools
Rode bus 214 on the second round
Accidentally rode it on the first round once
Was scared brother wasn't there
E'hit me called me stupid on the second round
Each day someone dusted the erasers
Was a lot of fun bashing them against the walls
PE class got to jump on the trampoline
Bev Holley did better than me
Had one at home
Tramp was beside the baseball field
Played t-ball there
I lost my shoe running from 2nd to home
So I turned back to get it
Then ran home—safe
Mt. Herman had a really cool playground
All kinds of rocks worth millions of dollars were back there
Tiffany and her dad got most of them
Most kids liked the swings
Boys tried to swing as high as they could
Without getting hurt or dying
Liked it too but Donna Reed wouldn't get off mine
Broke her wrist—problem solved
Never told—poor girl
Now I'm here same place and seat
The same building
It's been annexed by the city
Turned into a strip mall

Where I Sat in 3rd Grade
By A J Wade



Ball field's a drive through ATM
Playground partly gone
Classroom is a coffee shop
Clerk stands where Ms. Sater sat
I'm waiting for my caramel latte
Where I sat in the third grade

David

By Maria Marsico

How is it possible, David,
For one to be a shepherd and a sheep
At the same time?
To defeat a giant with ease,
Yet be defeated by your own greedy eyes?
To be a man after God's own heart,
Yet to break His heart time and again;
Can you be two faces, David?
Do you live two lives?
No, do not be discouraged, David
You are not alone.
You—your humanity, your imperfections,
Your ever-apparent need for grace—
This is what makes you real—tangible.
This humility reveals His Majesty's sufficiency.
Your brokenness—His completion
Your crying out in desperation—
Seeking so earnestly in honest, passion-filled poem and song.
Falling to your face and
Falling in love with Him over and over.
His mercy and forgiveness, piecing you back together,
Mending you and making you stronger and more courageous than ever before,
Making you whole,
Making you real,
Making you tangible.

I Carried His Cross By Annamarie McCoy

I, Simon of Cyrene, was pushing through the crowds that day, a day I will never forget.
I was on my way back from the country when I heard loud cries.
I knew of whom they spoke, The Savior. "Crucify Him," were their pleas.
I had to stop them. My Lord was going to die.
I had to tell someone! I had to flee.

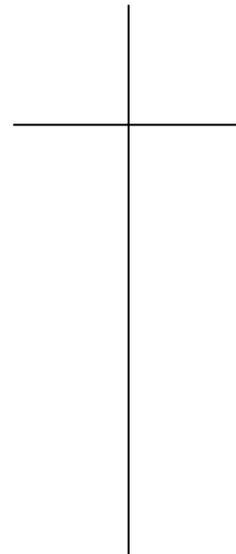
He had carried His cross thus far
When suddenly soldiers seized me, hurling me to the ground.
The screaming crowds continued on, silence surrounded my being.
As I gazed into His eyes, He uttered not a sound.
I wanted to protest and say I could not believe what I was seeing.

The crown of thorns was placed on His head.
His body was bruised. I knew by what I saw. They beat
Him, rejected by men with hate-filled eyes. I knew death was what Jesus had to bear.
He could take no more. I begged His release at the soldiers' feet.
The soldiers mocked Him and then tore the scarlet robe they made Him wear.

The soldiers again grabbed my arm.
They thrust His cross onto my shoulder and said, "Carry his Cross."
Jesus followed behind me, as the weight of His death was upon me,
I could only think of Jesus. I felt so much loss.
I knew Jesus would set my broken spirit free.

On the hill of Golgotha, the rugged Cross lay,
Echoes of hammering rang out, as they nailed Him limb by limb,
Wails pierced my soul as the nails hit His hands.
I listened to the pounding and poured out my thanks to Him.
Darkness began to fill the land.

The earth began to shake; I fell before the Cross.
Fervently He spoke, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."
A tear rolled slowly down my cheek. He took His last breath.
My eyes surveyed the Cross, looking to the Lamb who would give me life anew.
I will ever rejoice that He took my sin and conquered the grave and death!



THE ROAD HOME

By Corrie Emery

The road had stayed the same. Only it had not changed. Of course there were a few more potholes, the ruts had grown deeper, but in all nothing had really changed. It still would take me to the same place it always had. I had walked this dirt road home so many times during my life, and it had always made me smile. Along the sides was a fence, and behind the fence some cows. Birds were always singing and swooping through the air. On sunny, dry season days, the sun beat down and the dust rolled up around your feet, but that was all right because I had always loved the sun. Palm trees and Tica trees grew all around. The road was so straight, there was no taking a wrong turn once you were on my road. This was so unlike my life since last leaving my home; my life had taken so many turns. I thought coming home would help a little.

Had it been only seven years ago? It seemed like an eternity, and yet, yes, it had only been seven short years. Leaving had once sounded like so much fun: college, working, friends, and the BIG life. I was seventeen then and graduating from my small school. We had five graduates that year—the biggest graduating class ever at Escuela de La Independencia. Returning to the United States after having lived all my life in a small Latin country was something I was scared of and yet at the same time couldn't wait to do. My family returned me to the states to settle into college life.

The first year was challenging. Friends were not hard to make for me, but they were hard to keep. Most people were so busy with themselves and their problems, they hardly had time to just relax. This fact alone was foreign to me. Latinos *know* how to relax! I was determined not to become interested in a man, and for awhile that worked. I soon found myself caught up in everything around me: work, school, bills. It was the third year when I knew I had found MR. RIGHT, Carl Kanner, an American born Italian! It was difficult to think of school and everything else when I knew I was ready for marriage. Amazingly, he helped me with my schoolwork, my bills, and even reminded me how to relax a little. He had been out of college for a few years, and was now working in construction. After the first six months of getting to know each other, he asked me to marry him. I called my parents that night and told them the wedding was in five months! They had known I had met someone special, but the engagement came as a shock.

They had always been protective and asked me if I had thought all this through. I told them they just had to meet him to believe how wonderful he was. They caught a plane the next month, April, and finally met my fiancé. I had been right—they loved him and he loved them. Each one of my family members had something in common with Carl. My brothers sat for hours and talked of nothing but surfing and sports. My younger sisters watched from a distance until finally it was their turn to laugh and joke with him. My parents would take both Carl and me out to eat and they would talk of their faith, their work, and our lives together. I had never been happier, and I was only 21. In July we were married and we bought a little house near the college. Carl had to drive about an hour each morning to get to work, so he was always up early. Our first year of marriage was wonderful, and after only a year, we found out there would be a third to our family. With Carl leaving early every morning and not getting back till late, I had the house to myself. I was very busy and lonely during those hours.

Then one evening around 6:30 I answered a knock at the door. It was Carl's boss. Chuck had been to our house a few times but only when Carl was at home. He asked if he could come in, and I offered him something to drink, but he refused. He told me to sit down with him, that he had something to say. Right then I knew things would be different. Chuck began to tell me how Carl had mentioned some pain in his arm that day while working. Chuck told him to take it easy and go home. As Carl was heading to his car, he collapsed and was rushed to the hospital. Carl died on the way. I did nothing as Chuck finished his story. How could I? All I could think of was how happy we had been for the past few months, knowing the baby was coming and Carl so happy in his work. The next

thing I knew, I was lying on the couch, with a cold compress on my head.

I called my parents, and they rushed up to be with me. After the funeral, my dad returned to Central America, while my mom stayed with me awhile longer. I continued my classes in college, for I had only a few months left. Each day I grew weaker and weaker; I didn't really want to go on, but for the baby, I knew I must. One morning, I woke up and was so tired and sick, but I decided to go to school anyway and then grew sicker. During my lunch break I went to the bathroom and threw up. I must have fainted because I woke up in the hospital. My mom was holding my hand and crying that she loved me. All I could think of was the baby, was the baby okay? My mom squeezed my hand and told me the baby had been lost by a miscarriage. Now, not only had I lost my wonderful, handsome husband, but my baby had been wrenched from me as well. I turned my face to the wall and had no more tears to cry.

A few months later I found a job working at a grocery market in Lansing, Michigan. I had moved as far from the past as I could. My life-long best friend had lived here, and I had decided to check it out. I lived in a small apartment about ten minutes from the store, and could easily walk there. I talked to no one and had no friends. My nights were spent in my apartment with loud music playing some song about death. There were nights when I came close to killing myself, but I never could quite do it.

Ruth Lacey was my manager. She was a pretty lady who demanded respect and order in her store. Ruth was polite as she gave me the job, and had even offered to drive me home a few times. I refused, knowing she would not want to drive her car into my neighborhood. I had tried joining in on a few of the staff parties, but could not find enough happiness in my heart to enjoy the food and fun around me. Sometimes when a mother and her child would walk through my aisle and make their purchases, my eyes would well up with tears and I would turn my face away until the anger returned to my heart. Eventually I had no soft spot for tears, and when the mother and child walked through my aisle again, I was as hard as stone.

I had worked there for only a year when our store was robbed and Ruth Lacey and myself shot. We were rushed to the hospital. My wound was minor, but Ruth had been shot fatally in her back. As I was on my way to recovery, I was called to Ruth's hospital room. As I entered, she smiled weakly to me. I knew she was ready for death, but I couldn't explain why. I stayed as far away from her bed as I could. She held out her hand to me and whispered something. I had to get closer to hear what she had to say. As I leaned against her bed, trying hard not to hurt her in any way, she whispered something I will never forget.

"There's someone out there that shares your pain, someone who wishes to take it all from you if you will let Him. He loves you, as if you were His own child. All you have to do is accept him." Ruth's eyes closed in exhaustion, and I was shocked by what she had said. I knew *whom* she was talking about but refused to acknowledge it. The "man" she talked about had taken everything I loved away from me. He had laughed as I begged him not to take my baby, and had turned his face when I most needed a home. Of course, my mom had offered me a place back home, but I had refused knowing that home would never be the same after what I had gone through. I had run, and I had tried to run as far from Him and this faith as I could. Now, this lady whom I had not spoken more than a murmured yes or no to was telling me that someone loved me and cared for me. Ruth Lacey, my manager, had cared enough for me that she called me into her room at her dying moments. I noticed that no one had come to see her or wish her well. Some of her employees had sent flowers, but none had the time to come see her. I wondered where her family was, why no one was there to hold her hand and tell her things would be okay, that she would live. I looked down again to see a peaceful look on her face. Without thinking, I grasped her hand in mine and told her not to give up, that she had to fight, life was worth living. I couldn't help thinking how ironic those words sounded, coming from me . . . the woman who wallowed in death and drank of sadness. Nonetheless, I sat by her through the night and read to her from a small book on her table. A few times her eyes fluttered open and she looked at me with a motherly tenderness. She knew my pain. She had been through hell like me. I did not know how I knew this, but her eyes told me all I needed to know. Ruth Lacey, this pretty manager had known death, had known sadness and heartbreak. She had no family to speak of, and her life was just as lonely as mine. Yet, how had she managed to remain so

happy? No, more than that, it was joyfulness she portrayed in her work. This frail woman lying in front of me knew the real me and yet smiled and told me there was someone else who loved me more. The next morning Ruth died. Although I had not known this woman very well, I felt another piece of my life had been taken from me. I had hoped all night that she would somehow miraculously live and tell me of all that she had been through, and that she would be the one to bring me back to reality. But it was not to be. I had been let down again.

I was well enough to return home. As I lay in bed for those three days, I thought about how happy my life had been as a child, how home had felt, and how exciting things had seemed when I first left home. I laid a hand on my stomach, in the place the baby should have been, and my throat caught. It had been months since I had thought about Carl's face, and the way he loved me. Suddenly, something inside me broke. All of a sudden, the past didn't matter. I knew if I went home, I could find some answers. I quit my job the next day and was on a plane in a matter of weeks.

There had only been one other plane ride that had been this much fun, and that one had been taking me away from home. Looking out the window, I saw things I had missed on my first flight. The way not one cloud looked like another, how rivers flowed in different courses, and I was amazed as to how high up I actually was.

My parents hadn't known I was coming. This was something I wanted to do on my own. I needed the time to think on the way home. I had a long time to do just that, think. It was about an hours drive to my house. I looked back at how far I had run from home, how much had happened, and how lost I had been. I could feel my face lightening a bit as familiar sights came into view. This was the place I belonged, this was a place where answers would come, and people would love me. I asked the taxi to drop me off at the end of the road. I could walk the rest of the way. I had always loved this walk. Looking around me, everything was the same. The fence was a bit run-down, the cows looked a little lazier, but the birds sang as happily as ever.

As I reach the end of the road and look behind me, I see the dust starting to settle back down and the potholes don't seem so deep any more. The sun shines down with new strength and I think to myself that life will always be okay here. With parakeets soaring overhead, I turn around and look at what lies before me, something that has always been there, the place where I began. Home.

BEST NONFICTION

A You and Me Experience
By Amanda Martineau

There were no nagging wives, no worried mothers, no screaming babies. There were no obnoxious sisters, no taunting brothers, no over-enthusiastic tourists. It was just us. The two of us, on a beach, alone, in the middle of the night, my uncle and me. The night was quiet, a breaking wave here, a seagull there. We were sitting in beach chairs; he was lying back, no doubt staring at the sky, while I was hunched over, digging my feet in the sand. It was cold. Our fishing poles were closer to the water, swaying with the tide as they sat in their PVC pipes. And they certainly were huge, bigger than any normal fishing poles, I thought. I never asked why. We didn't say much, quite unusual for such talkative people. Lord knows it surely hadn't been that quiet in a while. Maybe it was the dark. Maybe it was the waves. Maybe it was the silence itself that kept us from saying anything. Whatever the reason, it drove us into complete serenity.

Now my uncle and I never talked much anyway, at least not to each other. I didn't understand him. He was an old, fat preacher who always sang "Amazing Grace." And why would he have understood me? I was a teenager, approaching anorexia, aspiring to become an archeologist. And I liked "weird music." But somehow things were different that night; we had found a common interest... fishing.

We had a couple of bites, nothing too sensational. My uncle had to rebait my line a lot, but he chuckled, so I didn't guess that it really bothered him. He caught some blowfish and ray-looking things, but the blowfish were my favorite. They had an orange-brown color, surprisingly pretty and their spikes stuck out all over the place. It was as if they were from some kind of Disney movie—perhaps *The Little Mermaid*—come to life.

The ocean was quiet, the same as before: dark, dull, in a sweet slumber. And yet somehow it seemed to be keenly aware of our motives by then, and very unwanting of our presence. All at once one of the poles bent in half toward the water. Surely it was a miracle of God that the ocean didn't digest it right then and there. My uncle took the pole and braced it on his stomach. "It's a big one," he said over and over again, as if teasing the waters, betting them to win, begging them to lose. I just sat there in the wet, cold sand, staring in awe at my uncle. The waves reeled him in, slowly moving him closer and closer to the water. His toes were first, then his ankles, and eventually his knees disappeared into the ocean. I could hear the line echoing in the wind; the reel's annoying clamor splitting the silence into a million pieces. "It's a comin', it's a comin' now."

I'm not too sure how long the struggle lasted. Maybe a minute, maybe twenty. Darkness has a funny way of keeping time. Eventually we realized what it was, though perhaps my uncle knew it all along. A shark. When he got it to the sand, it didn't move much; it just lay there and looked at us. I almost felt sorry for the thing. It wasn't *Jaws* but it had teeth, and lots of them. My uncle laid it by the beach chair trying to get an accurate estimate of its size: a couple of feet. A part of me was scared to touch it, but still another part of me couldn't wait. A real shark. Television really didn't do them justice. It had a beautiful gray-blue color that shimmered under the moonlight. Surprisingly the shark was not as rough as I thought it would be. An unusual texture, quite indescribable.

After he removed the hook, my uncle threw the shark back in the ocean. "No pictures. This is just a 'you and me experience'," he said to me. I thought about that, just a "me and him" experience. I didn't think we had ever had one of those before. So that's how it was and that's how it went. We baited our hooks again, sat back down, and stared into the distance as if nothing had even happened. After a couple of minutes he began to sing. "Amazin' grace, how sweet the soun', that saved a wretch like me..." His rough voice screeched the tune, and he grinned sharply as I tried to harmonize, an obviously futile mission so early in the morning. Yet despite the discord we giggled, fully aware that whales might have sounded more glorious, but in no way as captivating. "When we've bin there, tin thousan' years, bright shinin' as the sun..." It always was his favorite song.

BEST POEM

On Dali's Paranoiac Visage

By
Ryan
Leaming



Salvador Dalí Art Gallery
<http://www.dali-gallery.com/html>

My family and I gather after a long day of work
We sit around the hut to talk and think
We watch the clouds gathering to the east
Soaking up moisture that the sun draws
From the vast expanse of sea
The sea
An endless enigma of beauty, wonder, and danger
A painter's tray
Every morning and every night
The sun and sky and clouds
They paint their colors onto the sea
The crimson of the sun catches my eye
Purples and blues and golds
They all follow in succession
As my eye glances to each one in wonderment
The colors take my mind away from my day
The heat
The stench
The work
There is always work to be done
Food is not provided by a lazy hand
So I work to provide
Although my hands know no skill
They are quick and nimble
They are providers
One day I butcher
I take the hook and knife within my hands
I hold them tight as I slice away
Blood drips between my fingers

Animal Crackers?

By Frank Jacobs

In this messed up world of doubt, deceit, decay, and despondence many controversies rage to this day like an out-of-control fire. They irritate the roof of society's mouth and will not seem to heal. Sadly, many debates and questions will never be solved or answered. For example, how many licks does it take to get to the tootsie-roll center of a tootsie pop? The world may never know. The world will never know because it has too many variables. Tongue size is one of many.

Why does drinking up something and drinking down something mean the same thing? Why does it furthermore mean the same thing to beat someone up and beat someone else down? Are the words mere flaws in the English language—loopholes meant to keep our intrigue and interests of the world around us alive? Some would be happy and relieved with that possibility. However, it may be a darker, more diabolical plot to control the American people; manipulating word usage that ultimately hypnotizes us into accepting the world as it is dictated to us.

Our conspiracy theories may be interesting, but should not be banked upon in every respect. Who really killed John F. Kennedy? Did we really land on the moon or did we lie to scare the Russians into thinking we were ahead in the "space race"? What really happened to Elvis?

These many conspiracies and questions are trite and meaningless compared to the greatest debate of all time. The following conspiracy may change your life. It may rock your little, sheltered world.

Before your perspective on the very foundation of human existence is possibly shaken to the point of mental breakdown, be warned and know that I take no responsibility for the end of mankind.

The greatest controversy I have ever encountered in all of my life is this: are animal crackers really crackers, or are they cookies? Is this poor, innocent snack being doomed to dwell in the dungeons of the forbidden cracker's realm? I believe so. I believe them to have a much higher calling than that of the salty cracker. I believe the noble animal crackers to be none other than cookies. However, before I am burned at the stake for this brave statement that can be deemed as heretical by some, before I am martyred for this betrayal of common belief and accepted notion, please allow me the one chance to show the world and open their eyes to the true meaning of a cracker. Then, and only then, will you see that the benevolent animal cracker does not fit the criteria of a cracker, and is furthermore under a completely wrong genre of snack-foods. If, theoretically, an animal cracker is called a cracker but is not a cracker, then "what is a cracker?"

The root definition of a cracker is a thin, crispy wafer or biscuit. It is made from unsweetened dough. It is commonly and most recognizably unleavened bread, which is just bread lacking yeast. Yeast is the germ that causes bread to rise. Salt is also commonly added to give it some kind of desirable flavor; a failed attempt. The point to be seen here is this: a cracker is salty and boring, unlike the sweet and intriguing animal cracker.

A cracker is almost always accompanied by another element. Dip, cheese, or meat, are common additions to the desolate cracker. It needs to be this way in order to give it a flavor of any kind besides salty.

Crackers serve also as an addition themselves to a meal, like soup. However, alone it is thirst-provoking and dry. Crackers have a much-deserved reputation of being boring and bland. It is a thin wafer made of flour and water with or without leavening and shortening. It is unsweetened. It is brittle and thin.

Is it normal to be served cheese and crackers at a party? It is probably acceptable. However, the party would be of high reproach in your mind had you been served animal crackers with a nice slice of cheddar topped with mustard. Would you find it normal and to your liking if you were given a few animal cracker camels for your soup? It would not be a "taster's choice" meal to most. The reason for this is simple. Animal crackers are not that kind of snack. They clash with occasions associated with the uninspiring cracker. An average cracker is for every occasion. The cracker usually is consumed by an older and more mature age group. It is not uncommon to find a cracker of some kind on the snack-bar of any formal occasion. Crackers are dry, and therefore, are more for dry people. An animal cracker, however, is a food for a more colorful and possibly younger age and class.

Animal crackers are dessert snacks. They are sweet, like cookies, and freestanding in their taste, like cookies. They need no added flavoring to give the illusion of a good taste in your mouth like the pitiful cracker. Animal crackers do not need a dip or cheese to convey satisfaction and fulfillment to the consumer. They can be eaten straight from the bag, bucket, circus-train box, or any other packaging. Crackers are uniformed and packaged in boring boxes. The root definition of an animal cracker is this: a small cookie in the shape of an animal. That definition hammers the last nail on the cracker coffin. Why do people insist on soiling the snack's appeal by naming it a cracker?

Why is it named an animal cracker when it has been proven a cookie? The very nature of the animal cracker lends absolutely nothing to that of an actual cracker. A cookie is any small, flat sweet cake. The interesting

nature of the animal cracker makes it fun to eat. Animal crackers are much more fun than conventional crackers. Since animal crackers are not crackers at all, from now on I will be referring to them as animal cookies.

Will I eat a camel, horse, dog, monkey, llama, lion, elephant, or bear? The individual animal cookie 's fate is decided by chance. Not unlike the claw in *Toy Story*, the child 's indifferent hand grabs a few "chosen" species of cookie from their home. It is then customary for the child to play with each individual animal cookie before its doom. A horse is chosen. With his chubby forefingers and thumbs firmly holding the animal cookie, the child dances the cookie around as a real animal would move. With beige nubs that serve as legs, completing the chosen horse 's cartoon-like shape, the child taps the two legs back and forth on the table. For one second, the horse becomes real, galloping through an open pasture with no fences and definitely no box or bag or bucket to be crammed into with countless other mangled and intertwined animals. Satisfied, both the child and edible toy are ready for the next step. The kid then usually bites the legs and head off the happy horse, one by one. Though I used to do that to my animal playmates, I know they did not mind. Its morbid nature is only apparent to me now. A child makes it fun. The point attempting to be made is that animal crackers are much more fun than conventional crackers.

Putting fun, appearance, and taste aside, the cracker and the animal "cookie" are similar. They are both food. They are both snack-food.

They are both highly popular snack-food. They both contain the word "cracker." However, all the other things that make them what they are do not agree with one another. The differences between a cracker and an animal cracker force other cracker questions to arise.

Wishing to jump on the band wagon of falsely accused crackers, the jolly Graham cracker chases the others from behind.

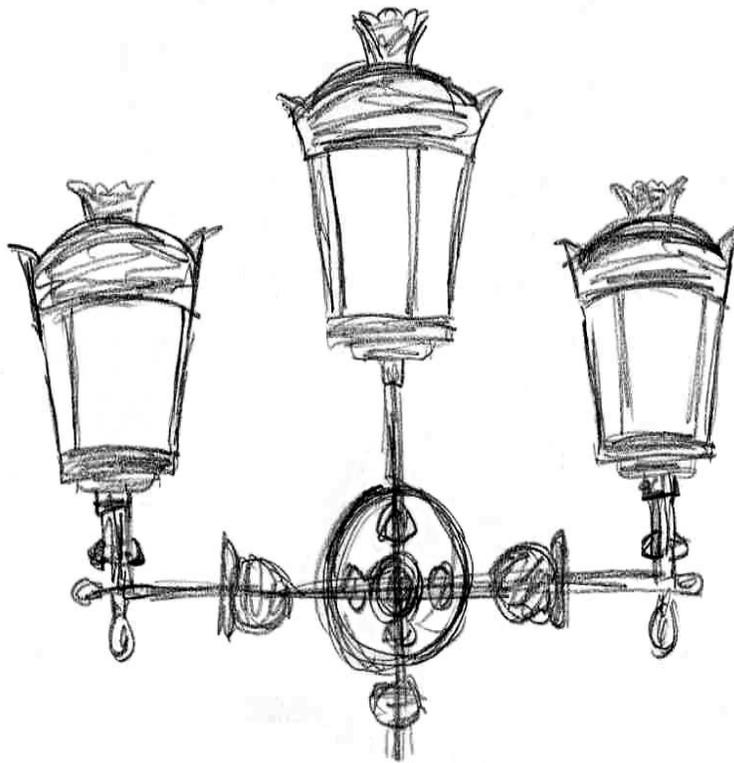
"If an animal cracker is not a cracker, then surely I am not either," the morsel proudly announces as he runs after the moving wagon.

With a smile on his porous dimpled face, he follows down the street. Just as he is about to jump onto the back of the wagon, a book appears in front of him, causing him to trip. As the wagon hastens out of view, the angry and sad cracker looks down at the dictionary.

"I was so close, I almost got away with it," the cracker exclaims. Sadly, the definition of a Graham cracker is a cracker. Though it is indeed semi-sweet like the animal cookie, it contains whole-wheat flour like many crackers. However, do not feel remorse towards the steadfast Graham cracker, for it has many flavors to keep it alive. It also has a cereal called *Golden Grahams*. Three cheers for the Graham Cracker. The animal cracker, however, needs to be freed from the name "cracker" forever.

**I was only two years old.
My father took me to the aquarium.
It was one of the few places he ever took me,
Before he walked out forever.
That day I got lost in the whale tank.
I stood at the glass, awed at the beauty.
The water was so blue.
The whales were so white.
Their graceful tails glided them through the water.
The light shone through the water
To dance on their smooth skin.
I wanted to jump in and swim freely,
To gracefully dance in the water.
But I stood daydreaming,
As I touched the cold glass
and stood on the cement floor,
Next to him.
Just as the gentle whales were held
Captive in their prison,
So was I held captive
By a man who is my father
But never will be my daddy.**

Mystic By Micayla Nelson



I remember those days long ago—
When my family went to enjoy a show.
The cold bit against our ears,
But we determined it was the social event of the year.
I stared at the show, as my father does my mother—
And after the show was done
We'd skate all day long.
The sky rolled the fluffy clouds over and over.
The branches hung low and touched our backs
As if it were Dad pushing us along.
But now they creak to take cover.
Dad's intense gaze as the sun glazed on the ice--
We didn't think twice
As it warmed our backs,
And time lost track.
Those days I'll never forget,
For it is where my parents first met,
And the church bells chimed to go home.

Memories
By Sarah Allen

